

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. 11

Autumn '95



Stoke it up

- McLibel - Mammon On Trial
- To Rave or to Riot?
- Road Wars
- Sisters on the Twin Decks
- European Romani

Wally Hope • Reclaim the Streets • Chartered Fayres • Exodus
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The State it's in

A view from SQUALL central

When a country wishes to conquer another, it must first undermine the strength of its intended target. In modern warfare this is done economically. If you can weaken or even destroy another country's economy then their flag will surely follow.

In its most obvious global manifestation this approach takes the form of economic sanctions but there are of course many underhand ways of bringing another country to its political knees. This 'military economics' is also used by governments to destroy unwanted cultural forces within its own borders.

When public opinion was so maliciously manipulated against the travelling culture, it was the alternative economy the conquistadors sought to destroy. What once flourished as a packed summer festival season has, over the course of a decade, been severed by laws and red tape. Public event licenses now cost a small fortune, whilst the attendance fees insisted upon by British Police pic, increase ever more prohibitively. And what happens if you don't have a licence and if you neither want, nor can afford, Old Bill wandering up to your fireplace like walking CCTV? Well then there's the Public Order Act 1986 and the Criminal Justice Act 1994 to facilitate the strict control of cultural freedom.

With no festivals, a whole economic support system is swept away. An economy of exchanging wares, selling tat, swapping favours, trading vehicles and doing odd paid jobs associated with running a festival. The festival circuit represented a fast growing alternative economy, supporting a culture of late night cafes and bars, theatre, music, dance, story-telling, rants, raving beat-heads and talking in tongues. A culture where people with crafts and performance skills could both learn and ply their trade, and a place where such talents were rewarded and

encouraged in recognition of their necessity.

Much to the concern of the established economic system, it was also proving itself viable without any dependence upon the state. What's more, the alternative economy was attracting more and more people disillusioned with the kind of de-skilling and spiritually de-commissioning employment increasingly on offer from the officially condoned economy.

But whilst the divisive 'military economists' have had a decisively detrimental effect on the growth of the alternative cultural economy, they have not yet destroyed it completely.

However, certain measures must now be taken to ensure that they don't.

For many people who live their lives in the alternative culture, 'economics' is a dirty word. Not surprising really, considering its dramatic and culturally catastrophic over-emphasis in the society in which we all have to live. However, ignorance is not bliss, it is a temporarily comfortable state which simply postpones the problem until it has grown unavoidably bigger. Every country faced with potentially crippling economic sanctions has to sit round the table and discuss how it will adapt to survive.

This will inevitably entail incorporating a few economic realities into our cultural interactions.

When one religion wishes to supersede another, it builds temples on the sites of previous worship. Thus throughout the summer there are still festivals in the UK. However, they are differently motivated to those that occurred previously. Whereas the old festivals were multiple economies that fed a culture, the new festivals are uni-economies which fatten one pocket. The new festivals are run by organisations with the money to pay for a licence, to pay off the police, to pay off the local authorities and then to reap the rewards of their capital expenditure by draining the pockets of eager festival goers.

The atmosphere of all festivals reflects the motivations of the authors. If that motivation is profit-oriented, then the fruits of the festival will undoubtedly taste of money. Glastonbury is the only large nationally known festival that still in some way reflects a motivation of

authorship going beyond the financial. Each year however, stricter and stricter economic controls are forced upon those that attend, squeezing alternative cultures to the edge and even out all together. More and more of the highly commercial food and product stalls paying the £2000-£3000 to be on site, are consequently demanding that strict controls are kept on alternative economic competition. Thus like a cuckoo in a foreign nest, the aggressive commercial economics sidelines and then replaces the alternative cultural exchanges that fostered the festival circuit in the first place.

Whereas the old festivals were multiple economies that fed a culture, new festivals are uni-economies which fatten one pocket.

Having recognised the mechanisms by which 'military economics' usurps its competitive opposition, it is then perhaps possible to make a stand and ensure the carpet is not swept from beneath our feet. How?

Living outside the official economic framework is undoubtedly a major exercise in financial survival. In response, many people have understandably adopted an individualistic approach. It is the symptom of modern capitalism that Britain has witnessed a serious erosion of any meaningful sense of co-operation and community beyond immediate financial gain. It is thus important that we recognise this symptom as it manifests itself in our lives and so enable ourselves to adapt an anti-dote to its pervasive creep. The burgeoning culture of free-party sound systems is a prime example of a new movement in this direction. The power of their non-mammon community stance is an inspiring flag, flying in the face of official economic thinking. 'We do it for the sake of the dance', they say, like a bunch of

aliens. 'Let the queen have the pieces of paper that bare her head and leave us to dance with each other instead.'

Except of course, they are not left alone. Simply because they are unattracted by the usual economic maggot and are not to be found wriggling on the hook, they are a threat and a competitive force. Consequently the 'military economists' gather in the war rooms and plot the next Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

One of the strengths of the alternative culture is its imagination and ingenuity and, to some extent, this has developed directly as a result of not having the money to buy its way out of a sticky situations. However, there is a point at which finances are required to facilitate that ingenuity, particularly as it now finds itself employed in the fight for cultural survival. Having recognised the economic attempt to undermine and destroy a culture, it is now necessary for us all to rally round each other economically and to give respect where respect is due. This boils down to some mundane but essential realities.

If you have the money then pay the entrance fee at a benefit gig and drop some significant money in the donation bucket when it comes round. Nothing drains a freedom fighter more than letting someone in for 26p because 'that's all they've got', only to see them waving a £20 note at the bar-staff half an hour later. If you receive help and materials from a grass-roots organisation, then pay them if you can. Always enclose at least an SAE if you want a reply. If you are a band, a theatre troupe, a sound system or the guardian of a venue then, if possible, help support the groups defending the culture.

Those on the periphery must realise that we now have a collective identity, if for no other reason than we are under collective attack. There are plenty of other reasons besides.

Recognition and respect of alternative economic realities will help ensure that the 'military economists' plotting the downfall of diverse cultures do not have the winning game plan. In fact it will surprise the living daylights out of them to find we are one step ahead of their malicious intent. They certainly aren't counting on that.

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- **Nick Cobbing**

Much Respect & Without Whom.....

Debs, Nikki, Kay, Tash, The Lutonites, Fruit of Earth Eric, Gary Watson, Paul, Jamie, DIY & Right to Party posse, The Network Foundation, Tim Malyon, UN Sounds, Yen Chit Chong, Gina Fietelson, Roving Jenny S, Chris McTofu, Disco Gary, John O'Sullivan, Melle Mel, Mark Kelly, Matty & Rosy, Jim Paton, pHreak, Simon Griffbum, Marcus, Ben, Naomi, Carla, Helen, The Liquid Sergeant, The Levs, Nathalie, Percy, Suzie, Andrea, Charlotte, John 'Virus Zappa' Hodges, The folk at CHAR, Corrie, Justice?, No. 28 for the hot baths, Paul Guenault, Shane, 52Bers, ASS.

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Nick Cobbing

MASSING NATIONWIDE - Critical Mass cyclists are coming together each month in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham, Oxford, Cambridges, Norwich, Cardiff, Bristol, Bath, Southampton, Brighton and London. No road-rage car-addict can stop it.

CND Arrest Update

Two CND campaigners who blocked a train carrying nuclear waste through the centre of London last December by sitting in front of it, had their case thrown out of Snaresbrook Magistrates' court in August.

The case against David Poulden and CND's vice chair Pat Arrowsmith at Snaresbrook Magistrates' Court collapsed because it was unclear which law they were being prosecuted under. Three other anti-nuclear

campaigners are due to appear before Stratford Magistrates' Court on December 18.

Christopher Gwynthorpe and Katie Andrews are charged with obstructing an engine under the 1886 Malicious Damages Act after sitting in front of a train outside Stratford Station in East London in May. Oliver Stoll is charged with criminal damage after painting the train with a danger sign and the words "danger" and "death".

All will be pleading not guilty. Chris Gwynthorpe told Squall that the 1886 act was designed to prevent land

owners trying to stop new railways being built on their land.

"I'll be arguing that what we did was attempt to prevent a breach of the genocide act in the Geneva convention," he told Squall. "This train carries nuclear waste which we have grounds to believe will be reprocessed to provide plutonium for Trident; and that it puts London and the British Isles at risk from radiation if there is an accident."

All three have been granted unconditional bail. Support and leafletting would be appreciated during the hearing which is scheduled to last two days.

Mawhinney looks for young activists

The new Chairman of the Conservative Party, Dr Brian Mawhinney, is reported to be calling for Tory associations to set up small teams of young activists to drum up local support ahead of the next general election.

Where exactly these young activists are to be recruited is not clear. The average age of Conservative Party members is 62 with only 5 per cent of the membership below 35. On the other hand he might find plenty of young activists drumming at the Newbury road protest, although he

would be advised to do any recruitment drives in the area from a rotten-tomato-proof vehicle after U-turning an earlier decision to halt the by-pass just half an hour before leaving his old job at the Secretary of State for Transport.

More anti-party legislation in the pipeline

In a green paper consultation document published in March of this year, the Government announced its intention to create a new criminal offence of playing music at night.

Whilst the sections on raves contained within the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act place criminal sanctions on music and dancing in the open air, these new proposals represent an extension of such control to private parties occurring in people's homes.

Recommendations contained within the document, backed by both the Department of Environment and the Home Office, also suggest the creation of a specific power of immediate sound equipment confiscation, with a charge to be levied for its return.

At present, excessive night-time noise is dealt with by obtaining a noise abatement notice under part 3 of the Environmental Protection Act 1980. Only if this abatement notice is ignored can measures be taken to confiscate equipment and fine the perpetrators. In effect this allows a warning period for which the people involved in putting on the

party can reconsider both the suitability of the venue and the sound levels, if there are excessive complaints from neighbours.

However, the new green paper suggests that if the noise is judged by an environmental health officer to be a statutory nuisance, it should be an immediate criminal offence punishable by a fine and the confiscation of equipment. Liability for criminal conviction, it suggests, should fall upon either the person responsible for the sounds, or the owner or occupier of the premises from which the sound is being made. The times within which these offences might be committed are given as between 11pm-7am.

The suggestions contained within the green paper obviously represent a serious concern for anyone who either attends or organises parties at which people gather to play music and dance. The recommendation for the level of sound to be deemed statutorily intolerable is a staggering 35 decibels - roughly the sound of a hi-fi system on volume level 3. The so-called consultation process finished on June 30th and the Government are presently considering what legislative form the proposals will take.

Traveller's Tax Relief

All vehicles over 25 years old are to be exempt from road tax after an agreement reached between the Department of Transport and the Treasury.

A date has not been set yet. The move is designed to help the rich and famous who own 'classic cars', but in traditional loophole fashion, travellers with trucks over 25 years old will also be

included.

"It'll give em one less excuse to bust me," says Marcus, whose live-in Austin K9, 'The Liquid Sergeant', was built in 1954. "I'm sure they'll look for others though."

Environmentalists are concerned that the Government's keenness to save classic car owners the £156 they could undoubtedly afford, will also lead to people driving clapped out, exhaust billowing cars.

Dramatic rise in number of juveniles imprisoned on remand.

The number of 15 and 16-year-old children imprisoned whilst awaiting trial has risen by 85 per cent according to a report published jointly by NACRO (National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders) and ACOP (Association of Chief Officers of Probation) in July.

Both the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Judge Tummin, and Lord Justice Woolf have argued strongly that remand prisons are an unsuitable environment for 15/16-year-olds; identifying serious problems of bullying, self-harm and suicides. Alternative options to remand prisons

include bail with appropriate accommodation, reporting requirements or counselling, local authority secure accommodation and remand fostering. Despite this, however, the report reveals that the average amount of time spent by juveniles in remand prisons has also gone up by a staggering 154 per cent. These comparative figures come from March 1993 and September 1994.

Another alarming feature of the report is the percentage of black 15/16-year-olds on remand. In Feltham Remand Centre, which serves the London region, 53 per cent teenage remand prisoners are black; with 51 per cent in Birmingham and 43 per cent in Manchester.

New Database on Police Malpractice

The police are to get a taste of their own medicine after losing a bid to ban a new computer company from running a police malpractice database service for lawyers.

The Defendants Information Services (DIS) was set up by former civil rights campaigner with the Hackney Community Defence Association, Russell Miller, and a solicitor from the London-based firm of Birnberg & Co.

The database currently has information on more than 1,000 officers mostly in the London area, although the service plans to expand nationally. The Metropolitan Police and two other county forces made representations to the Data Protection Registry arguing that the information contained on the DIS database was 'unlawful'

and in contravention of the Data Protection Act. The registry officer dealing with the case, Neil Marshal, said: "They were very concerned about the basic idea of keeping tabs on police officers for later legal use. But their objections were very non-specific. I cast around for a statute or common law principle that they [DIS] might be breaking and I couldn't see there was one." John Burrows, Chief Constable of Essex and Chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers data protection working group, also made an attempt to prevent the setting up of the database, all to no avail.

The Defendant's Information Service now means that criminal and malpractice actions taken by the police will be 'noted on record' as are the indiscretions conducted by the rest of the population.

ID Cards and the "Redneck Tendency"

It seems too many people in government want to find a way of introducing an ID card for British citizens without provoking a civil liberties backlash.

As such, the intention as it stands is to introduce ID cards for benefit claimants, on the pretext that it will cut down fraud, and a driving licence ID card, under the pretext of cutting down on car crime.

The Tory Party Conference heard calls for compulsory ID cards but government plans are to introduce the concept slowly

and "voluntarily" and then engineer it so that life is made difficult if you haven't got one.

In a London seminar given in September, Sir John Smith, ex-deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Force and former president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, described the push to introduce ID cards as being fuelled by the "redneck tendency", describing it as a "dramatic over-reaction" to an "almost pathological interest in crime".

"If that opinion held sway," he argued, "the relationship between the police, the state and the citizen would be quite dramatically and

adversely affected. For this reason leaders of the police service should continue their present opposition to it."

He also described the growing incidence of public surveillance as leading to "civic one-up-man ship".

"Such unwarranted concern could result in the creation of crime-free enclaves protected by the best that money could buy, yet surrounded by a sea of criminality and disorder," he said. He argued that conducting surveillance in one area would simply displace criminals to other areas which couldn't afford surveillance.

New Police Caution Is Not Understood

A research paper published in the forensic magazine, *Expert Evidence*, has suggested that people perceive the new police caution that replaced the right to silence, to be a threat.

The new police caution, brought in following the removal of the right to silence in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, reads: "You do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned

something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence."

In the survey, forming the basis of the report, more than half those tested could not understand what the caution meant. Only one in eight of those questioned understood the second sentence.

The researchers responsible for the report include Eric Shepherd and Anna Mortimer, both consultant forensic scientists asked by the police service to conduct continuing research into cautioning.

The research paper concludes: "Delivering the 37-word, three-element caution as a whole is an inherently meaningless process. Its length, number of clauses, and syntactic and semantic complexity ensures that it is beyond the ability of the majority of people in the street to absorb, let alone comprehend." The research was welcomed by civil rights groups although some questioned whether it was any easier to comprehend the report than the new police caution!

Stop and Search of Black People on the Increase

Greenwich Action Committee and the Newham Monitoring Project both report a tripling in the number of complaints of police harassment against black people during July of this year.

Statistically, black people are already 10 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people but since the July launch of a police operation billed as an

initiative to tackle muggings and street theft, harassment has escalated. Police claim that Operation Eagle Eye relies largely on 'hi-tech' surveillance methods and intelligence gathering although civil rights groups say that, in reality, this has meant more stop and search targeted mainly at blacks.

Following Metropolitan Police Commissioner Paul Condon's comments that most muggers were young black males, and Home Office backing for his statement, the

Greenwich Action Committee have called for a London-wide campaign to co-ordinate the statistics on stop and searches since Operation Eagle Eye started. Meanwhile, residents on the Stonebridge Estate in Harlesden, north London, also report an increase in street searches. "The police are very heavy handed, they make nasty comments, my clients rise to the bait. They would do better if they handled people with more respect," says Hussein Jewel, a solicitor on the Estate.



Andrew Testa

The Glorious 12th

Festival Welfare Services

It would be a sad day indeed if Festival Welfare Services were to close as a result of the recent Home Office decision to withdraw their grant.

FWS started up in 1974 as a co-ordinating committee for a number of organisations including Release and the Samaritans.

It received recommendations from government committees and was given an annual grant by the Voluntary Services Unit of the Home Office. Using that money, they have operated a London office and provided an essential service to thousands of festival goers for 21 years.

Many people will remember them as the posse who could still spare some elastoplast at 2 O Clock in the morning, or that were still available to calm down and chat with the neurotic fall-out from festival wildness. At commercial events, they were the people who took over night-time operations from St John's Ambulance and other official services when they shut down for the evening. At countless free festivals they have provided their services, expertise and advice to help ensure that the events were healthy.

They have also written information packs for festival organisers and welfare teams, given advice on public events to local authorities and supplied security charters for event-security companies. During their 21 year history they have provided their services to events as diverse the

Stonehenge Festies (when they were full and mighty), Monsters of Rock, VE Commemorations Hyde Park and the Big Green Gathering. The most they have ever received for these events is expenses, having relied on volunteers and their Home Office grant to steer their vital way through the last 21 years. In January of this year a member of FWS received the People Award from the Event Supplier's Association, to stand alongside commendations from the Health and Safety Executive and the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

However, with the removal of the Home Office grant, the vital and well-loved Festival Welfare Posse may be a posse no more.

"Logic says the promoters should pay for it," says Don Aitkin, a trustee for FWS since it began.

But whether the cost-cutting mammon-heads who put on the major festivals these days will value the FWS highly enough to budget them properly is an eventuality that remains to be seen.

Their London Office closed at the end of October although mail will be forwarded. In the meanwhile the Committee intend to stick together and have made several applications for grant funding. They are in contact with the Red Cross, who may provide some help. They are also attempting to organise some benefit events, although this will not replace the financial security of regular grant.

"We hope to keep ticking over 'til next season," says Nicole Pollen, an FWS committee member. "If we don't get a grant this year, we will keep looking next year."

All correspondence and offers of assistance can be sent to Festival Welfare Services, 61B, Hornsey Road, London, N7 6DG.

Scapegoating Birds with Bullets

The Department of Environment have rarely acted so quickly. But when the Scottish Landowners' Association asked for a change in the law allowing them to cull birds of prey, a working party was immediately set up.

The argument given by Scottish landowners' for an amendment to the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act allowing them to shoot peregrine falcons, hen harriers and buzzards, is that

these birds are eating a rapidly diminishing grouse population. John Drysdale, from the Scottish Landowners' Association and manager of 25,000 acre estate said: "It is not a problem when the grouse numbers are healthy but when grouse do badly because of the weather or other factors, the birds of prey prevent recovery." What is interesting of course are the "other factors" that Drysdale refers to. As the Heather Trust stated in its 1995 annual report: "Predation by raptors is unlikely to be the main limiting factor on red grouse populations." Indeed, there is no mention whether the DoE working party will

take into account the hundreds of rich tourists who flock to Scotland every August to blow the living daylights out of the grouse population; all in the name of good sport.

There again, with the large profits made by Scottish landowners every year in 'glorious 12th' shooting fees, it is small wonder they are directing the blame for the diminishing grouse population on peregrine falcons trying to find a few grouse still left to eat. It is also small wonder that the Department of Environment know where its interests lie.

Ozone Hole Doubles in a Year!

The ozone hole over the southern hemisphere has doubled in the last year and is now the size of all Europe, warned the UN's weather agency in September.

Research conducted by members of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) also found that high altitude ozone over Europe and North America has dropped 10-15% since depletion was first recorded in the eighties. The research

blames the phenomenon of the effect of man-made chemicals.

Rumen Bojkov from the WMO warned that every one per cent drop in ozone means roughly a 1.4% increase in ultra violet radiation. With each 1% increase in UV there is considered to be a correspondent 2% increase in the chances of skin cancer and eye cataracts.

Whilst ozone has been steadily decreasing over Antarctica in the last ten years, dramatic decreases

have also been recently recorded over the Arctic Circle. Latest figures from the European Stratospheric Arctic and Mid Latitude Experiment show ozone loss at 18kms altitude over the Arctic Vortex reached up to 1.5% a day! The figures show that by March, ozone levels had fallen by 50%. Over some places in Siberia, the ozone screen had been reduced by 35% and large doses of ultraviolet-B radiation were measured on the ground. Warnings abound.

King Arthur Gives It Some in Court

Both the Criminal Justice Act and Wiltshire Police made an unsuccessful attempt to nail King Arthur in a Salisbury Magistrates Court in September.

Yer man with the long beard, wearing a white robe, blue cloak and iron headband, swore his legal oath upon the 'sword of Excalibur', revealing to the court his identity as a reincarnation of King Arthur Uther Pendragon and giving his spiritual date of birth as the year 549 AD.

King Arthur faced charges of trespassory assembly under section 70 of the Criminal Justice Act, after being found next to Stonehenge on June 20 along with 27 other people.

Wiltshire Police argued that he had refused to move after being told that he was within the four-mile exclusion zone placed around Stonehenge at Solstice time. The new trespassory assembly law applies to 20 or more people gathered on land. But Arthur told the court how police had rounded up the 27 people from a 200 yard stretch of road. He also recalled that the so-called assembly included a German TV crew, three legal observers and some "drunk Italians".

The court was told that Mr Pendragon, of Farnborough, was Official Swordbearer of the Secular Order of Druids, the Titular Head of the Loyal Arthurian Warbands, Honoured Pendragon of the Glastonbury Order of Druids and member of the Council of British Druid Orders. Arthur explained that he was more a warrior druid than a priest.

King Arthur's legal brief Kier Starmer, also explained to the court that as a member of three druidic orders, the King had a religious right to be at Stonehenge at that time, citing the European Convention of Human Rights to back up his right to celebrate his religion. "If you put a four-mile exclusion zone around midnight mass at St Paul's, there would be an outcry," King Arthur told an assembled court of reporters after the case. Neither did he consider that it should be exclusively druids that are allowed on site on their sacred day. "That would be like letting the vicar in but not the congregation," he said. "I believe everybody has the right to worship at Stonehenge."

After 15 minutes deliberation the magistrates found the once and future king of Avalon not guilty.

Hulme Travellers Fight on

Travellers in Hulme, Manchester appear to be winning their campaign against eviction.

Although there has been no official climb-down by Manchester City Council Department of Land and Property or Hulme Housing Office, the travellers have been informed by the tenants association that Land and Property are not prepared to risk confrontation in the face of strong opposition from local residents.

It is expected that the travellers will now be allowed to remain until the street they live in, Otterburn Close, is demolished next spring/summer.

The decision is believed to have been made after a sympathetic television report on BBC local news drew attention to the unanimous support of residents and the impossibility of the travellers finding alter-

native sites. In the report the chair of M.C.C. Housing Committee, Councillor Lunts, admitted to the real reason for the evictions, not mentioning the alleged "neighbourhood complaints" which were supposedly the justification for the evictions. He said: "The area is going to be demolished next year anyway, and we would rather move them out sooner rather than later."

The statement revealed the Council's true attitude towards the lives and homes of travellers, ie that they are worth less than some bureaucratic convenience.

In an ironic footnote to the campaign, Manchester Freedom Network invited representatives of the Housing Department to come to the Close to meet the travellers and discuss alternatives to the evictions. Hulme Housing Office replied by threatening to evict MFN from their office in a squatted flat!

Twyford Down Land 'Given Away' to Public School

The site of the old A33 Winchester Bypass, replaced by the much disputed M3, is to be effectively given away to a top public school.

The one and a half mile stretch of land was restored and landscaped with

public money but is now to be handed over to Winchester College for just a "few hundred pounds". Observers say it is a behind-the-scenes pay-back for the college putting up no opposition to the destruction of two Special Sites of Scientific Interest on Twyford Down, to make way for the M3. Chris Corcoran,

chairman of Twyford Parish Council said: "It is absolutely iniquitous and disgraceful. It sticks in my gullet something rotten." A DoT spokesman said that the deal was not unusually secret: "To describe them as secret is missing the point. If you are negotiating about something you don't do that in public."

First CJA conviction for Trespassory Assembly

The first court conviction for breaking the new law on assemblies of more than 20 people, were made in Salisbury Magistrates Court in early October.

Dr Margaret Jones, a senior lecturer in literary studies at the University of West of England in Bristol, and Richard Lloyd a postgraduate student from Bristol, were charged with taking part in a prohibited

assembly at Stonehenge on June 1st. They are the first to be convicted under section 70 of the Criminal Justice Act. During the court case, Dr Jones shouted at Salisbury Magistrates that "It is wrong to uphold an oppressive law". She was given a two year conditional discharge plus £100 costs, whilst Lloyd was fined £140 with £100 costs. Both pledge to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights.



CAR FREE SPACE CREATED IN EDINBURGH

BRITAIN'S FIRST car free urban space is to be created by Lothian regional council.

A housing estate planned for Edinburgh city centre will only accommodate tenants who renounce ownership of motorised transport. The pledge will be incorporated into the tenant's lease. Lothian's transportation committee also approved a plan to turn a mile long stretch of city centre road into a bus and cycle lane and plan to ban cars completely from the city centre during next year's festival.

POLLUTION IS FACTOR IN INCREASED RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS

CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLLUTION are some of the reasons given for the sharp rise in respiratory problems noted in a research paper, published jointly by the NHS Trust Federation and the Kings Fund Health Policy Unit in September. The research was carried out on six out-of-London Hospitals during the period from December 1992 to November 1994.

CONSERVATION GUIDELINES SCRAPPED

NEW PLANNING GUIDELINES which will practically scrap conservation considerations in Wales have been condemned as a "disaster" by conservation groups. The guidance, a legacy of former Welsh Secretary and would be Prime Minister John Redwood, would leave conservation areas vulnerable to development the conservationists say.

HESELTINE TAXED OVER CAR ALLOWANCE

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER Michael Heseltine has been having a tough time recently. Not only were the grounds surrounding his Northamptonshire mansion the scene of exploratory opencast mine works but now the treasury have limited the car allowance for his privately owned midnight blue Jaguar to a mere £43,628 a year. The money includes a 31 pence a mile allowance plus a contribution to his chauffeur's wages.

Contaminated Ecstasy Blamed for Deaths

A seventeen year old boy died and two of his friends were admitted to hospital after ingesting contaminated ecstasy tablets in a Blackpool night-club in September.

Since 1990 there have been 51 'ecstasy-related' deaths in commercial night clubs, 46 due to dehydration caused by packed dance floors and by turning off

water taps to increase water sales at the bar. There have been no reported deaths at free raves.

The death of Daniel Ashton has induced calls for a more sensible and less hysterical official approach to ecstasy use in Britain. The dodgy ecstasy tablets are thought to have been dumped onto the UK market by Dutch manufacturers. With Dutch dance promoters encouraged to provide testing booths at raves, manufacturers of crap and contaminated ecstasy can no longer find a market there.

Thus it looks likely that the UK dance scene is providing a dustbin for their unwanted products. The exaggerated politically-motivated rhetoric surrounding ecstasy means that it is not possible for someone to be present at a UK rave testing people's tablets before they are ingested. However, following the latest death, the Exodus Collective who run free raves in Bedfordshire say they are to set up a testing booth at their dances in future.

First CJA Squatting Case Collapses

The first Criminal Justice Act case against squatters collapsed in a Bristol Court at the beginning of October.

The new Interim Possession Order forms were used by Bristol Churches Housing Association against four squatters in the Montpellier region of Bristol. Bristol Churches Housing Association have a large amount of empty property in the area but for some reason decided become the first known users of the new law.

The squatters had attracted large amounts of support, with local shops putting up posters on their behalf and over 100 protesters turning up at Bristol County Court.

The judge turned down Bristol Churches Housing Association's application of the basis that they had failed to adequately prove their case. The squatters were represented by Brian Cox of Bobbetts McCann in Bristol with the help of Jim Paton from Advisory Service for Squatters, who travelled down to Bristol to lend ASS's expertise. The liaisons

between the squatters and legal assistance was facilitated by Bristol Housing Action Movement (BHAM).

Brian Cox is now seeking a judicial review of Bristol Churches Housing Association's grounds for seeking possession against the occupiers, on the unusual legal basis of the Association having too many empty properties. Brian Cox is a judicial review expert and it will be interesting to see whether he can establish such a legal basis for resisting possession orders.



Fox Hunters Seek Public Money

The Sinnington Foxhunt have applied for £1,000 of public money in order to help what they call their "conservation" project.

The Huntsmen argue that the maintenance of blackthorn thickets, on the North York Moors, will provide cover for foxes so helping to conserve wildlife. It will also encourage foxes to abide on the very land on which they hunt, ensuring

plenty of sport for hunters, as well as blood for the hounds. The Hunt have applied to Ryedale District Council to be included in their annual £20,000 local conservation budget. It will of course also provide them with the PR weapon used by Britain's fox hunters. Namely that they are good for the conservation of the countryside. Apparently only two out of the 12 councillors on the Council's Community Services Committee actively opposed the application.

Travellers Triumph in Court

Unique court precedents were recently established which will help shield travellers from some of the worst excesses of the Criminal Justice Act.

The ground-breaking court decisions followed efforts by Wealdon District Council to use section 77 of the Act against travellers on a site near Crowborough in Kent. The presiding judge, Mr Justice Sedley, ruled that the Council had failed to investigate the social circumstances of the travellers present on the land before applying to the magistrates for an enforcement order to evict. The case was brought on behalf of a mother who, according to the judge, was entitled to expect the local authority to carry out its statutory duties under the Children Act 1989, the Housing Act 1985 and education acts. These include requirements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need and to protect their access to education.

Mr Justice Sedley also ruled that an order made under Section 77 of the CJA applied only to travellers present on the land at the time but did not extend to travellers arriving on the site after the order. This decision makes a rotation of traveller sites by differing groups of travellers a possible way of skirting what Mr Justice Sedley referred to as the "in some ways draconic" Criminal Justice Act.

It was undoubtedly an important court triumph for travellers, with future ramifications in other court cases.

"Technically the decision is not binding on future high court judges,"

explained David Watkinson, the travellers' barrister, "but in practice High Court judges do follow another High Court judge's decision, unless given a jolly good reason why not to."

In a separate court case in Southend Crown Court, Basildon District Council were defeated in their attempts to evict a gypsy called William Thomas. He had been the subject of an enforcement notice to leave, after it was claimed he lacked the necessary planning permission for the caravans, toilet and small day room that he and his family live in. The family own the land on which they live and refused to comply with the notice to vacate and dismantle their home.

At first, Mr Thomas, who could not read or write, appeared in the pre-trial court hearing without legal representation and pleaded guilty. He was allowed to withdraw his plea, however, when he was advised that he did have grounds for defence. The penalty for non-compliance with an enforcement notice is an unlimited fine which increases daily.

The grounds for defence were that he had done all that he could reasonably do to secure compliance with a notice. The defendant's barrister argued that doing nothing whatsoever was all he could reasonably do!

The reasons he gave were as follows:

- 1) Growing restrictions on gypsies freedom to move and reside by the roadside
- 2) Lack of provision of local authority/county council sites
- 3) DoE circulars regarding gypsies finding their own accommodation
- 4) Basildon District Council's planning attitudes toward gypsies
- 5) The nature and quality of the land on which the defendant had chosen to

reside and its environs

6) The nature and quality of other possible plots in the area

7) The recent history of gypsy lifestyle

8) The reality of options open to Mr Thomas

The European Convention on Human Rights was also cited.

The jury decided that William Thomas should be allowed to stay living in the structures on his land and not be fined for non-compliance with the enforcement notice.

Although a jury court decision is not binding on future court cases, it can be used to back up similar pleadings. Along with the European Court of Human Rights ruling last January (June Buckley Vs UK), which overturned a DoE decision to evict a single parent gypsy from her own land, the latest court cases are more of a series of court precedents slowly but surely re-establishing some of the rights eroded so dramatically by recent legislation.

CAR SALES UP

CAR SALES for the prime selling month of August have been calculated at around 455,000 this year. Due to the issuing of the new registration plates for the year, August is a good indicator for the car industry. The media reported the sales figures as the cause of "gloom" for the industry because it was only 0.5% higher than last year.

PICKAXE MINISTER FINED

ALLAN STEWART, the former Scottish Office minister who threatened road protesters at the M77, in Newton Mearns, Glasgow, with a pickaxe, was fined £200 for breach of the peace at Paisley Magistrate's Court in September.

Stewart's son, Gareth, was also found guilty of carrying an illegal air pistol. His sentence has been deferred for a year.

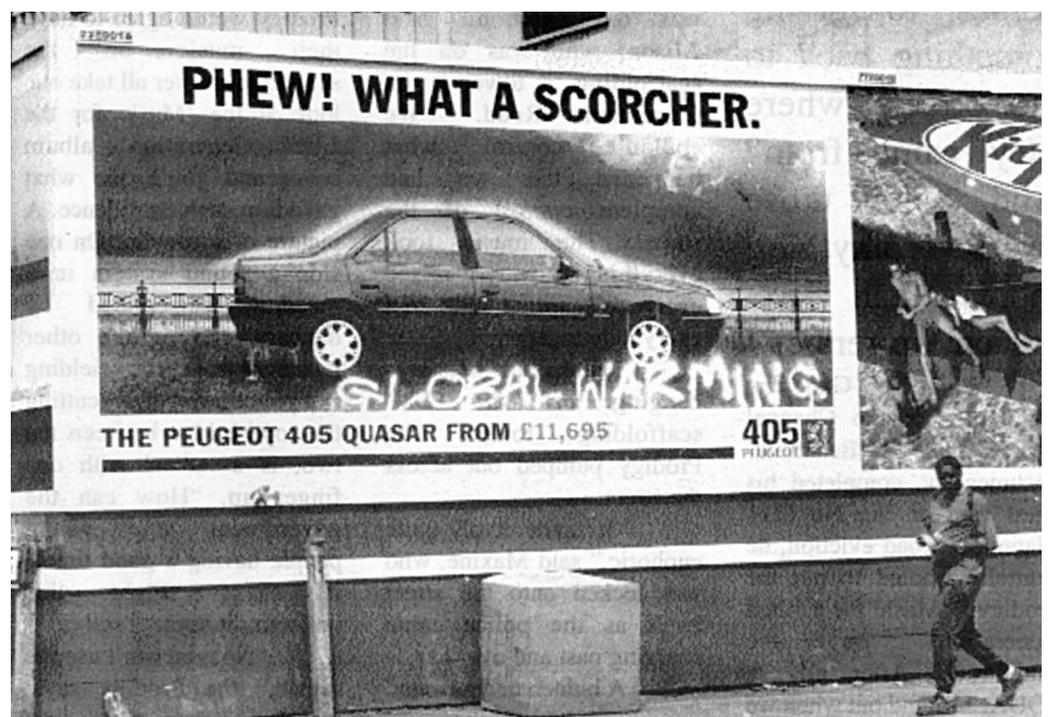
GREEN ANARCHIST TARGETED

BOOKSHOPS were raided and several journalists arrested in July in what is believed to have been an attempt to close down the Green Anarchist underground magazine.

Hampshire police raided bookshops in Manchester and Oxford confiscating copies of the magazine, and arrested members of the group on charges of conspiracy to commit arson. According to Hampshire police the raids were part of a "long ongoing enquiry" by a special task force into animal rights activists. "We believe there are people who are inciting others to commit criminal damage and arson," a police spokesman said.

ANIMAL RIGHTS PROTESTORS ARRESTED

NINETY animal rights protestors were arrested during a demonstration to mark the 100th day of action against live animal exports through Dover in September. Several hundred protestors blocked the main route into Dover by sitting in the road.



Black Moon Sound System - Fall Guys for the Mother

One of the few groups to be charged under the Criminal Justice Act after the attempted Mother festival, was the Black Moon Sound System from Derby.

Police failed to issue warnings to Bruno, owner of the sound system, and yet he was still arrested along with two other of his colleagues.

Most charges arising out of the Mother debacle are for 'conspiracy to cause a public nuisance' under the Criminal Law Act 1977. This includes eight members of United Systems including Debbie Staunton who, along with Michele and Andy from

Advance Party, were raided by Hampshire Police on the day the Mother was due to take place.

However, three members of the Black Moon posse are being charged under CJA section 61. They have also had £9,000 worth of sound equipment confiscated by Northamptonshire Police, £3,000 of which was borrowed for the event.

Black Moon have been in operation for about a year, putting on free parties in the Derby area. They were the only sound system to have set up at the Wheldon/Corby site and had done nothing more than tested the speakers with music at "car-stereo level". No disturbance had been caused.

"I just get a buzz of people enjoying themselves," says Bruno on his reasons for running the sound system.

"We were told there

were going to be 18 sound systems turning up in the night. In the end there was just a couple and we were the only ones set up," said Bruno. "The police were all round turning people back. If we'd known there were posters all round Corby advertising where it was, we wouldn't have shown up."

"We were sitting ducks," agrees Dan, one of the Black Moon posse charged with the section 61 offence.

The origin of the posters and stickers put up all over Corby with people's telephone numbers on it is a mystery, as is the identification of the person who posted the site location on the Internet and the origin of maps of the site circulating well before the event. "I'd love to know," says Debbie Staunton from United Systems.

And she's not the only one. Nobody SQUALL spoke

to seem to know who was responsible for such a naked broadcast of the site location. The maps were sent out by post prior to the event with 'Please destroy - this is conspiratorial information' written on them; as if such a warning made any difference once the postal system had been used and photocopies were flying about. Was it naivety or a conspiratorial attempt to flush out the party people? Either way, some hard lessons have had to be learnt about how to organise an event for which people risk their equipment and their liberty to attend.

The police were undoubtedly given an 'intelligence gift' with the overt way the location for the Mother was brandished about. However, there are indications that the Mother Festival, which had been regularly talked about and even referenced in the Guardian, was an event the

authorities were determined not to let happen.

"The police seem to be half hearted in the way that they're dealing with us," says Debbie Staunton. "They're telling me in interviews that they'd rather not be bothered with this sort of thing but that they've been told to. To me it suggests the whole thing is politically motivated."

Black Moon's solicitor - the omnipresent warrior for civil rights, Peter Silver - thinks that with no previous record, Black Moon may well escape conviction and get their sound system back. Even if they don't, however, there is a determination not to stop.

"We have had some offers to do benefits for us, so even if they take our sound system from us then we're looking to be back on the road after winter," affirms Dan.

Prodigy Jilt the Jilted

We've heard the lyrics about freedom and dissent? But where are the musicians when it comes to giving something back to the streets where they came from? And were those lyrics anything more than expedient lip service?

When Neil Goodwin, co-director of the Channel Four 'Battle of the Beanfield' documentary, completed his latest film on the No M11 Claremont Road eviction, he naturally wanted to put the Prodigy's 'Music for a Jilted Generation' on the soundtrack. After all, as SQUALL found out when we

interviewed the activists that resisted the eviction (SQUALL 9), the Prodigy's music had given everyone the strength to resist the potential hysteria induced by the arrival of over 700 police.

"It made it seem like it was our eviction," said Alison, who was on the scaffolding tower on Claremont Road. "We couldn't control what happened but we had complete control of the sound. The music took everything over, raised everyone's spirits and kept everybody together."

Thanks to speakers hanging off the 100' scaffolding tower, the Prodigy pumped out across the street.

"It made it all quite euphoric," said Maxine, who was locked onto the street itself as the police came charging past and over her.

A hidden underground

electricity supply system thwarted police attempts to cut the power to the music system and it continued for many hours.

So Neil Goodwin thought it would be no problem to ensure that The Prodigy would agree to have their music on the soundtrack. After all take one look at the 'Music for the Jilted Generation' album cover and you'll see what gave him such confidence. A picture of a canyon. On one side a sound system in a meadow surrounded by dancers, and on the other hoards of truncheon-wielding riot police. And there, cutting the rope bridge between the two, is a radical with one finger up. "How can the government stop young people having a good time," it says. "Fight this bollocks," it says.

"No, you can't use the music," the Prodigy says.

Pardon? "You can't use the Prodigy's music."

According to Stuart Bishop, assistant manager of the Prodigy, the band have moved on since their 'Music for a Jilted Generation' album and no longer wished to be associated with political issues. As such they are not prepared to allow their music to be used on the soundtrack to film, despite the fact that you can hear their music in the background on the original footage.

Incredulous, Neil Goodwin then rang up a music journalist, Nick Jones who in turn contacted the Prodigy's songwriter Liam Howlett. And from the horses mouth, the same story. The Prodigy no longer align themselves with any political movement - it was just a phase they were going through.

Neil Goodwin says that he now has no intention

of removing the music from the film: "If they want to sue us then they'll have to get in line behind the likes of the DoT, who are looking for £26 million already. We don't expect the Prodigy to become the Mother Theresa of pop but we don't take kindly to bands that sell number one albums on the back of social upheaval and then dismiss the harsh realities like some outmoded marketing ploy."

Neil Goodwin's film is called 'Life in the Fast Lane' and was completed with the financial assistance of Greenpeace. Details on how to acquire a copy of the video can be obtained by sending an SAE to Neil Goodwin, Life in the Fast Lane, 56A, Crampton Street, London SE17.

Social Security to Hire Private Debt Collectors

Private debt collectors are to be introduced by the Department of Social Security to collect money owed to them, according to a Benefits Agency document leaked in September.

The pilot study for the scheme begins next spring and will involve two private debt collecting companies

who will each be paid a tenner for every debt they collect. The debts referred to are overpayments of benefit. The pilot study will involve 7,500 cases, of which 4,400 will be overpaid income support, 900 will be overpaid child benefit and 2,200 cases social fund loan recovery.

Sally Witcher of Child Poverty Action Group said: "It cannot be right that people who are overpaid through the department's inefficiency then find debt collectors

turning up on their doorsteps."

The leaked document, marked "restricted", refers to the "political sensitivity" of the new measures, saying a "gauge of the public perception of private sector involvement" had to be made. Presumably so those perceptions can be remoulded with a bit of spin-doctoring, paving the way for the measures to be introduced nationwide.

National Lottery Making Poor People Poorer

A report in the British Medical Journal published in July suggests the national lottery is likely to make the poor poorer.

Using evidence based on a lottery system in operation in the United States, the article says that it is mostly poor people who buy lottery tickets in the hope of improving their financial status. A US study has shown

that lottery sales increase with rising unemployment and that, since the National Lottery started in Britain, there has been a 17% increase in calls to Gamblers Anonymous, 20% of which are related to the lottery.

The British public now spends more money on the lottery than it does on bread or books. The effect of this, says the article, is that the money levied by the lottery is mainly at the expense of those that can

least afford it.

Another study, conducted by the London School of Hygiene, also showed that a tiny reduction in the income of a poor person can have a big effect on how many nutrients they eat. The article concludes: "Anything that makes poor people in Britain even poorer, especially if they do not derive benefits in kind, becomes an important public health issue."

ANIMAL RIGHT'S GROUPS NEW "TERRORIST" THREAT

ANIMAL rights groups are among new targets for Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch following a reduction in terrorist activity due to the IRA ceasefire.

Officers from the branch are exploring three new areas of potential terrorism: "millenarium" apocalyptic groups; international threats from Kurds, Turks, Serbs, Bosnians and Croats; and animal rights groups. Talks have also been taking place between the security services and the Association of Chief Police Officers with a view to incorporating MI5 officers into police work.

CONTAMINATED VEGETABLES

VEGETABLES grown near Aldermaston's Atomic Weapons Establishment and Sellafield contain up to seven times more radiation than normal, according to the Ministry for Agriculture Fisheries and Food. But according to Dr John Cooper, of the National Radiological Protection Board: "The level of radiation is very low."

WOAD IS ME

AN ECO-FRIENDLY blue dye, first used by ancient Britons to scare the Romans, is currently undergoing tests to see if it is a feasible crop for farmers. Woad, a cabbage like plant, could be used to replace the 80,000 tonnes of toxic dye used worldwide each year for jeans.

Long Live the King of Trees

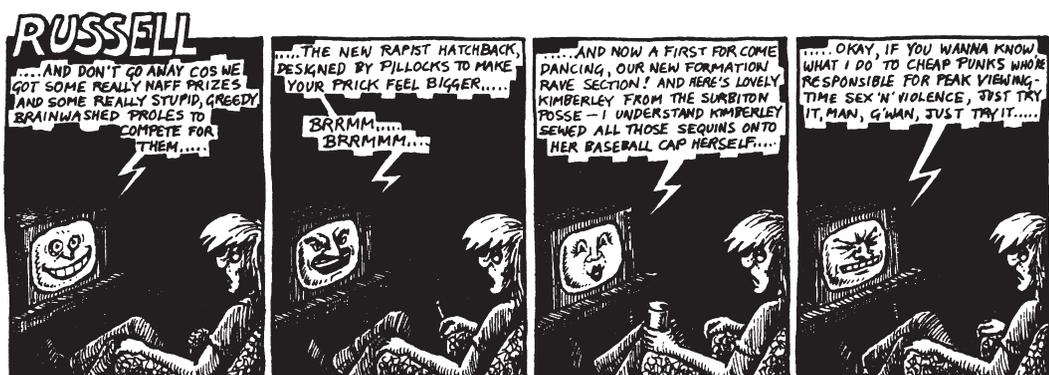
The tree-dwellers of Windsor Great Park were celebrating in true style in mid October, after successfully preventing the death of 20 ancient oak trees.

The Duke of Edinburgh intended the trees to be cut down because they were too untidy for his ornamental pathway.

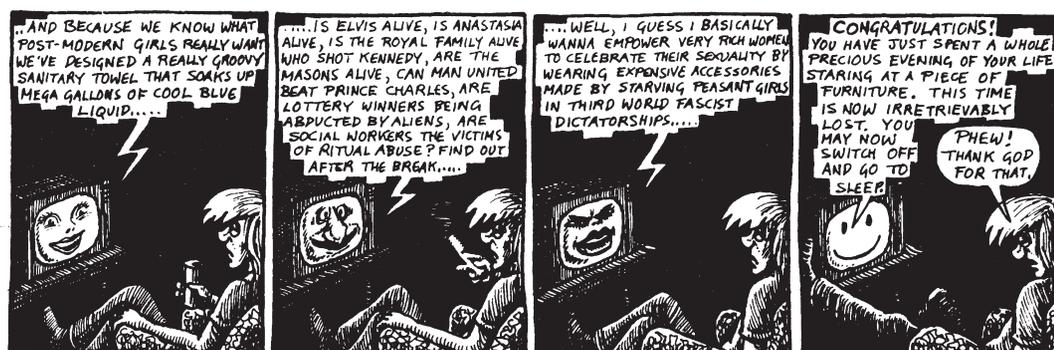
While national media ran headlines like "Prince Philip spares surviving Windsor Oaks" (D. Telegraph 10/10/95) and cited local authority and

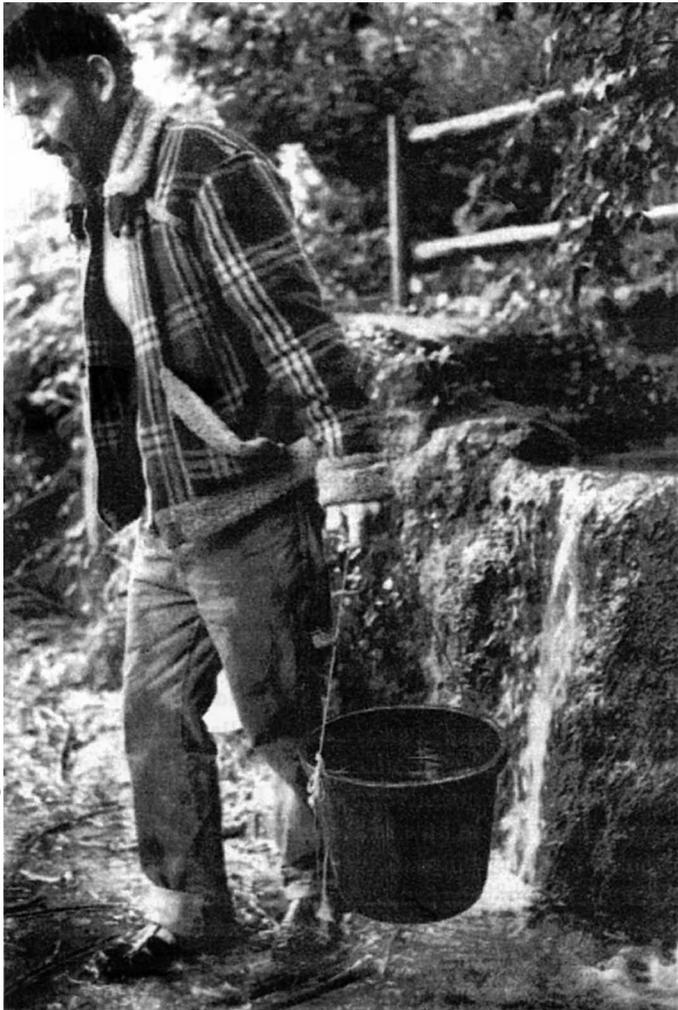
conservation group disapproval as the reason why they were saved, there was no doubt that the environmental activists who built tree-houses in the Oaks and lived in them, were the true saviours. They made sure the chain saws were stopped in time to ensure there were any trees left to save.

The tree-houses are now to be dismantled by activists and taken to the Newbury By-pass protest which is hotting up as both the Department of Transport and the dodgy handshake brigade seem determined to make sure the road goes ahead.



BY PETE LOVEDAY





Nick Cobbing

Water Profits and Prices Go Up

City forecasters predict that the privatised water companies are heading for a record profit of £2 billion this year.

The predictions, published in the monthly Estimates Directory, issued by Edinburgh Financial Publishing, show that £658 million profits were made in 1989/90, rising to £1.74 billion in 1994/95 and likely to be up to £2 billion by the end of the financial year in

April 1996.

This rapid growth in profits has been brought about partly by an average 77 per cent increase in water prices, as well as a reduction of investment in the service. South West Water, which has the highest water rates in the country, cut its investment by 41 per cent last year. Since privatisation, investment in the service has amounted to only £13.5 billion, £9.5 billion short of the target envisaged by Ofwat, the government body set up to regulate the industry.

More Red faces at Group 4

Group 4 Security, notorious for both losing prisoners placed under their guard and bashing road protesters, have suffered yet more embarrassment. This time they have lost a ship.

The Panamanian registered 'Carla' was being guarded by Group 4 security

officers in southern Cyprus, after being impounded by an admiralty court. Detectives who launched an air and sea search suspect that a gang nicked the ship and may have taken it to Lebanon or Egypt. Since 1992, Group 4 have lost eight prisoners and had one die in its custody. Now they've lost a ship. "It was not our fault," said a Group 4 spokesman. Presumably, it just slipped out of their port.

Arms Fair Protest

Twenty six people were arrested for aggravated trespass (CJA Section 68) at a demonstration against the arms trade in early September.

Around 100 people marched through Aldershot town centre on their way to the Royal Navy & British Army Equipment Exhibition. The arrests were made as the demonstration reached the perimeter fence. Amongst those arrested was Chris Cole, a member of the Christian-inspired 'Swords

into Ploughshares' group and the man who fights fighter planes with hammers (See SQUALL 10 interview in prison).

Twenty five of those arrested were later released without charge although one woman, Juliet McBride, is to be charged with aggravated trespass with intent to disrupt the arms fair, after obtaining entry to the site for 30 seconds. Ironically, she was bailed under condition that she did not go within three miles of the arms fair, although the court house was in fact within the exclusion zone. The police consequently had to give her a special

escort to and from the court room.

The demonstration was co-ordinated by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. They plan to hold a mass lobby of Parliament for an embargo on arms sales to Indonesia on December 7.

According to a BAe diary leaked out from the arms fair, countries with appalling human rights records invited to attend by the British Government include both Chinese and Indonesian Army military hardware purchasers. Contact CAAT: 0171 281 0297.

Mammonchester United FC

Manchester United's recently published accounts for the last financial year show that their sales of merchandising soared 65 per cent in just one year, rising from £14.2m to £23.5m.

Since being floated on the stock market in 1991, Manchester United's share price has tripled with recent sharp increases having seen a quadrupling of the share

price between 1993 and the end of the financial year in April 1995. Manchester United have three football kits, one of which has a design change every year fuelling cynicism that the merchandising department are doing all they can to milk the market of team devotion. Entrance prices have risen 13 per cent since the end of last year, accompanying a 10 per cent increase in profits from gate receipts over the last financial year.

According to Andy Walsh, secretary of the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association: "It's a scandal. They promised us there was

going to be a freeze on prices for two years. They're pricing the ordinary fan out of the market." According to the vice-chairman of the Association, Johnny Flacks: "In the past five years there's been a 300 per cent increase in prices."

In a remarkable piece of instant Karma, Mammonchester United were dumped out of the League Cup by York City on the day the accounts were published.

However, put another way, the walking adverts for Sharp Electronics were beaten in the Coca-Cola cup by the walking adverts for Portacabin. Hurrah! Hurrah!

More Bull than Stake

Proof that embarrassment gets things done the best came when Burger King were forced into making sure their little scam to defraud workers of money was knocked on the head.

A media outcry resulted from the discovery that a student had received just £1, after working a five

hour shift. The scam was that management got the employee to clock off every time the restaurant wasn't busy, meaning that the employee never managed to clock up hours relevant to how much time they had actually spent in the burger bar. A spokesman for the company, owned by Grand Metropolitan, said that a policy "allowing" employees to clock off when there were only a few

customers had been "misinterpreted".

The spokesman went on to say: "All managers have been instructed that the practice is a dismissable offence [it is now!]. The fair and respectful treatment of all Burger King staff is, and will continue to be, a major priority." Always was, always is, always will be? - we think not.

Housing Charity to Gamble on Money Market

A housing association is considering using the high risk derivatives market to fund its debts.

London based Circle 33, which has £500 million worth of property and is responsible for 9,000 homes, is currently in the process of borrowing £40 million from the City.

Derivatives are a high risk money marketing gamble which lost

Hammersmith and Fulham council £100 million in 1991.

Margaret Hodge, the Labour MP who chairs Circle 33 and once described aggrieved tenants as "nobodies", said she had not fully studied the report which was presented to the management committee.

"I'm not a financial expert," she said. "But others are."

Tories in the Red

The Conservative Party is still £15 million in debt despite Bournemouth builder John Jackson leaving the party over £1 million in his will last year.

The debt is £2 million less than last year but the Tories still owe the Royal Bank of Scotland more than £11 million. Michael Trend, deputy

Tory chairman, concedes that he will have to "negotiate" how much they will be allowed to spend in the next general election.

The Labour Party, by contrast, have a £4 million nest egg and will fight the election with a financial advantage for the first time. It seems that New Labour are already beating the Tories at their own game.

Unemployment Benefit Doled out at Local Rates

Regional rates of unemployment benefit, meaning that claimants in Newcastle would receive less than those in London, are being considered by Social Security secretary Peter Lilley.

It is thought that the plan, which would see responsibility to pay the benefit devolved to town halls, is a way of decentralising the Welfare State.

Benefits would be paid at local rates to reflect the different costs of living in different areas. The cost of living in London, for example, is 17 per cent higher than the national average, while Newcastle is 12 per cent lower.

Social justice groups say that regionalisation will lead to local authority competition for the lowest levels of benefit. The reasoning behind this fear is that by setting a low level the work force will be prepared to work for lower wages thus attracting business into the area.

Jobs for the Boyds

Sir Thomas Boyd-Carpenter, a lieutenant general in the armed forces with no experience of benefit issues, took charge of the government's social security advisory body on September 1.

The body must be consulted by the government on any social security change. In the past it has been deeply critical of the government's policy, warning, for example, that cuts in housing benefit would risk damaging the fabric of the nation.

Sir Thomas, son of a Tory grandee, will be paid £250 a day and work one day a week. His previous experience includes being chief of staff with the British Army on the Rhine, deputy chief of staff for programmes and personal at the MOD and writing the best selling *Conventional Deterrence* into the 1990s.

But not to worry. He says he is "committed to acquiring quickly" the necessary expertise for his new job. It is thought that Social Security secretary Peter Lilley wants to neutralise the previously independent body.

LABOUR TRIED TO SUPPRESS DRUG DEBATE

A COMMONS DEBATE on the medical uses of cannabis was almost suppressed by the Labour Party in July because they wanted to attack the Liberal Democrat candidate in the Littleborough and Saddleworth byelection by accusing him of supporting "the legislation of soft drugs".

Jack Straw, the shadow home secretary, was among a number of front bench Labour MPs who put pressure on Paul Flynn, the Labour MP for Newport West, to drop the debate he had tabled.

FACT: One in five Britons uses illegal drugs. Less than one per cent use hard drugs.

ALL PARTY GROUP LOOKS FOR CHANGES IN DRUG LAWS.

AN ALL PARTY group has been established to liberalise drug laws. With the backing of at least 20 Labour MPs and three Conservatives, the All Party Parliamentary Drugs Reform Group will press for a Royal Commission to investigate changes in the law, as well as pushing for a commons debate on the issue.

MINIMUM MINIMUM WAGE FOR THE YOUNG

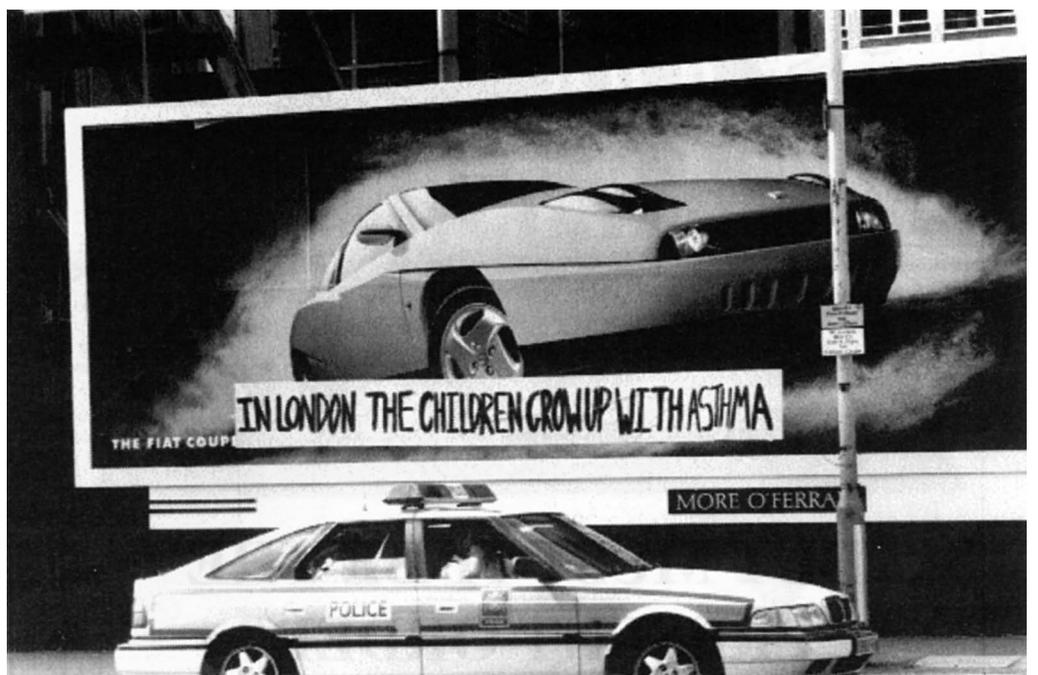
A SEPARATE minimum wage for the young will be set below the adult rate if the Labour Party comes to power, Harriet Harman, the party's Employment spokeswoman, has said. "The Labour Party is determined to give young people protection, but the minimum wage will be set to take into account they have less experience and may be involved in training," she said.

FAREWELL TO WELFARE

ABOLISHING the single parent benefit allowance of £6.30 a week for new claimants is one of the measures planned by the Tory party to cut welfare and relaunch itself for the next election. John Major's contribution to "Building a Forward looking Policy Agenda" is to stop state benefits for unemployment, sickness and care in old age and leave provision to private insurance.

BENEFIT DEPENDENCY RISES

ONE IN FOUR families now receive a major, means-tested benefit according to figures released by the Department of Social Security. The figure represents a rise of 25 per cent since the Conservatives gained power in 1979. The figures also show that 27 per cent of the population now live in families which depend on means-tested social security, a rise of 60 per cent since 1979.



Local Authorities Against ID Cards.....except true blue Wandsworth

The three main representative bodies of local authorities have spoken out against the introduction of identity cards of any kind.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities, Association of District Councils and the Association of County Councils have said in a joint statement that ID cards "would be detrimental to the rights of individual citizens".

In their response to Michael Howard's Green

Paper on the subject, they say: "Giving the police powers to stop people and ask them to prove their identity is a major intrusion on the rights of the citizen and is bound to heighten tension between the police and certain sections of the community particularly the young and ethnic minorities."

The response goes on to say that a voluntary ID card scheme would lead "to substantial social pressure to carry a card. In effect, a voluntary scheme would lead to a de facto compulsory one very quickly".

Wandsworth Council, however, continues its

long waged fight to erode social housing. The central London borough council have put forward controversial new proposals obliging council tenants to re-apply for a lease every seven years and to carry identity cards.

Wandsworth have said the scheme is designed to "ensure council homes go to those who need them, not those who use the system best". As a borough that has sold over half its housing stock, the Council's misdirected finger appears to point under false pretence.

Westminster Council Scandal Grows

The investigation into gerrymandering "wilful misconduct" and "the export of homeless people out of the Borough" by Westminster City Council, may be concluded by the end of this year.

The figure, representing the cost to the population of Westminster of the dodgy dealings and likely to be surcharged to Damn Shirley Porter and five other councillors, has been revised by district auditor John Magill. In his provisional

report published in January 1994, he stated that the money that councillors spent on "socially engineering" a Conservative vote was £21.255 million. This figure has been revised to £29.949 million following the discovery of more evidence that behind-the-scenes manoeuvring went on all the way up to 1994. If found guilty by the district auditor, as seems likely given his overt provisional report (see SQUALL 8), Porter and her minions will have to pay the whole lot back.

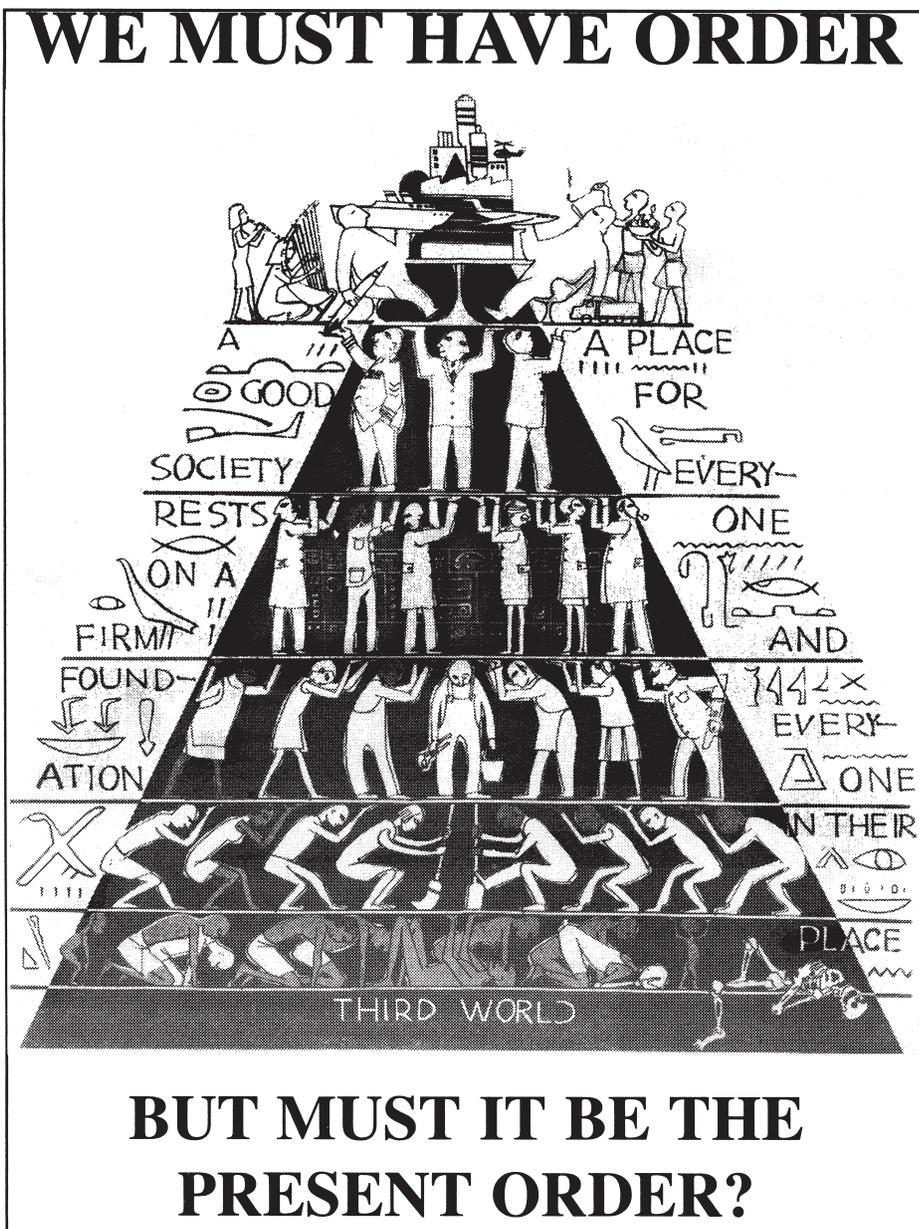
Britain Gets Fatter

A suppressed report conducted by the Government's Nutrition and Physical Activity Task Force predicts an explosion in obesity in the UK.

According to senior civil service sources quoted in national newspapers: "The food lobby have gone berserk" over the implications of the report. The report blames a high fat, high salt, high sugar, low fibre diet as one of the major factors involved, saying there is a consequent increase in male susceptibility to cancer of the colon, rectum and prostate, and female susceptibility to cancer of the

breast, uterus and cervix. Unnamed but quoted Whitehall sources have said that Government recommendations on diet published in the Health of the Nation white paper, have been watered down by the Department of Health "to soothe the fury of the food industry".

The dominance of the car as a lazy form of transport is also blamed for the dramatic increases in obesity and once again car industry lobbyists have been implicated in suppressing the information. The official Department of Health line is that the report has not been suppressed, "it just hasn't been printed yet".



Rise in Prison Sentences for Fine Defaulters

The number of people imprisoned for fine default has gone up over a third since 1990, according to a report published by the Penal Affairs Consortium in July.

The increase for male

defaulters between 1990 and 1994 was 35 per cent (from 15,814 to 21,303) and for female defaulters it was 68 per cent (from 842 to 1,420). The report also says that since 1990, there has been a seven fold increase in the number of people jailed for not paying poll tax or rates.

Legal Aid Cuts Against Human Rights

Plans to cut legal aid risk breaking European human rights laws, the human rights pressure group Liberty have said.

The government plans to introduce regional cash limits on the amount of legal aid a person can receive; and legal aid would only be available to "fund-holding" solicitors working on the same principles as

doctors who control their own budgets.

Liberty say that the plans break both the European convention on human rights and the United Nations' international covenant on political and civil rights. Both agreements say that free legal help should be given to those who cannot afford it in the interests of justice.

Secrets of the Lobbying Process

The effectiveness of recommendations made by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life was clearly shown by a lobbying seminar given by a senior professional lobbyist in October.

A journalist from the Independent newspaper, managed to gain entry to a secret seminar given by Michael Burrell, managing director of top professional lobbyist's Westminster Strategy. The advice given at the seminar was that lobbyists should encourage friendly MPs to take certain standpoints in the House of Commons to ensure they

gained places on powerful standing committees and then once in place, could effect legislation according to the wishes of lobbyists clients. Burrell said the idea was "to get your supporters to speak but not support you. Then they might get on to the standing committee. It's a bit machiavellian." The use of the word "supporters", acknowledges the fact that MPs are voluntarily manipulated by professional lobby groups.

Westminster Strategies' clients include the National Westminster Bank and the Corporation of London. Present at the seminar were representatives of British Aerospace and Cable and Wireless.

Commoners reject cash for land

One hundred and twenty commoners have turned down a £1 million cash offer and are resisting a plan to turn 150 acres of their land into an industrial estate.

The 2,000 acre common, near Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan, has been used for generations by commoners to graze livestock. Ogwr Borough Council have earmarked the site, just off the M4, for

industrial use which, they say, will create 1,000 jobs.

Gwyn Williams, the fourth generation of a farming family to graze cattle on the land, said: "There have been many times when they have tried to take the valley from us. We won't give up without a fight."

The "many times" included winning a High Court battle to prevent a golf course being built and preventing a Japanese company building a factory in the 1980s.

Michael Howard back in Court

One of Britain's top criminal delinquents is to be taken to court again, this time by the National Association of Probation Officers.

Michael Howard will appear in the dock (by proxy no doubt) to answer for his decision to change the way probation officers are

selected. He wants to do away with the necessity for a social work diploma and introduce the recruitment of people who will "learn on the job". As Baroness Blatch, the Home Office Minister, has said, it will allow more people with military or uniformed backgrounds to apply for the job. The move is widely known to be an attempt to shift the probation

service over to one of more discipline and punishment, rather than one which attempts to address the social and psychological rehabilitation of offenders. The National Association of Probation Officers are seeking a judicial review of Howard's intention and say they will not co-operate with his proposals.

Single Parent Benefit to Go

You can be sure that when John Major says that "[benefit] provision must be designed to help people in the most difficult and stressful circumstances in our society" that he's about to cut welfare.

And wait for it.....
"We must look forward to encouraging an increasing element of self provision".

A cabinet meeting taking place in mid-September is thought to have paid most of its attention to how to go about cutting down the £73 billion social security bill. Not by discussing better provision for employment opportunities of course, but by "our determination to deliver effective and well-managed public services - intensifying our efforts to limit waste and prune unnecessary expenditure as we pursue our continuing objectives of lower taxes."

Not hard to translate John Major's words - slash welfare so that tax cuts can be offered as bait to voters in the run up to the next election. One of these cuts is thought to be the complete removal of the miserly £6.50 average, currently paid in single parent child benefit. This manoeuvre is also designed as a financial disincentive for woman with low incomes not to have a child out of stable wedlock.

Shell's new PR team get to work

After the Brent Spar debacle and a 50 per cent drop of sales in Germany, Shell dismissed their PR department and hired in some new ones.

What was needed was a rehabilitation of their reputation amongst the petrol

punters. Evidently they got to work immediately and so it was that we had a nationally run story about all the potty suggestions they've had about what to do with the redundant platform.

Jolly old Shell chuckling to the thought of turning it into a casino or a museum. They were even offered "a no questions asked

disposal" if they put £50 million in a Swiss bank account. "Ho Ho Ho, what jolly fun we have here at Shell," said Shell's Corporate Affairs director in not so many words. All good publicity of course, appearing as it did in every national newspaper. Cocktails and lines of coke all round one assumes.



BNFL DOING ITS MEDIA HOMEWORK

BRITISH NUCLEAR FUELS LTD paid a London-based media-monitoring company to provide them with all the news footage surrounding Greenpeace's work in highlighting the French nuclear tests in the South Pacific. Their intent? To examine Greenpeace's tactics and to gauge public opinion in order to learn how to counter both.

CARS IN THE DOCK - FIRST ROUND VICTORY

FAMILIES of several asthmatic children have won the first round in their court battle designed to get Greenwich Council to close certain high pollution roads. The judge granted them leave to bring a judicial review against the local authority for their refusal to budge on the matter. The anti-car campaigners, Reclaim the Streets, received much local support when they recently closed the main High Street in Greenwich in their now legendary 'can't-wait-for-the-courts-to-recognise-what's-good-for-us' stylee. The judicial review case will be heard before Christmas.

MICHAEL HOWARD VS LORD CHIEF JUSTICE

NO SOONER had Michael Howard spat out his party conference rhetoric on stricter prison sentences, than the Lord Chief Justice issued a statement criticising the Home Secretary's proposals. In what is a highly unusual public expression of opposition, Lord Taylor said that Howard's aired intentions would be "inconsistent with doing justice according to the circumstances of each case". His statement was issued just two hours after Michael Howard's conference speech and according to Lord Denning, the Master of the Rolls, this could be the start of "a contest between Parliament and the courts."

NEGATIVE EQUITY INCREASES

THE NUMBER of households with negative equity increased by 90,000 in the last quarter of the last financial year according to the Woolwich Building Society. The figure now stands at 1.12 million, although City stockbrokers predict it could be up to 1.5 million in six months time.

NOBEL PRIZE FOR OZONE LAYER SCIENTISTS

THE 1995 NOBEL PRIZE for Chemistry was awarded to two scientists responsible for research which has highlighted the deterioration of the Earth's high level Ozone layer. The ozone layer of course protects us all from the harmful rays of the sun, but holes are appearing in it due to pollution. Levels of skin cancer related to a higher exposure to ultraviolet have been recorded all over the world.

GUILTY SILENCE

GREATER NUMBERS of innocent people are likely to be convicted following the abolition of the unconditional right to silence most lawyers questioned in a poll believe.

The poll carried, out by The Lawyer magazine, questioned 204 lawyers, 57 per cent of whom thought the law change, which occurred in April, was likely to result in more miscarriages of justice.

PERKS OF PARLIAMENT

THE GOVERNMENT spends £100 million pounds each year on travel expenses for MPs and civil servants with a maximum 72.2p a mile given out to MPs who have big engined vehicles. The Department of Defence, the only department to provide an allowance for bicycle use pays out £600. That's one pukka bicycle a year.

Legal Defence

Seventeen people were arrested at the end of the Reclaim the Street's Party in Upper Street, Islington, in July, when riot police moved in to clear a residue of 150 protesters.

According to the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group, who took responsibility for legal back up on the day, the police action was unnecessary and heavy handed. One demonstrator needed hospital treatment after being hit with a truncheon and two more were knocked unconscious by the police.

The LDMG say that "although the actions of the riot police were totally out of control throughout the whole episode, we feel a number of incidents deserve special attention:

"One particular officer in full riot gear was seen on at least three occasions using his clenched fist to punch demonstrators in the head and face - one of whom was knocked unconscious.

"An articulated lorry was moving through the crowd and the police were violently pushing people past it causing a number of them to lose balance. It was only luck that somebody did not fall under the wheels of this vehicle.

"When one demonstrator was knocked unconscious legal observers and protesters tried to see if he was alright, but were viciously pushed and beaten by police."

The LDMG are asking for money to finance the "bust fund" in defence of those arrested, and that the incidents are publicised as widely as possible through "articles, word of mouth, posters, internet etc" and help in "loads of other ways" as they are only a small group with limited resources.

Enquiries, donations to LDMG, who did a sterling job on the day, should be sent to: LDMG, c/o BM Box Haven, London WC1N 3XX. See RTS article on Page 58.

Cyclists win the Plottery

A National cycle network covering Britain and Northern Ireland is to be created thanks to a £42.5 million cash handout from the National Plottery.

Sustrans, the voluntary organisation who applied for the lolly, expect to complete the 6,500 mile network by 2005.

Half the network,

which will stretch from Inverness to Dover, will consist of cycle pathways on disused railways, canal tow paths and bridleways. The rest will use existing roads, mainly minor ones.

The grant is seen by cycling groups as acceptance of the bicycle as a viable form of transport.

David Collins, chairman of Sustrans, said: "This is a great day for cycling. The very existence of the network will lead to the creation of thousands of

miles of other routes which will be linked into the network."

Sustrans was started by an engineer called John Grimshaw in 1980. It's volunteers have created over 300 miles of dedicated cycle paths, and 300 miles of cycle routes on existing roads, on a meagre income.

Previous Plottery handouts have gone to the Royal National Opera House and Churchill's war time paperwork.

Pedal for the Planet delayed after accident

Jason Lewis, one of two intrepid nutters cycling around the world, has broken both legs in an unfortunate accident on an American highway.

Jason completed a crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in a pedal boat with his partner Steve Smith earlier this year (see the

'Pedalling for the Planet' feature SQUALL 9).

After landing in Florida, the couple decided to try out separate routes, with Steve heading for Alaska to cross the Baring Straits by canoe and Jason roller-blading across the US heading for San Francisco.

Unfortunately, a motorist who was mistakenly driving on the hard shoulder

of the highway hit him from behind.

Jason is back in the UK for a recovery period and then intends to fly back and complete the roller-blading journey to San Francisco.

From there he plans to pedal solo across the Pacific Ocean to Hong Kong. We kid you not.



Actors of Parliament

Another member of the Criminal Justice Act Standing Committee was Dr Liam Fox (Con MP Woodspring). At the time, he was Parliamentary Private Secretary to none other than Michael Howard.

As readers of last issue's SQUALL articles on travellers will remember, Fox has also testified against travellers on public inquiries into site permission in the Avon area. SQUALL has recently received a letter written by him in 1992.

As an exposure of Government intent we have reprinted it below, particularly in the light of the fact that 'Field Marshal' David McLean (Home Office Minister and loyal Howard sidekick) said the Government has nothing against the "gentlemen of the road my wife reads about in the Sunday Post":

"I am increasingly concerned at the blatant disregard and hostility Avon County Council is showing towards the Green Belt sites in our area. They have shown that they put the interest of minorities before the interests of the tax paying majority.

In the run up to their abolition, the County Council [due to become a unity authority] seemed determined to create as much havoc as possible in Conservative-controlled areas. I have come to expect no

less.

I have pressed and will continue to press the Department of the Environment to minimise the effect Avon's policies will have.

Ultimately, however, the problems stem from the 1968 Caravans Act. This piece of Socialist legislation must be completely abolished.

In order to test Parliamentary opinion, I sponsored a Ten Minute Rule Bill earlier this month, which proposes scrapping the duty to designate sites and privatise those now in operation. Those who want what they call an 'alternative lifestyle' must be made to pay for it. It is time we stopped subsidising those who want all the benefit of our society without contribution to our society.

I look forward to the scrapping of the 1968 Act, and Avon, soon. You can count on me being in the front line of the attack."

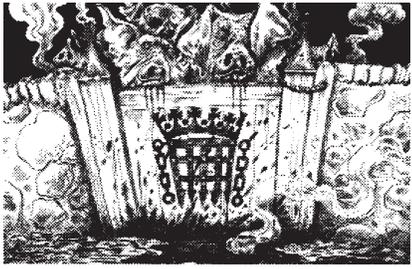
The job of both parliamentary private secretary and government whip is a job where you don't speak. You just whisper, eavesdrop, grass and manipulate. Whilst it is obvious the Government don't want someone who gives away such racist intent as a spokesperson, they are obviously more than happy to have him in the engine room.

In SQUALL issue 6, we commented on the fact that 9 out of the 16 Tories on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act Standing Committee were elected in the 1992 general election.

SQUALL observers sitting on their tongues in the public gallery, noted how these rabid go-getters, with their whole career ladders stretching before them, were out to impress. No surprise then to find that seven of them are now in Government.

James Clappison (Con MP Hertsmere): now Parliamentary Under Secretary - Department of Environment. Cheryl Gillan (Con MP Chesham and Amersham): now Parliamentary Under Secretary - Department for Education and Employment. Roger Evans (Con MP Monmouth) and Oliver Heald (Con MP Hertfordshire North): now Parliamentary Under Secretary - Department of Social Security. Jonathan Evans (Con MP Brecon and Radnor): now Parliamentary Under Secretary - Department of Trade and Industry. Derek Conway (Con MP Shrewsbury and Atcham): now Lord Commissioner - Whips Department.

The prize for political rabies, apparently, is promotion.



Actors of Parliament - *Special*

Shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, is well-known as a seeker of self-publicity. In this Actors of Parliament special, **SQUALL gives it to him.**

Straw's Jaw Jaw

Ally Fogg reviews Jack Straw's Neighbour Witch-hunt proposal's and finds fault-lines in the new Communitarian novelty.

The last refuge of the armchair activist has always been "well there'll be an election in a few years and the other lot might repair the damage." The latest application of this has been "Tony Blair has said he'll bring in a Bill of Rights so he'll have to repeal the Criminal Justice Act, won't he?". One year into Tony Blah's leadership and issues of civil liberties, cultural diversity and social justice are further off the agenda than ever before.

It has been tempting to believe that Blah and his spin-doctors were merely manipulating the media to his own advantage, and protecting himself from the worst maulings of the tabloids. Just as Tories pretended to be deeply caring baby-kissing human beings until they were elected and then metamorphosed into twisted gargoyles after the votes were counted, maybe new Labour were just pretending to be twisted gargoyles and would transform back into socialists, or at least liberals, after the election. Now that 'New Labour' is beginning to flesh out its image with actual policy, we can begin to see just what kind of government we can expect in less than two years time. And as a starting point, Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw's new policy document "A Quiet Life: Tough Action on Criminal Neighbours" makes chilling reading.

Briefly, Straw's plan is to introduce new laws to deal with groups of people, particularly families, who terrorise residential areas by an accumulation of petty offences. A court can then make a 'community safety order' which can set curfews and restrict movement. Failure to obey a restraining order will be a criminal offence which carries a maximum sentence of seven years.

There are two distinct reasons for opposing this idea, firstly that it quite obviously will not achieve its own objectives, and secondly that it flagrantly and dangerously disregards all accepted standards of civil liberties and human rights.

When the plan was first announced it was greeted with patronising contempt from the likes of the Magistrate's Association who said that every magistrate knew a "family from Hell" and it was likely that they would simply not obey the restraining orders and would end up in jail. The Penal Affairs Consortium, representing prison governors and chief probation officers among others, called it 'dangerous and draconian'.

From the civil liberties perspective the

proposals look even worse. At the heart of the issue lies the right to a fair trial. The restraining order can be granted without first-hand testimony but using evidence of a police officer that complaints had been received, without naming the complainant. The idea is that people will not be intimidated out of reporting offences if they will not be named in court, but it also means that complainants cannot be cross-examined by the defence to establish that they are telling the truth. The principal behind the proposal seems to be one of 'no smoke without fire', that is if enough neighbours think that a family are a bunch of villains, then they must be. This is the justice of the witch-hunt, and is dependent on the honesty of police officers. There is also obvious use of guilt by association, people could end up imprisoned for the crimes of their relatives.

The effect will be people facing a seven-year stretch when they have not been convicted to a criminal level of proof. This is not something that appears to concern Jack Straw. The true face of New Labour can be seen not just in the policy, but in the presentation and justification given.

In the style perfected by Michael Howard during the Criminal Justice Bill campaign, Straw defended his policies by evoking stories of vicious criminal behaviour which are already worthy of long prison sentences. While Howard justified persecuting squatters and criminalising travellers by recounting tales of breaking and entering, theft, assault, and drug-dealing, Straw has justified his proposals by, you've guessed it, recounting tales of breaking and entering, theft, assault, and drug-dealing. In both cases the logic is if we can't prove that people are doing nasty things, we'll lock them up for being nasty people. That logic is as fast a track to fascism as any.

Straw was not prepared to settle for emulating the Tories in policy, he even adopted their language, repeatedly asking: "What about the civil rights of the victims of crime." Somebody should explain to Mr Straw that civil rights are what protect the citizen from the state, and that we need those more desperately than any laws to protect us from each other.

If there is any doubt left about how Jack Straw's mind is working, consider this quote, not from the heat of the moment in a live debate, but from a carefully considered column in the Independent on July 6. "Is it not the duty of serious

politicians to take preventive measures for the innocent victims of crimes?" The preventive measures he means are not social policies to tackle poverty and the true causes of anti-social behaviour, but are attempts to shift attention away from the politicians who are responsible and on to the victims of their failed policies. By being so quick to get their retaliation in first, Labour are making a tacit admission that they intend to do nothing about the real problems that millions of people are facing in this country.

At an ideological level, Straw's policy may be significant as the first real product of new Labour's flirtation with the ideas of American communitarians like Amitai Etzioni. Communitarians advocate small, self-defining communities which encourage positive social behaviour through majority opinion, with legal powers of 'local taboos' and eviction from the community. Etzioni himself argues for protective rights against prejudicial or unfair majority rule, although other advocates on the American right are less liberal. In return communitarians reject unfettered consumerism and expansive capitalism. Motivating forces should be responsibility and duty, not self-interest. The main concern many have with the theory is that it provides little scope for civil liberties and it does nothing to address the imbalance of power between sex, class, race etc which already exist in society. As Anna Coote of the Institute for Public Policy Research wrote recently: "Communities, like clubs, are defined as much by exclusion as by inclusion. Where does communitarianism leave the dissenters and non-conformists, the artists and innovators, the misfits and migrants, the oddballs and loners, the recalcitrants and recidivists? Nowhere - unless in a long-stay institution of some kind." The philosophy uses the premise that liberty, equality and justice have already been sufficiently achieved, and now we need to protect what we have achieved from collapse into chaos.

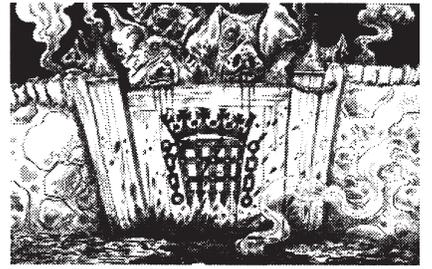
Thus far communitarianism has been causing ripples in the think-tanks of all the British and American political parties, but none have as yet wholeheartedly endorsed the theory. Until they do it remains an interesting theory, which for Labour in particular could provide intellectual stuffing for their new image. The way in which it is applied could hint at the future of mainstream politics into the next millennium, and provide a route out of the ideological vacuum of our times. Equally it could lead us into a new political era of cultural fascism and majority tyranny. In the meantime if anyone else tells you that Blair is a liberal at heart, then remind them of the how he stood back as Shadow Home Secretary and allowed an inept government to introduce a malicious assault on the civil liberties of a generation, and simultaneously allowed the trades unions and the British people to be sold down the river on the H.M.S. Criminal Justice Act. And he hasn't looked back since.

SQ

There's a Parrot in the Dustbin

Seamus Wino on the not so pretty boy in the Shadow

Home Office



Jack Straw is often to be seen thumbing for attention by the side of the bandwagon highway. Not that many bandwagons are stupid enough to stop and wait for him to catch up, but apparently he's not fussy. Any old model-T-rhetoric unfortunate enough to stall at the lights will feel its weary suspension springs groan as Jack jumps in the back. In search of the driving force for this restless interloping we can only look to what certain colleagues in the Labour Party privately refer to as his unquenchable and always just-a-bit-late-for-dinner, hunger for self-publicity. And Jack, they say, is the promiscuous type. Any old dog of a sound-bite will do for a quick romp.

In 1993, as the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act was working its way through the parliamentary digestive system, Shelter organised one of its annual debates on housing policy. Traditionally the politicians invited to speak at the debate are the respective housing spokespersons for the three major political parties. And so it was that Simon Hughes came along on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, whilst Sir George Young - the then Minister of Housing - came on behalf of the Government. But where was John Battle, the then Shadow Housing Minister and street level defender of homeless people? Relegated to the audience is the answer. For although he was lined up to appear at the conference, he was ousted at the last minute none other than Jack Straw, who at the time was masquerading as Shadow Environment Secretary.

There was visible dissatisfaction amongst the housing and homelessness professionals gathered at the debate, who despite having little time for the Government's homelessness policy (or lack thereof), appeared to have even less time for Jack Straw's social abstractions, devoid as it was of either interest or policy statement. Towards the end of the debate, the panel was asked what they thought of squatting and homelessness. Of all the replies, including Sir George Young's, none was more hysterically stereotypical than that given by Straw:

"I am afraid that squatters get very little sympathy from me. I applaud local authorities which are dealing effectively with squatting because it's a way in which people queue jump."

There are 868,000 empty homes in Britain and only around 15,000 squats. Homeless people making use of run-down unlettable properties? Jumping the queue? The Government alone has far more empty departmental housing stock than all the squatted properties in the UK. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities that represents the local authorities Jack Straw was referring to, said at the time: "The most effective and permanent solution to tackling squatting is to tackle its cause - the lack of affordable housing."

The word "causes" should have triggered some Labour Party law and order sound-bite button but alas Jack wasn't there with that one.

Carol Grant, Director of Communications with Shelter, was also quoted at the time as saying: "This law [CJA] will scapegoat people who are basically homeless. This isn't tackling law and order - this is another headline-grabbing ploy."

So, did Jack demonstrate a grasp of the issues giving an early indication that here was a home secretary to be?

Er... no. Apparently Jack Straw was out to lunch and the soup de jour was regurgitated misinformation from Government press releases.

"Squatters deny others resources which ought to be allocated in a fair way," dribbled Jack.

So there were groans all round when Tony

Blair promoted Jack Straw from Shadow Environment to Shadow Home Secretary, a position Blair had vacated to assume party leadership. In his new job, Straw was asked to comment about the Labour Party's abstention on the Criminal Justice Act. He was quoted: "The trouble was that Labour was concerned about law and order and the safety of the community, but the position adopted by the party was a parody of that concern." (the Independent 29/8/95)

Parody of course means 'mimicry with satire or humour'.

Since assuming the job as Shadow Home Secretary, Straw has emitted a series of repetitive bleats that, like his comments on squatting, appear to have come directly from the hard-right textbook used by both Michael Howard and his side-kick David McLean (Home Office Minister). However, there is little humour in his mimicry.

One of his early regurgitations as Shadow Home Secretary, were statements and promises on 'noisy neighbours' lifted directly from a Government consultation paper on 'noise control' issued three months previously. (See page 4 this issue).

However, the latest and most galling parody came at the beginning of September, when Jack Straw scraped one of the oldest pieces of rhetoric still rotting at the bottom of the sound-bite dustbin.

"The winos and addicts whose aggressive begging affronts and sometimes threatens decent compassionate citizens," he snorted.

Does anyone remember the protest march that took place in central London in May 1994? The demonstration, organised by a group of homeless hostel residents, received widespread national media coverage for two reasons. Firstly, it took place on a 'slow news' bank holiday weekend and secondly it took place only a few days after Major's tirade against the "eyesores" of beggars and homeless people. The main object of the protest was the closure of several London hostels (including MacNaghton House, see Page 72 this issue), as well as the fact that an average of 12 homeless people die on the streets every week. If Jack Straw had known the event was to receive so much media coverage, he would have undoubtedly been there taking John Battle's place. Instead it was the street principled Battle who travelled all the way down from his Leeds constituency on a bank holiday weekend to lend 200 homeless demonstrators his support and encouragement. All the more galling is it then to hear Jack Straw pretending that he speaks on behalf of "compassionate citizens" with his latest vitriol.

In his recent speech, Mr Bandwagon referred to "reclaiming the streets" (where d'you get that one from Jack?) from winos, beggars and "squeegee merchants who wait at large road junctions to force on reticent motorists their windscreen cleaning service."

He goes on: "Yet physically the street scene in many areas has been brutalised. Window shopping is no longer a possibility as many steel shutters have replaced windows. Graffiti, a much neglected crime in my book, adorns much street furniture. Even where graffiti is not comprehensible or racist in message, it is often violent and

uncontrolled in its violent image, and correctly gives the impression of a lack of order on the streets."

On the day Jack squawked, SQUALL received a letter from Inner City Artists of Manchester. With the letter were photographs of colourful graffiti designs. The ICA posse use the drab walls of Manchester's Hulme Estate to create works of art in places where previously there were only grey walls.

More evidence that Jack Straw's speeches are reconstructed from used up right-wing sound-bites came when his comments on winos, beggars and squeegee cleaners are compared to a street

strategy document written by Rudolph Guilano, the right-wing Republican Mayor of New York.

In his strategy document, Guilano states: "Beggars stand on street corners, aggressively demanding money from passers-by. Squeegee cleaners stake out the entrances

to tunnels and highways, intimidating drivers into accepting their services in exchange for coerced payments. When the walls of residential schools, stores and apartment buildings are covered with graffiti, it conveys the sense that the streets themselves may be out of control."

No small surprise was it to learn that Jack Straw visited New York in August.

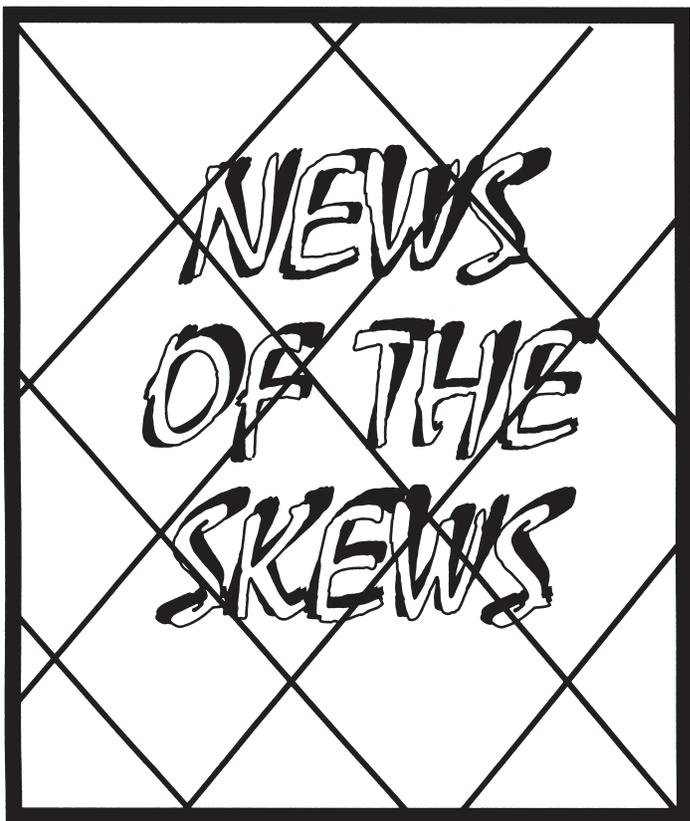
In a letter sent to the Guardian (6/9/95), Straw denies ever meeting Guilano or reading any of his work. However, there is little doubt that were the two speeches classed as literary works rather than political ones, Jack Straw would have a hard time defending himself against accusations of breach of copyright. In the letter, Straw also suggests that to compare the two texts: "falls for the Tory trap that safety and security in the streets is an intrinsically right-wing issue." The possibility that the "Tory trap" is in fact to parrot the right-wing misdiagnosis for the problems of the street, seems to have passed Jack Straw by.

As Joe Oldman from the Housing Campaign for Single People put it: "We would like to express our disgust at the ignorant, offensive and dangerous comments made by Jack Straw. They seem to lack understanding or compassion for the many thousands of homeless people who are forced to beg or scrape together a living on the streets. It is cowardly to attempt to boost the electoral fortunes of his party at the expense of the weak, most vulnerable members of the community."

In his letter to The Guardian, Jack Straw even had the audacity to say: "In an increasingly privatised and private world, street life remains a crucial, shared, and free experience, critical to the maintenance of functioning communities and society."

Well Jack, the message from the street is that if street life is so "crucial" get out there and find out the reality presently masked by your regurgitations. You would undoubtedly find out more about street life and communities if you spent less time rummaging through the dustbins of right-wing speech-makers, looking for rubbish to hold up as original political thinking. There's more to street life than jumping on the bandwagons that go trundling by.

SQ

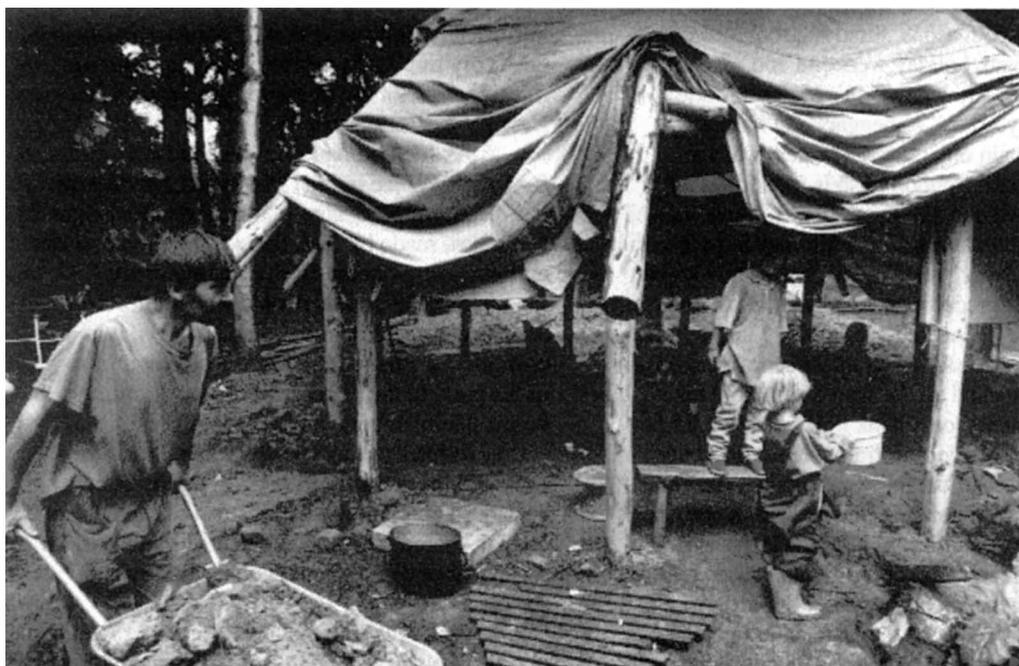


SQUALL's regular look at national media skew-whiffery

This issue's prime skew-whiff comes twisting in from an article appearing in the Independent (5/9/95), written by the newspaper's own staff journo Esther Oxford. Esther doesn't have a good reputation for accurate investigation, her article cobbled

use of cut and paste quotes from previous newspaper articles, some of which were 18 months old.

As you can read on page 24 of this issue, the residents of Tinker's Bubble have been on the brunt end of Environment Secretary John Gummer's decision to evict their site within six months.



Nick Cobbing

together about the bender-dwellers of Tinker's Bubble, and appearing in the Independent's second section, only provided more evidence to support her critics.

Entitled "Not so hippy, not so happy", the article pays lip service to up to date reporting, not least via her

According to the article, intrepid investigative reporter Esther Oxford risks the "eerie rustle of pine needles" and the "worry of seeing something we are not supposed to see" and ventures daringly into the Tinker's Bubble settlement. Despite being the owners of the woods

which they inhabit, the Bubblers do not fence off their land, allowing ramblers to walk through the settlement if they so wish. As it happens, Oxford found no-one at home on the day she arrived unannounced and so proceeded to postulate what it could all mean: "Perhaps they've given up the project? Perhaps they've been swept away by the bailiffs."

Oxford then gives a run down of what she describes as the "intellectual Bubblers".

"Six adults, four children and half a dozen weekenders (city people wanting a quick romp in the countryside)," she writes with a sneer. Oxford hadn't made an appointment to meet the residents of the Bubble but with a couple of thousand words to write she had to come up with something and so wanders into the local village and speaks with what the Bubblers describe as "one of the most vitriolic" of local residents. Five hundreds words later, and the Independent's readers are left in no doubt that the residents of the Bubble are "grubby-looking paupers" who have "scared the deer off". And as if that wasn't enough, they have also ruined the local housing market because "buyers are reluctant to purchase a home knowing that hippies live in the back yard".

In fact three house sales have been successfully completed in the tiny village of Norton Sub Hamden whilst the Tinker's Bubble project has been running. Not bad in a housing market slump but obviously not good copy for the Independent.

Esther Oxford then pays a visit to some other locals, descendants of the well known British countryside artist, John Constable. They have only good words to say about the Bubblers but aren't given enough credence in the article to come any where near re-balancing Oxford's slow build-up trashing of the project.

With the scene well and falsely set, Esther Oxford then revisits the Bubble where she meets Albert and where Albert refers to her as a "middle-class bastard". In the light of the article, Albert's observation does seem remarkably

accurate for a first appraisal but needless to say it doesn't go down too well with Esther. She quotes Albert some more: "Look at you trapped in this eight-hour day, work hard ethic. What is the point of working hard and paying taxes? You're just caught in the system.

You don't have a soul." These comments could have been lifted straight out of a Jeffrey Archer screenplay, with Albert as the classic

"The journalist made all sorts of extraordinary assumptions.... We made her a cup of tea and spoke with her for a long time. Some of the quotes are completely out of context and some were made up completely."

drop out hippy. You can just imagine the Independent readers, many of whom do work eight-hour days and pay taxes, rising to Esther's bait with a seething hatred for the residents of Tinker's Bubble. And that's the funny thing, because Albert is not a resident of Tinker's Bubble and never has been, he actually lives locally. But, with a couple of thousand words, a deadline and a story to be made up, he'll do. Albert you see had wandered into the settlement precisely because the Bubblers do not erect fences and everyone is free to walk in. Did Esther know this? We shall never know - but by this stage, ignorant or malicious, her damage is done. But not yet content, she goes on to quote the landlord of the Lord Nelson, a local pub: "Some of their women [female residents of Tinker's bubble!] were sneaking in the back door, using the pub loos. If they want to live like pigs, they can, but don't use my facilities." Nice one Esther, except she didn't speak to the landlord herself as she implies in her article, she lifted the quote directly from a newspaper article published 18 months previously. She also quotes a man called Michael, another person she found at Tinker's Bubble in the absence of the residents. Michael tells her that the residents are "elsewhere" today.

From this information she concludes: "Some settlers had left because they found girlfriends 'who wouldn't dream of living here'. Others [such as Michael] had flats or other homes elsewhere. After a while it becomes clear that the Tost community' we'd been searching for that morning was not at a protest, or working the fields. It has simply dispersed."

Unfortunately for the cause of truthful journalism, investigative reporter Esther Oxford's conclusions were completely wrong. The day before her arrival had been what the Bubblers call a 'work day'. Occurring once a week, the work day sees all the Tinker's Bubble residents gathering together to develop or repair parts of the site. The day following 'work day' is usually spent going off site and conducting personal business. Two residents were in fact up in London

on the day Esther arrived unannounced, selling organic apples grown in the Tinker's Bubble orchard. Another resident was in Yeovil talking to local planning officers about the site.

Contrary to Esther Oxford's uninvestigated assumptions, the residents of Tinker's Bubble had not dispersed from the site at all, having every intention to continue the development of the site and appealing against John Gummer's decision.

Perhaps the most sickening falsity in Oxford's article is an assumption she makes about an absent Bubble resident called Louise and the words she attributes to Michael, the only resident of the Bubble she bothered to meet before writing her article.

"In the village, the locals already knew that Louise was looking for an escape route - a council house, to be precise. Michael knew, too. 'We'll miss her,' he says sadly. 'But it was all too deep for her. She liked the novelty of living in the woods but wasn't cut out to cope with the reality.'"

"The journalist made all sorts of extraordinary assumptions," Michael told SQUALL. "We made her a cup of tea and spoke with her for a long time. Some of the quotes are completely out of context and some were made up completely."

Louise is a mother of four children and a long standing resident at the Bubble. She had previously been living with her partner in a three bedroomed council house right next door to the Westland Helicopter Factory in Yeovil. "The noise was terrible," she recalls. Louise moved to Tinker's Bubble in Feb 1994, one month after the project started and has lived there ever since. In fact, contrary to Esther Oxford's assumptions, she still lives there with her four children. Any Independent journalist who can suggest that Louise doesn't know anything about reality, needs a serious dose of it themselves. Yes Louise has made enquiries to South Somerset District Council about housing but with John Gummer's ideas for imminent eviction she would be less than a mother if she didn't make sure her kids, who all attend the local school in Norton Sub Hamden, are alright. "The children are number one," she told SQUALL. "But if we are allowed to live on here we will."

It took just one phone call to Tinker's Bubble to investigate Esther Oxford's journo tripe. Esther Oxford on the other hand had one week and all the financial resources of the Independent newspaper to look into the story.

As far as "weekenders and city people wanting a quick romp in the countryside" goes, Esther Oxford has proved herself top of the league. Whilst the residents of Tinker's Bubble face the complete annihilation of two years of unwaged

hard work - courtesy of Environment Secretary John Gummer - investigative reporter Esther Oxford is now safely back in Canary Wharf, working on her next well paid invention.

More news management for the masses came skewering in from the Daily Mail in September. "Euro Court's Gypsy Shock" ran the right wing tabloid on its front cover (22/9/95). According to the first line of the article: "A shock European ruling threatens to throw Britain's planning laws into chaos". New shock news? Hardly.

Look through the article and you'll find no mention of when the ruling was actually made. The reason? Despite being trumpeted as the front page latest, the story was in fact a topical nine months old!

Last January, lawyer Luke Clements took a case to the European Court of Human Rights. He was attempting to reverse an enforcement order of eviction placed on June Buckley, a 31-year-old gypsy single mother, camped on her own land in Cambridgeshire ("only 15 miles from John Major's house" snorts the Mail). The European Court ruled that the enforcement notice violated June Buckley's human rights and that she should be allowed to stay.

So why do we have the Daily Mail plucking this one out of their dusty in-tray?

Well you see, we have the Tory Party Conference and as both a single parent and a gypsy, June Buckley was prime fodder for the conference build up. "More and more travellers want to stay in one place but they don't build nice sites for us," says the disgustingly welfare-dependant June Buckley, proving what we've always been told about gypsies and scrounging

In the agenda-manipulation business this is what they call news-fortification; first the plant - then the fortification - all with no real news story.

single parents. The story also provided an opportunity for a good dose of pre-conference anti-Europe rhetoric, courtesy of dial-a-right-wing commentator Sir Ivan Lawrence QC, chairman of the Commons home affairs select committee: "I am one of a growing number of people who are getting fed up with being told what to do by Europeans who do not share our

history, our culture, our traditions or the good sense of our courts." Quite so Sir Lawrence, Knight of the Square Table, but.....oh, he hasn't finished: "Interference in our sovereign democratic nation - which has led the world in human rights - is becoming tedious."

And lo and behold if the Daily Telegraph don't run a follow up to the Daily Mail story just three days later, with "Tory Euro-rebels plan assault on party conference" on page 2 and a "Soaring Cost of judgements in Strasbourg - Major weighs case for leaving Euro-court" (3/4 page spread) on Page 4. In the agenda-manipulation business this is what they call news-fortification; first the plant - then the fortification - all with no real news story. Of course, just four days after the Daily Mail plant, and two days after Telegraph fortification, the Government received a public reprimand from the European Court of Human Rights for gunning down three unarmed IRA suspects in Gibraltar. The knowledge that such a reprimand was on the horizon might have had more than a little baring on the media steer of public sentiment don't you think?

Interference in our democracy is indeed getting tedious.

There was a media chuckle all round when both the BBC and Channel Four stood up at Edinburgh's National Television Festival to say how Greenpeace's media machine had seduced them into forsaking their journalistic impartiality. For as every editor, journalist and proliferating PR company knows, impartiality is a mask worn by a thousand pre-agendas. There is not one single national media organisation untied from at least several truth-compromising criteria. Whether it be the convenience of the Government press release - in excess of 10,000 a year - or a manufactured photo-opportunity from Cheshire cat Blair's media overtimers.

Are the 150 farmers trained up in the National Farmers Union's media school, here to talk about the changing seasons or are they here to push a landowner's political agenda?

How many publications will vote truth when truth affects their advertising revenue?

There was none so blatant an example as the recent Microsoft version of The Times. The once renowned newspaper reduced to being bought out for the day by a computer software company. Not for the first time though. Media observers may remember with yet more chuckling, the laughable edition of The Times printed on September 22nd 1994 (see page 47). This is no photo-shopped mast-head. This eight page bulletin appeared in the newspaper, not headed by the word

'advertisement' but packed with sycophantic pseudo-feature articles about the incredibly interesting McDonald's burger story.

The day The Times publishes an eight page feature pull-out on the good work Greenpeace is doing, is a day that we might dare suggest that some balance is emerging from the dim light of media manipulation. It looks increasingly unlikely however.

So in the meantime, what exactly constitutes vital worthy news? Is it a group of people prepared to risk their lives in a James Bond-style environmental protest in order to save the planet, or is it some double chinned corporate executives with a slop bucket full of burger sound bites and the money to buy into our airtime?

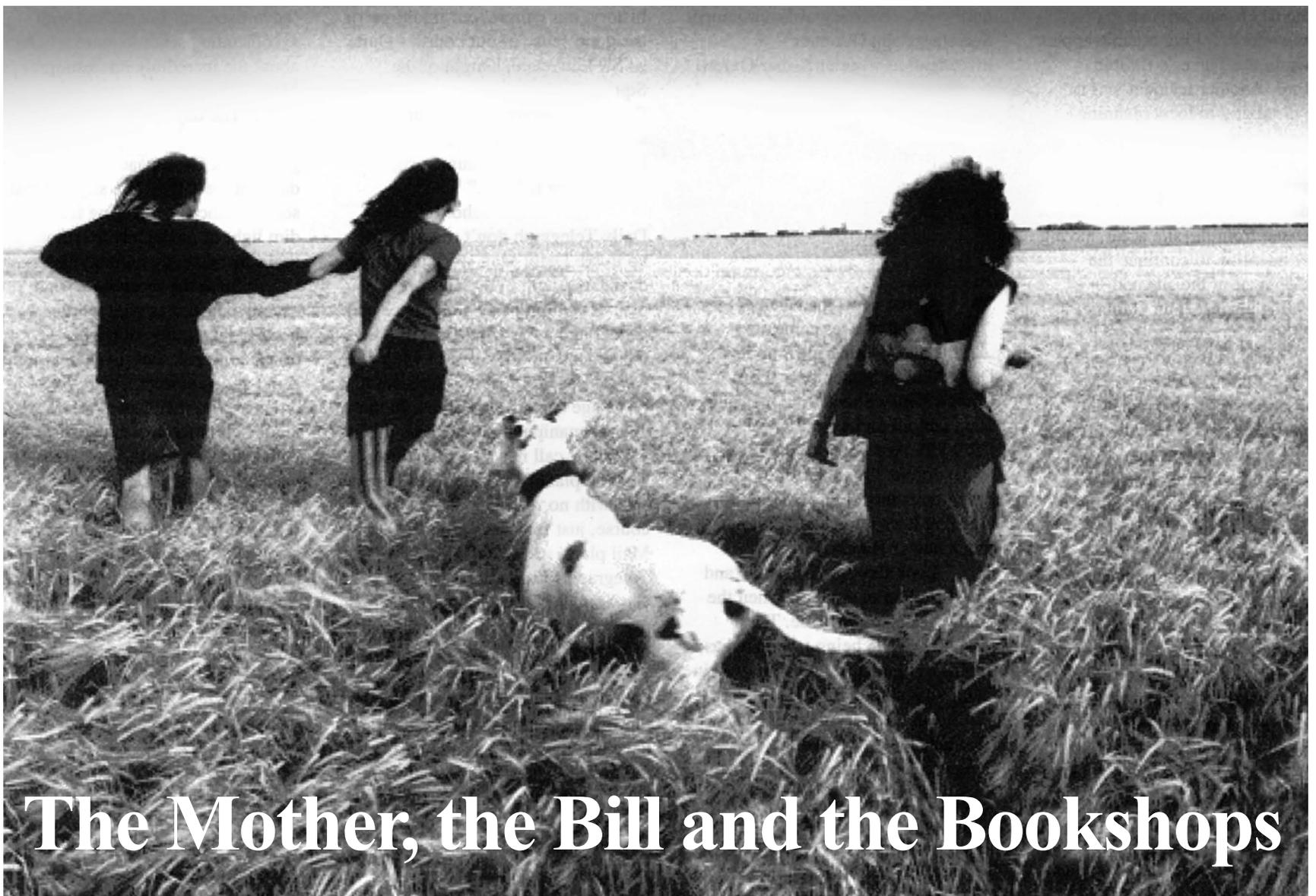
If we're going to get worried about who's manipulating the media, let's get our priorities straight. Greenpeace are in the fourth division as far as the league table of divisive media manipulators goes.

If you have not read "To rave or riot?"! on page 30 of this issue of SQUALL then check it out because certain parties would rather you didn't. An edited version of the article appeared in the September edition of Red Pepper magazine. Lo and behold if the Sunday Times Colour Magazine - once an 'insight'ful read, but now a Murdoch Tory news-management organ - did print a four page article that reads like a carefully calculated refutation of the "To Rave or Riot?" article.

The Sunday Times' version of the Marsh Farm riots was written by staffer Peter Millar and contained more factual inaccuracies than there were rioters on the Luton Estate. The article places the blame for the entire fracas firmly on the shoulders of a juvenile criminal, nicknamed Billy by the newspaper so they could use "Billy the Kid" as a headline. According to the article, Billy - juvenile delinquent and son of a single parent - took drugs and was a one-boy crime wave who caused the riots. According to Peter Millar, or indeed whoever was advising him, the riots were halted by appropriate police tactics. The Sunday Times then spends almost an entire page on the Exodus Collective, for no apparent reason other than to say they couldn't possibly have had anything to do with halting the riot. Somethin' gwon in the world of national media, something to do with who whispers in whose ear to get whose point of view across. If journalism is supposed to be the 'first draft of history' - then realise that someone is tampering with the archaeological record at source.

I think we should be told, but I don't think we will be - I think we'll have to find out for ourselves.

SQ



The Mother, the Bill and the Bookshops

Ally Fogg notes Hampshire Police's sudden over-interest in political activism.

It would have been the Mother of all Parties: a massive show of defiance of the Criminal Justice Act, and the biggest free festival since Castle Morton in 1991. Sound systems, travellers and party-goers were making their way from around the country towards the planned venue in Corby, Northamptonshire, but so too were a small army of police officers.

By midnight on Friday July 7 members of one sound system had been arrested under the CJA and alleged organisers from the Advance Party Network had been raided at home in London, and arrested for conspiracy to create a public nuisance. Police roadblocks around the site had created chaotic convoys of ravers and travellers heading off to find another venue, creating more policing headaches in at least three counties. But how did it happen? How can the free festival and party movement learn from the events? And what is the connection, if any, with raids on small radical bookshops in Oxford and Manchester earlier this year?

First and foremost, the Mother was the subject of some intense police surveillance. Michelle Poole, of the Advance Party, arrived home on Friday afternoon to find her flat full of policemen busily bagging up most of her possessions and even taking the pictures off the walls. "They made no secret that they'd been watching us for days, they were even boasting about the transcripts of my telephone calls that they'd taped," she said. "But before, and even after, the event lots of people were getting dodgy phone calls from people they didn't know asking

about the Mother, so we'd known something was up".

The police also arrested Andy, a friend of Michelle, and her dog and held them all for ten hours for questioning. Earlier that day another Advance Party activist, Debbie Staunton, had been woken at 6.30am by the police letting themselves into her flat with a battering ram. She phoned her solicitor immediately who then talked to the senior officer. Because of this she believes they were more cautious about what they removed from the flat. Nevertheless she was not allowed to take her seven-year-old son to school, he was taken by a WPC instead, and Debbie was taken for questioning and also held for ten hours. Debbie believes she was raided by officers from the Met, Northants and Hampshire. Michelle by the Met and Hampshire.

It may be that this massive police operation was successful in establishing the location and plans for the Mother, but sadly it is likely that they found out by a more traditional means, namely carelessness. Posters were stuck in Corby advertising the event from a week before and details were also posted on the Internet. Too many people around the country knew too many details too far in advance for the police not to find out somehow. But even if they did know in advance, it becomes much harder to justify the excessive force used against the Advance Party.

Hampshire police are not coy about the extent of the operation. Their press office told me: "We were just one of a number of police forces who were monitoring this event, the

number may even go into double figures. We were there simply because we believed at some stage that the event might be held in Hampshire." This is understandable, although by the time the raids were carried out they knew otherwise. Their apparently unusual presence may have something to do with the experience Hampshire Police have in surveillance of those at the radical end of animal rights and environmental activism.

A week before the Mother, Hampshire police were involved in a raid on Frontline Books in Manchester, with a warrant to seize articles relating to two publications: 'The Green Anarchist' and 'Scumbusters' and any other materials likely to incite others to criminal damage and arson. Neil Swannick of the co-operative which runs Frontline told me: "Our relationship with Green Anarchist is strictly commercial, they send us the magazine and if we sell it we send them the money. Scumbusters was apparently being advertised in Green Anarchist at a box number here, unbeknown to us and under a different name, which presumably is the connection with us, although I still haven't seen a copy of whatever 'Scumbusters' is. As for the incitement, they basically took that as a brief to seize any materials involving direct action. They seized around a hundred magazines and two books, including 'Eco-defence' by Dave Foreman which is in its third edition and widely available."

Hampshire police also raided two bookshops in Oxford earlier this year, apparently seeking information about Green Anarchist, four of whose activists are currently on police bail for

conspiracy to incite arson. Robin Webb, allegedly press officer of the ALF, is currently on remand in Winchester Prison on firearms charges, arrested in East Anglia by Hampshire police. The press office acknowledges that they have a special unit dedicated to animal rights "extremists", but they are adamant that the unit is only investigating crimes which have occurred or might occur in Hampshire, ranging from minor criminal damage to parcels laced with razor blades and letter bombs. The unit is funded and staffed by Hampshire Constabulary. It was, they say, definitely not involved in the arrests made in connection with the Mother. Nevertheless, rumours are rife in the press and among activists of special units funded centrally and involving CID, Special Branch or MI5 depending who you listen to, providing a role for all the spooks who have lost their way with peace in Ireland and the end of the Cold War. This has led to a paranoia which may or may not be justified. Ultimately though, if the police forces of the nation are willing to exercise the kind of collective muscle they used against the Mother, then whether it is being co-ordinated from London, Hampshire or John O'Groats is largely irrelevant. We now know exactly the lengths the police and/or security forces will go to to prevent major acts of defiance from taking place.

According to Michelle, the authorities felt they had to clamp down on the Mother in order to justify the expense and time that had gone into gathering intelligence and collecting data on travellers and sound systems. "Just imagine what all this has cost the taxpayer. None of us are violent people, it was a festival thing, all we wanted to do was have a party."

Michelle and Debbie maintain that the police did not 'win' over the Mother. After the Corby site was busted sound systems led convoys to alternative sites in Leicestershire and Cambridgeshire and eventually parties began which continued all weekend. "The Mother had children," Debbie says, "and everyone found a party to go to." Michelle adds: "It just shows that you have to be persistent, if you come to a roadblock don't just give up and go home. But it also shows how many people were willing to play a part in making the weekend worthwhile. A party is no longer something that someone else organises and you go to, it is something you become part of and help make yourself. Even if that just means taking a bag full of rubbish away with you when you leave."

The reaction of the Advance Party to the Mother is a positive one, a determination to learn from the mistakes made, particularly regarding communications and secrecy, but also a strength taken from the excessive reaction of the police, showing just how terrified the authorities are of a movement and a culture which only seeks to make people happy, something that they do not understand. Debbie says: "I always knew that if they came to arrest me I was on the right track. I felt quite cheered and heartened as they were going through my underwear drawer!" A reaction to cheer and hearten us all. 

Ancient Royal Charter Vs Criminal Justice Act

Tan Hill Fayre was the first of many attempts to re-establish our ancient right to celebrate traditional country fayres.

Heather James recalls the first stand-off.

The Tan Hill Fayre was set up by Royal Charter by Henry VII in 1499. It was granted by special grace to the Abbess of the monastery of St Mary in Winchester. The Abbess was licensed to hold a yearly fair on the feast of St Anne (6-7 August) in the Parish of All Cannings, Wiltshire. This is traditionally near Lammas - the Celtic festival of harvest. For the last 500 years (at least) a sheep and horse trading fayre has occurred with gypsies and travellers attending to buy and sell livestock and find work in the area at harvest time. Archaeological evidence suggests that people had been gathering on the hill since Celtic times and a dewpond, estimated to be 5,000 years old, was used for watering stock.

The Fayre ran consistently until 1932, but lapsed with the outbreak of war. In 1994 the Dongas - a tribe of travellers from Twyford Down - resurrected the fayre with local support and attendance. An 87-year old man, who remembers the fayre as a boy, told of the lighting of beacon fires, playing games and feasting on roast beef and wild raspberries which grew on the hill.

This year the fayre was planned and promoted as a tribal gathering of feasting and merriment with no vehicle access. People travelled from all over the country to attend - mainly by 'green' transport. The Freedom Trail walked from Dartmoor pushing hand-carts and moving along the ancient droves and greenlanes with a donkey and goats; horse-drawn travellers arrived and one girl walked all along the ridgeway (50 miles) to attend.

About 40 people camped on Tan Hill on Thursday evening (August 3, 1995). At about 10pm the landowner arrived with police asking the travellers to move. On Friday morning about five riot vans with dogs came on site. Police handed out notices to those at the camp demanding that people leave the site within one hour or they would be arrested under section 61 of the Criminal Justice Act ('94). A copy of the Royal Charter and map of the ancient site were shown to the police who responded by saying that the CJA over-rode the Charter. This is untrue.

The hot midday sun was beating down and several people were suffering with heatstroke. The travellers tried to reason with the police that they would leave once the heat had gone down and when the horse-drawn folk had returned to move their wagons and horses.

The police would not negotiate with the travellers and demanded that everyone move. Some of the horse-drawn people were not on site at the time and people who had no experience had to move the horses and tat three miles down hill to a drove.

The group met up again on a drove near Knapp Hill, a National Nature Reserve. After the land-owning farmer visited the site permission was given to stay for three days. Police circled in helicopters three times a day and took photographs.

With some 200 people in attendance the Fayre took off. Music and dancing around the hill forts and tumuli in the evening, feasting and gatherings during the day. On Sunday evening, the second day of the official Fayre, a small group visited Tan Hill to perform a ceremony of bartering, mead drinking, picnicking and dance. A beacon fire was lit which could be seen from the village, to inform people that the fayre had taken place - despite police harassment. However, the police arrived again and a quick departure was made.

That Sunday the police arrived again at Knapp Hill and handed out notices saying that unless everyone left and did not return within three months they would be charged under section 61: for more than two people trespassing and intending to stay; causing criminal damage (horse-grazing and fire pits are classed as damage) and having six or more vehicles (they included hand-carts and bike-carts as vehicles). By Monday the site was empty, all litter had been cleared and the drove was left as it had been found.

One point of note, the small print in the Charter guarantees all Fayre-goers immunity from jurisdiction of the land. Under "The Court of Pie Powder" all conflicts which arise must be resolved at the Fayre. This allowed travellers to come from abroad to sell their goods without recourse to the law, and shows that the Fayre was held in high regard not only in this country but internationally.

There are many such ancient fayres which were held all round the country, all waiting to be re-enacted. Go to your County Record Office and get researching. The Tan Hill Fayre intends to go ahead again next year and lawyers are being contacted to clear the legal situation. 



TINKERS BUBBLE



Nick Cobbing

Despite recommendations from a DoE Inspector that the low-impact dwellers of Tinker's Bubble should be given a chance, John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, wants them evicted in six months.

Small scale agriculture and low-impact dwellings were the subject of John Gummer's recent disrespect, when he insisted that a small Somerset community-settlement should be evicted off their own land.

The residents of Tinker's Bubble, a small woodland near the village of Norton Sub Hamden, had originally applied for planning permission for seven low-impact dwellings (benders and tents) to accommodate up to 12 adults. They narrowly failed to obtain it after the South Somerset Area Planning Committee voted to reject the application by seven votes to six. Residents of the Bubble were then served with a local authority enforcement notice requiring them to remove both themselves and their tents within six months.

Planning restrictions on residential development are of course necessary to prevent profit-driven building work from ruining the countryside. However, the settlers on Tinker's Bubble argued that there should be a right for people to live on their own land if they resided in 'low-impact dwellings' next to small scale agriculture. The Bubble residents look after a

1,000 apple tree orchard, some farm animals and several allotments on their 40 acre organically farmed woodland site.

They appealed against the planning refusal and enforcement notice issued by South Somerset District Council, so becoming the subject of a DoE inspector's investigation. The consequent appeal hearing took place in Norton Village Hall on April 5th this year, and was conducted by Dr J. R Frears from the DoE. Whilst waiting for the completion of the appeal process, the Bubblers had agreed to carry out a five year conservation management plan for the site in co-operation with the South Somerset District Council (see Page 24 opposite).

The DoE inspector spent some time interviewing local residents from the nearby village of Norton Sub Hamdon, as well as the Bubblers themselves.

In his report, the inspector concluded that the residents of Tinker's Bubble were engaged in a unique experiment in low-impact living and small-scale agriculture and should therefore be given the opportunity to show what could be done.

He wrote: "The alternative lifestyle and

the form of agriculture are, from the evidence presented, manifestly part of the one experiment. It therefore follows that the Appellants, if they are to make their experiment, need to live on the land in the countryside. Even if the way of life could be separated from the form of agriculture, I am very doubtful whether it could be acceptable if carried on in a town or village."

The inspector also cited the "genuine" nature of the experiment, concluding that it did not harm the landscape of the Special Landscape Area in which it was situated. He also said that although the residents weren't gypsies in the strict sense of the word, the DoE Circular 1/94 advising local authorities to encourage gypsies to acquire land for their own residence, "does have some bearing on the case". The inspector's report also comments on the very temporary nature of the residencies, saying that any decision to give them a chance would not be irreversible.

Answering fears about a possible rush of applications that might follow were the Bubble residents granted planning permission, the inspector said that such a style of living would "only appeal to a small minority" and would not therefore "give rise to fears that it is a precedent for planning policy as a whole in the countryside".

After the completion of his investigation the DoE inspector recommended that the residents of Tinker's Bubble should be given the chance to show what could be done with small scale agriculture and low-impact dwellings on self-owned land.

The Secretary of State for the Environment called in the decision, making himself personally responsible. In the event that John Gummer might over rule his primary recommendation, the inspector also gave a conciliatory suggestion. He recommended that if they were to be evicted, the Bubble residents should be given at least a year to wind their settlement down due to the fact that children on the site were attending local schools from which they should not be hastily wrenched.

In September, the Bubblers received a letter written on behalf of Secretary of State, John Gummer, saying that he had no intention of allowing either of the recommendations made by his own inspector. Instead, he wanted to see the settlement evicted within six months in compliance with the original enforcement notice.

In the letter, he concludes that the aspirations of the Bubble residents were a "personal preference which do not justify setting aside the planning objection. Any benefit of these aims to the rural economy would be negligible, since minimal agricultural and other produce would be available for wider consumption. And the reduction in demand for conventional housing and other claimed social benefits would be minimal. The view is taken that the provision of groups of tents or similar residential

accommodation in the open countryside, merely to provide a subsistence living for the occupants, is not a practical pattern of land use."

The Secretary of State goes on: "To grant permission would be likely to encourage similar applications for other rural sites in this locality which, if allowed, would have a serious cumulative impact on this area of landscape value."

So what future for the six adults and four children of Tinker's Bubble? Well, they can and will appeal against the Secretary of State's decision if they can find the necessary £5,000 appeal fee. Otherwise, after two years of putting their backs, hearts and passion into the development of a working organic community, the residents of Tinker's Bubble will find themselves homeless again. And John Gummer? Well he's probably already forgotten about them, in the same way as he has forgotten about the international Agenda 21 promise he signed in 1992.

But just for John, here's the agreement this Government signed in Rio only three years ago:

"All countries should as appropriate, support the shelter efforts of the urban and rural poor, the unemployed and the no-income groups 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 regularisation and upgrading of informal settlements and urban slums as an expedient measure and pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit."



THE PROBLEM WITH PLANNING

You can't even live in a hole on your own land for more than 28 days without falling foul of planning laws. **Simon Fairlie**, from Tinker's Bubble, argues the case for more favourable planning consideration for low-impact dwellers.

"Reclaim the Land!" has become a common battle-cry in the protest movement, which is hardly surprising, given that much of England, and virtually all of Scotland, is owned by an astonishingly small number of wealthy landowners. Land ownership in Britain is more concentrated than in many Third World countries where development workers are piously recommending land reform.

Yet, surprisingly, land in Britain is cheap. Low to average agricultural land sells at about £1,200 per acre. Admittedly, you have to buy it ten acres at a time to get this price because small areas are bought up by the rural bourgeois to provide grazing for their daughter's ponies. And, of course, it isn't easy to get £1,200 together on income support. But nevertheless, an acre of land - and there is one acre for every man, woman and child in this country - costs about the same as 20 Benson and Hedges a day for 15 months. Anyone who seriously wants to "reclaim the land" should think about saving up a grand, getting together with some like-minded people, and buying it.

For settlers with a bit of cash, the main difficulty with reclaiming the land is not ownership, but planning.

Even if you own land you can't live on it - not unless it's designated "development land" in which case it costs £50,000 per acre, or more. In the seediest Third World dictatorship, any peasant who manages to scabble together the money for an acre of land can usually erect a shack on it and live there without too much hassle from the government or big local landowners. In democratic, freedom-loving Britain, if you try to stick up a shack, or a tent, or a living wagon, or even nest in a tree-top, on your own land, the planners will come down on you armed with a ton of recyclable office paper. "Change of use!" they will cry. "By living on this land you are changing the use from agricultural to residential and that is against the law of the land." Unless you are prepared to go through a long and expensive legal wrangle - which in all probability you are likely to lose - they will chuck you off.

In fact it is the planning system, rather than ownership, that is now the main way in which ordinary people are prevented from "reclaiming the land" in this country. However, this does not imply that would-be settlers should instigate some kind of aggressive direct action campaign against the planning authorities. On the contrary, the planning laws are something we would do best to work with, rather than against.

The planning system in this country was designed to stop the invasion of the countryside by urban developers. Since the Second World War the planners' answer to ribbon development, dormitory settlements, urban sprawl, and other invasions of the countryside, has been to designate certain zones where development is permitted and forbid any kind of residential development in what is termed "open countryside". They may not have been brilliantly successful at preventing some atrocious scarring of the countryside - from motorway cuttings to ten acre holiday caravan sites that are obliged, by law, to remain empty for



Nick Cobbing

half the year - but the planning system has been the only defence against the developers who would happily concrete the whole of Britain to make a quick buck. Any movement to "reclaim the land" should make sure that it does not undermine the planning system. There are plenty of free-marketeers lurking in the not so nether regions of the Conservative Party who would be very happy to see planning restrictions relaxed, so that they could start developing green belt land and unleash a tide of "economic regeneration" in the open countryside.

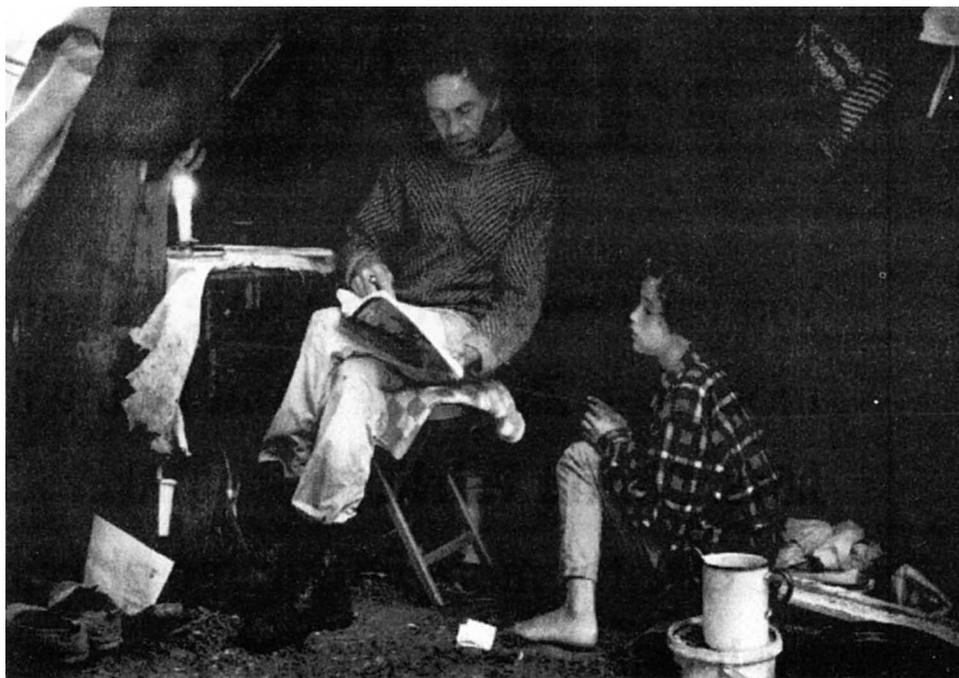
Moreover, planners are not total idiots when they look critically at applications from smallholders, settlers and so on to erect cottages, mobile homes or other living accommodation upon agricultural land. However genuine rural settlers may be about their intentions to live "in harmony with the land", there is a chance that their project may fail, that they may decide to bugger off to outer Turkmenistan, or they may simply die. Whoever subsequently acquires or inherits the land may be less interested in living in harmony with the environment, and more concerned with extracting the maximum economic benefit from any change of use agreement accorded the land, by forcing through a further application for 20 residential bungalows or holiday chalets. Planners are quite right in viewing bona fide applications for permission to live on one's land as a potential Trojan horse for much more undesirable forms of development.

What then is wrong with the planning system? The answer is that it bundles together all forms of development - from a tent to an estate of 200 bungalows - as something basically bad for the environment; something that should be restricted to certain "development zones" and not let loose upon the rural landscape. In the 50 years since the Second World War there has been no attempt to establish a distinction between residential developments that complement the rural environment and add richness and diversity, and residential developments that extend the domain of the city by smothering the countryside with car-based urban sprawl. Planners have tried to protect the countryside by excluding people; and in doing so have opened it up for destruction by the bulldozer, the combine harvester and the Range Rover.

If we want to reclaim the land, then we have to confront the planners with a well-thought out project for the future. "Look," we should say, "there is a difference between modest rural dwellings that fit into the countryside and developers' schemes that propose to extend urban sprawl into the countryside. Planners should be distinguishing between dwellings that are low impact, because they are small-scale, or temporary, or surrounded by trees, or built with local materials, or make low demands upon energy and resources; and those that are high impact because they introduce, to a countryside

that doesn't need it, all be mediocre extravagance of urban-style development. It is about time that you, the planners, made this distinction so that we, the growing number who want to find ways of living in the countryside without consuming excessive resources or importing products made by slave labour on the other side of the globe, can find some space to do it."

Believe it or not, planners will respond to these kinds of arguments. For 25 years planners have had a chip on their shoulder because everything they do is reactive rather than proactive. Their attempt to keep development out of



the countryside has been a rearguard, defensive action, doomed to failure. It gets little support from both developers who resent being restricted and from environmentalists who object to the countryside being tom apart by an agriculture based on machines rather than people.

Giving planners the opportunity to decide what is and what is not "low-impact development" - to put it another way, to decide what new rural buildings accord with Local Agenda 21 and which are out of tune - would enhance their standing immeasurably. No longer would they be charged merely with deciding where undesirable development should or should not take place, but instead with the altogether more useful job of deciding what sort of development is

desirable, and what isn't. For example, they might be empowered to say: "OK, you can build a house there; but only as long as you use local materials, plant a screen of trees, replace the uprooted hedgerows and use renewable energy for heating and lighting."

Can these unimaginative grey-suited bods in district planning departments - yes, even planning magazines print cartoons about how boring planners are - be entrusted with making such important decisions? Perhaps not; but it is they who at present make local decisions and recommendations about how land is used, comparatively free of government interference; and it is they with whom those of us who want to "reclaim the land" will have to deal. And believe it or not, there are a surprising number of sympathetic, thoughtful people in the middle echelons of the planning bureaucracy who have

been waiting for something like Agenda 21 (and subsequent government policy statements about sustainability and diversity) to give them licence to pursue more idealistic objectives. They are now looking around for good ideas.

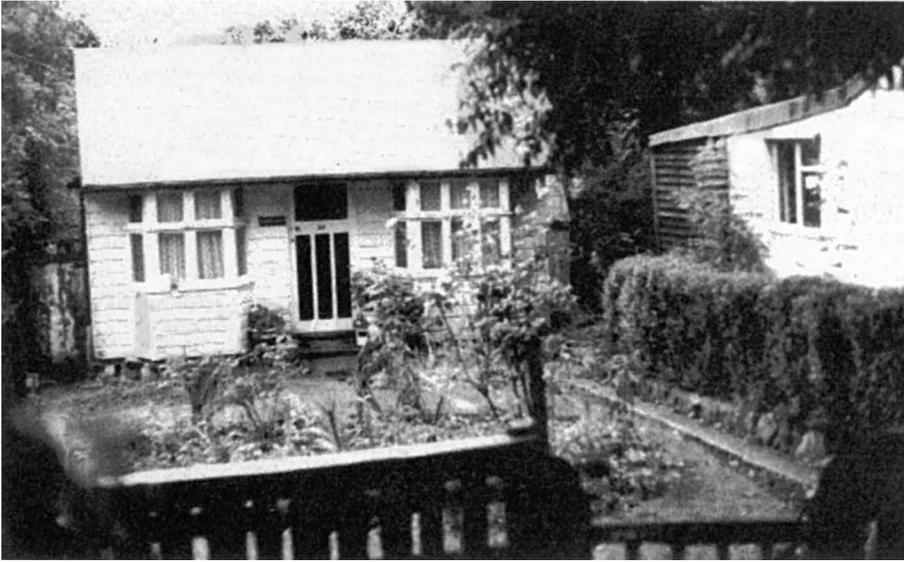
There are a couple of ways we can feed them with ideas. One is to put in a planning application at every opportunity. It is not widely realized that anyone can make a planning application on any property or piece of land - you don't have to own it. Whether you are squatting a disused council gravel yard, an abandoned airfield, a dilapidated mansion or a derelict warehouse, it is worth thinking about putting in a planning application for "change of use". It will cost £140. Follow it up with a detailed proposal explaining what you plan to do with the property, why it will be good for the property, for the environment and for the local community, and how it fits in with Agenda 21 and other government utterances. Find a friendly planning expert to help you if you can. Send your proposal out to the local press. Work on the property to show neighbours that the "change of use" will be beneficial to them. Particularly if it is council property, you will be less likely to be evicted until after the planning process has run its course.

You will probably lose your application; but you can then take it to appeal, a process that usually lasts over a year. You'll probably lose that as well, but you may have bought yourself some time. More importantly, you will have shifted the legal debate beyond the issue of a possession order to a matter of planning permission. The public question is no longer simply "who owns this property?" but "what is the best thing to do with this property?". The more the planning authorities and the Department of the Environment are bombarded with planning applications of this nature, the sooner the Government will realize that things have to change - that ownership does not confer only, or even necessarily, the right to eject others, but also a responsibility to use the land in a socially and environmentally acceptable way.

The other way to bring round the planners is to present them with clearly reasoned arguments and evidence showing them how, by ceasing to exclude people from access to land, they can enhance the richness and diversity of the landscape - and the townscape. The Tinker's Bubble Trust has been commissioned to prepare and publish a 50,000 word report on Future Planning Policies for Low-Impact Development. We are keen to receive the views and comments of anyone who is concerned with these issues, particularly anyone who has experienced planning problems, or is considering putting in a planning application. The report will be primarily focussed on the rural situation; but there will be a section on urban questions that will examine possibilities for sustainable low-impact, community-based projects designed to make cities better places to live.

If you wish to contribute towards this report in any way, or require more information, please write to Simon Fairlie, Tinker's Bubble, Little Norton, Stoke Sub Hamdon, Somerset TA14; or telephone 01935 881975.





Holtsfield

- a community under threat

The values that most urban communities have forgotten are practised by people living in ex-holiday chalets in a community in South Wales. But their community is under threat from property developers who want to bulldoze the houses and erect a compact, maximum-profit housing estate instead. **Mel Gunasena and Paul O'Connor** report.

Take a short bicycle ride away from the steel works and the polluted sea around Swansea and you may stumble across Holtsfield. Twenty seven wooden chalets, each reflecting the characters of the thirty families living in the Caswell Valley, dot 14 acres of semi-woodland in South Wales. The chalets were built in the 1920s and 30s by people who hauled the timber, by bus, from Swansea and then walked two miles with it to the building site. This is not a long-forgotten hippy commune but a diverse range of people who chose to opt out of the rat race and live a sustainable low-impact life.

One of the families has been living there for four generations and most of the children there today were born there. The oldest resident is in her nineties, whilst the latest arrival is celebrating her second month of life.

Dee Murphy has lived on "The Field" for six years with her two children; Dale, 17 and Seren, 13. She talks with a passion about the community that does not lock its doors and looks after each other. A great wooden table that sits in the middle of The Field serves as a meeting place for everything from midnight talking and drinking sessions to a forum for discussing problems.

The chalets are beautiful, built of wood and lightweight materials, with one chalet sporting a turf roof. Swansea's skips provide the wood for room extensions and fuel for the wood stoves which supply cooking facilities, heating and hot water. Many residents use compost toilets, recycling waste onto their vegetable plots as fertilizer.

The low-impact nature of the dwellings means they do not spoil the landscape of the Gower, Britain's first designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A stark contrast to the sea-front developments ten minutes walk away, through the woods. Ten years ago the council "improved" the beach by building a concrete and tarmac burger bar and ice-cream

tourists' paradise. Huge apartment buildings and hotels are rapidly rising on the cliff-face, ugly and monotonous.

It didn't take developers long to discover the potential of Holtsfield. The residents of The Field own the chalets but not the land on which they stand. This was fine until, in 1989, the freehold was bought by a property development company, Elitestone Ltd, headed by a solicitor, Tim Gilbert Jones, from Swansea. His plans, made clear in a number of letters to the residents and their solicitor, are to force the residents to leave and then bulldoze their homes in order to build a housing estate. From 1990 the residents have been intimidated and told they have no legal right to remain on the land. Not only do the residents stand to lose their homes and see their community break up, they are now faced with the phenomenal costs involved in resisting Elitestone Ltd through the courts.

A Department of Environment health survey, conducted in 1991 as a result of Elitestone's pressure and complaints, found all the chalets "unfit" for habitation, mainly on water and sewerage grounds, despite the fact that the community is healthy. Five test cases were brought before Swansea County Court, then the Court of Appeal in London, all of which were lost. In a strange twist of logic the residents are being evicted as the chalets are not seen as proper dwellings, with associated tenant's rights, but as "temporary chalets" because they stand on concrete footings. This decision was reached by a judge in London who has never been to the Field. Not far away the residents of Tipi Valley are being evicted because their tipis are seen as permanent structures.

The few remaining hopes lie in one resident, Dai Morris, and his petition to the House of Lords for leave to appeal against these

judgements. This will cost around £25,000. No-one has that kind of money, and funds, as well as morale, are getting low. Another avenue is to persuade the Council to issue a Compulsory Purchase Order to Elitestone Ltd for the land. Tim Jones paid £175,000 for the site six years ago. He is now asking for £3 million. Petitions and letters of support for Holtsfield are needed to put pressure on Swansea Council to issue the CPO.

Dee Murphy said: "We can't believe we won't win through in the end because we can't bear the thought of leaving our friends and the community splitting up." Several families are now facing eviction, and some have decided to use direct action by refusing to leave. They are emphatic that they do not want the field to turn into a full-on protest camp, but they will need the help of non-residents, especially on eviction days.

Ask for the Council's support in issuing a CPO.

Write to:

*Mr A Botswain
Chief Executive
Swansea City Council
The Guildhall
Swansea
South Wales*

Pledge your support for the residents of Holtsfield. Write to:

*Save Holtsfield
do 16 Holtsfield
Murton
Swansea
SA3 3AQ*



WALLY HOPE

- A Victim of Ignorance

by Neil Goodwin

**“What is evil but good tortured
by it’s own hunger and thirst?”**

Phil Russell, 1974

Perched on a stone beside a bronze statuette of the Indian goddess Shiva, a small oak box carries the epitaph: **WALLY HOPE, DIED 1975 AGED 28, A VICTIM OF IGNORANCE.** For twenty years the box that once contained the ashes of the man who founded the Stonehenge Free Festival has made regular appearances at Stonehenge gatherings.

Each year friends and former acquaintances, druids and festival-goers, preserve his memory by becoming official keepers of the box. It is the closest the modern Pagan/Hippy movement has to an icon; a lasting testament to torture and death at the hands of an intolerant regime.

Penny Rimbaud, author of the book ‘The Last of the Hippies’, first met Phil Russell, alias Wally Hope, in 1974. She describes him as “a smiling, bronzed, hippy warrior”, whose ideas were “a strange mixture of the thinking of the people he admired and amongst whom he had lived”, including peasant Cypriots, Masai herdsmen and North American Indians. During their first meeting in London he outlined his plan to claim back Stonehenge from the government and make it a site for free festivals.

The Hippy movement was to join a long list of youth cults that had laid claim to

Stonehenge as a social and spiritual centre. During the ‘40s jazz bands played there regularly. Crowds of Beatniks, complete with regulation duffle coats and ‘doss bags’, danced within the ancient circle throughout the late ‘50s. In the ‘60s Mods gathered in great numbers to join the solstice celebrations, and The Beatles hung cardboard effigies of themselves from the stones in 1965.

Ten years after the acid prophet, Timothy Leary, advised people to “turn on, tune in, and drop out”, rock festivals had firmly established themselves as a unifying force among the world’s youth. Under the shared flag of Rock ‘n’ Roll diverse political and social groups had come together to form a mass movement for change. It was Wally’s vision to reinforce that trend through the Stonehenge Free Festival, and continue a centuries-old tradition of festive gatherings at the monument.

Thousands of fliers and posters were printed and distributed. Invitations were sent out to such varied celebrities as the Pope, the Duke of Edinburgh, British Airways air hostesses and the hippies of Kathmandu. For nine weeks, with only a battered old cassette player to provide the music, a few hundred people braved the wet weather at Stonehenge.

Wally Hope was delighted: “Our generation is the best mass movement in history, experimenting with anything in our search for love and peace. Our temple is sound. We fight our battles with music - drums like thunder, cymbals like lightning, banks of electronic equipment like nuclear missiles of sound. We have guitars instead of tommy guns.”

The monument’s official keepers were understandably less enthusiastic. A Notice to Withdraw was eventually served on the festival site. The festival-goers had agreed that, should the authorities intervene, they would answer only to the name of Wally, after a much sought-after lost dog at an Isle of Wight festival years before.

Ludicrous summonses against the likes of Phil Wally, Sid Wally and Chris Wally set the scene for a colourful showdown at the High Court in London. Fleet Street loved it. The Wallies of Stonehenge appeared in the press

daily, flashing peace signs and preaching the power of love.

“We were attempting to say that festivals were good for the heart and soul of the country,” recalls Sid Rawles, a founding member of the Windsor Free Festival. “They were cheap holidays. We felt that a lot of inner-city problems could be solved just by allowing people to come out into the countryside and have a good time.”

“A tradition had been born. But Wally Hope had pushed a thorn into the side of the system, and the system was not going to let him get away with it again.”

Although they were ordered to vacate the land, the trial ensured massive publicity for the free festival movement. Wally Hope sensed victory, and sang to the waiting press: “We have won, we have won. Everybody loves us, we have won.”

“In a way they had won,” says Rimbaud. “A tradition had been born. But Wally Hope had pushed a thorn into the side of the system, and the system was not going to let him get away with it again.”

From Stonehenge the Wallies travelled to Windsor Great Park for the third Windsor Free Festival. It had been the idea of a former civil servant called William Ubique Dwyer to hold rock festival in the Queen’s back garden, an event that, in the words of David Holds worth, former Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, “cocked a very public snook at the Establishment in a rather sensitive area”.

On the morning of the sixth day, six hundred of his men moved in to clear the site. There were 220 arrests, and 116 reported injuries.

“I saw a pregnant woman being kicked in the belly, and a little boy being kicked in the face,” recalled a bruised and depressed Wally Hope. “All around they were just laying into people. I went to one policeman who had just knocked out a woman’s teeth and asked him why he’d done it. He told me to fuck off or I’d get the same. Later on, I did.”

In the Winter of 1974, preparations were made for Stonehenge II. Wally’s bizarre dress-sense of middle-eastern army gear and Scottish

tartans became a familiar sight around London. In May 1975 he set out for Cornwall in his rainbow-striped car.

The next time Penny Rimbaud saw him was inside a mental hospital. He was almost unrecognizable; transformed within a month from a healthy confident young man into a physical and mental wreck.

“He had lost a stone in weight. He was frail, nervous and almost incapable of speech. He sat with his head hung on his chest. His tear-filled eyes had sunk, dull and dead, into

An independent doctor diagnosed his condition as being chronic dyskinesia, a disease brought about through the overdose of correctional drugs such as Modecate.

his skull. His hands shook constantly in the way that old men’s do on a cold winter’s day.”

Slowly the truth emerged. Two days after leaving London Wally had been arrested for possessing three acid tablets. Having been refused bail, with his right to a phone call denied, he was held in prison on remand. He was alone and hopelessly ill-equipped for what was about to happen to him.

A week later he developed a rash from his prison uniform and was sent to the prison doctor who diagnosed his condition as schizophrenia. Massive doses of the ‘chemical cosh’ Largactil were then prescribed, and administered by force.

“By the time he was dragged into the courts again,” says Rimbaud, “he was so physically and mentally bound up in a drug-induced strait jacket that he was totally incapable of understanding what was going on.”

Wally Hope’s fate was sealed. He was ‘sectioned’ under the Mental Health Act 1959 and committed to the Manor psychiatric hospital near Salisbury for an indefinite period. The second Stonehenge festival went ahead with thousands in attendance, while its founder and spiritual leader lay sick and motionless only a few miles away.

Wally Hope, now a nervous and gibbering wreck, was eventually released. An independent doctor diagnosed his condition as being chronic dyskinesia, a disease brought about through the overdose of correctional drugs such as Modecate. For this there was no known cure.

Penny Rimbaud looked after him throughout his final days:

“At night he would lay in his bed and cry; quiet, desperate sobs that would go on until dawn. We tried to teach him to walk properly again. His left arm would swing forward with his left leg, his right with his right. Sometimes we were able to laugh about it, but the laughter always gave way to tears.”

On the third of September 1975, unable to face another day, perhaps hoping that death might offer more to him than what was left in life, Phil Russell, alias Wally Hope, overdosed on sleeping pills and choked to death on the vomit they induced.

Weeks later, while giving evidence in the coroner’s court, the police officer responsible for investigating his death dismissed him with the line: “He thought he was Jesus Christ didn’t he?” A verdict of suicide was later reached with no reference to the appalling treatment he had suffered in hospital.

For people like Penny, Phil’s death signalled the end of an era:

“Along with him died the last grain of trust that we, naively, had in the ‘system’, the last seed of hope that, if we lived a decent life based on respect rather than abuse, our example might be followed by those in authority.”

Like the Kent State University killings a decade before, when five protesting students were shot by the US Army, the British Establishment had shown that it too was prepared to kill its young rather than accept diversity and change.

Wally’s death coincided with a growing tide of anger and distrust amongst Britain’s youth. A year after his death the Sex Pistols released ‘Anarchy in the UK’, and vocalised popular distaste for the dominant culture. Punks soon replaced hippies as public enemy number one.

“Up to that point they had truncheoned us out of Windsor Great Park and arrested us at every opportunity,” observes Sid Rawles.

“Then punk arrived and all of a sudden they were putting their arm around your shoulder and saying: ‘well, of course, you old hippies are really nice people. You believe in peace and love. Look at that lot!’”

Wally Hope’s ashes were ceremonially scattered at Stonehenge in 1976. It was to be another eight years before the state put a violent end to the Solstice gatherings during the infamous Battle of the Beanfield in 1985. In the intervening years Stonehenge became one of the most famous festivals in the world, attracting tens of thousands of people and spawning bands like Hawkwind, Gong and the Magic Mushroom Band.

Twenty years after his death, Wally’s last known statement provides a tragic reminder of Britain’s last great hippy:

“The first dream that I remember is of myself holding the hand of an older man, looking over a beautiful and peaceful valley. Suddenly a fox broke cover followed by hounds and strong horses ridden by red-coated huntsmen. The man pointed into the valley and said, ‘That, my son, is where you are heading.’ I soon found that out, I am the fox.”

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Mixin' on Wally's box at an early Stonehenge Festival.

Alan Lodge

To Rave or to Riot?

When a fracas kicked off on a Luton estate this summer, it was an ideal opportunity to examine two very different ways of dealing with pressure-cooker violence. In keeping with Home Office edicts, police were keen on a 'paramilitary' approach. The Exodus Collective, on the other hand, thought it was about time we all got on a different one. **Jim Carey** discovers how the Lutonites danced off the disturbance. Pictures by **Nick Cobbing**.

It's no small irony that members of the Luton-based Exodus Collective returned home from a community centre planning enquiry to find burning cars billowing clouds of smoke amidst the tower blocks of their estate.

"Boredom rules among Luton's rebel youth," trumpeted one national newspaper after the disturbances on the Marsh Farm Estate.

But as is so often the case, the real story is far more remarkable than the casual explanations used to explain what the media viewed as just another urban summer riot.

"A lot of the media rationale for the riots was stock, straight out of the cupboard. It didn't cut any ice up here and worse, it gave credence to a few Herberts trying their hand at sociology," observes Rick Hammond, Luton Borough Council's publicity officer.

The real story does indeed involve a disaffected boredom, but also a continuing political disregard for youth culture, heavy-handed police riot-control tactics and a collection of "freedom fighters" called the Exodus Collective.

Exodus have been in existence for three years, running free local raves, occupying and refurbishing local derelict properties and operating as the purveyors of unorthodox approaches to 'community regeneration' - their stated purpose. (See SQUALLS 8, 9 and 10)

On that Wednesday evening, members of the Collective had just attended a local authority planning enquiry into their proposal to establish a community centre in a disused warehouse in central Luton.

After reading in the local press that the planning committee were intending to turn down their application, Exodus asked for the opportunity to address the

councillors. After a twenty seven minute précis of their intentions, the committee agreed to forestall a decision pending a site visit. (See Page 33 for Community Centre latest.)

"So we went back on a celebration tip," says Glenn Jenkins, resident of the Marsh Farm Estate for the last seven years and a spokesperson for the Exodus Collective. "When we got back to where we live we found burning barricades on the estate."

Most media reports of the Marsh Farm

disturbances referred to the arrest of a 13-year-old runaway from a local youth detention centre, citing the incident as the spark for three nights of rioting. His friends had apparently made a hoax call to the police, pelting them with stones upon arrival. For the residents of Marsh Farm Estate, such incidents, and the small flurry of youth violence that followed, was not uncommon.

"This estate is portrayed as being worse than it actually is. There are problems with kids and vandalism - they're little buggers basically - but I wouldn't say it was any worse than a typical poverty council estate where there's loads of kids hanging around," says pregnant mother of two, Jacki Bridger.

However, in the past such disturbances have not resulted in the kind of rioting, arson and looting that occurred over the next three nights.

"If the police had backed off to their normal patrol then it would have been just a gossip about Wednesday night - 'did you see so and so' and I reckon that would have been the end of it," continues Bridger.

John Jefferson, a local councillor for four years and resident of the Marsh Farm Estate for 15 years, strongly feels a riot ensued from the way a fracas was dealt with.

"On Wednesday night I got a call from Chief Superintendent Gary Banks [Divisional Commander of Luton Police] asking me what the situation was and I told him that it had calmed down and that if the police didn't come into the estate, people would go home. He told me that the police would not send anybody in for at least an hour, after which time he would give me another ring to review the situation. Then all of a sudden, fifteen minutes after the call, comes a procession of flashing blue lights and the police come charging in."



Riot police immediately sealed off the area and the local youth, still on the streets of the estate, scattered.

"The following day police were tugging everyone," recalls Glenn Jenkins. "Tax discs, driving licences, anything; harassment all day long."

The police remained on the estate throughout the course of the day, with residents describing it as one of "high tension".

"The police presence was unbelievable on the estate - it made you nervous," recalls Jacki Bridger. "I took the kids to school in the morning and the parents' talk was all about 'something's happening tonight because have you seen the amount of police?'. It was like a red rag to a bull, especially on an estate like this that doesn't have good police relations anyway."

Besides Bedfordshire Police, other forces were involved in the operation including the Metropolitan Police Force.

"It was very heavy-handed," agrees Larry McGowan, a 57-year-old local Borough Councillor. "Not being in the police, I don't know what their motives were, but calling in the police from all over the bloody place was over the top."

On Thursday night, after a day of incredible tension, the smouldering resentment blew up into a full-scale riot.

"There were hundreds of people all over the estate, burning schools, looting shops - it was atrocious," recalls Glenn Jenkins.

According to John Jefferson, Chief Superintendent Banks claimed in a later telephone call that he had not been able to relay Jefferson's on-the-spot assessment to the control room in time to prevent the riot police from going in. Judging by the short time span between the time of his alleged call and the arrival of the police on the estate, this is certainly likely.

However by Thursday, Chief Supt Banks appeared on Anglia Television talking of "reclaiming the territory" on the estate, a phrase certain Marsh Farm residents found inflammatory in its own right.

Chief Supt. Banks declined to comment personally on the conversations he had had with Jefferson. His spokesperson, Chief Inspector Woolf of Luton Police would only say: "I know Mr Banks has spoken to a number of people on a number of different occasions. The police presence on the estate was well-considered and appropriate for the time."

On Saturday, after three nights of violence and running battles with riot police, an extraordinary event took place. An event that Tom Shaw, Borough Councillor for the nearby estate of Lewsey Farm, describes as playing "a major part" in quelling the disturbance.

The Exodus Collective had already planned to hold one of their fortnightly local raves on the Saturday night but the disturbances of the previous three days and nights gave the event an added significance.

The Collective issued a three point declaration of intent, announcing that a dance was to be held as a "non-violent demonstration against the use of policing methods that had turned a spark into a fire", "to try and alleviate the tension" and "to continue, by direct passive action, the campaign for a permanent community and activity centre in order that the youth of this community are able to express themselves positively".

The rave was held six miles from nearby Dunstable and attracted 2,000 local people. At 3.30 am on Sunday morning, members of the Exodus Collective received a call from BBC Radio Bedfordshire to say that the streets of Marsh Farm Estate were now solely populated by riot police, with not a rioter in sight. Members of the Collective then travelled back to the Estate with a film cameraman shooting footage of riot police loitering on the streets with nothing to do. The film soundtrack recorded birdsong.

Bedfordshire Police claim there is no evidence to suggest the dance was instrumental in quelling the disturbance:

"Whether or not that had the affect of causing an abstraction of people from the estate is one of those things we shall never know. There was what is known as a rave away from Luton on the Saturday night and that may or may not have had an affect. There may have been a number of factors that helped return the estate to normality, whether they are cumulatively significant we don't know," says the roundabout Chief Inspector Woolf.

Other observers, including local councillors, were more unequivocal:

"They got youngsters off the Estate and got them dancing to the music," says Cllr Larry McGowan.

"It certainly took some young people from Marsh Farm Estate and those young people, had they stayed, might have been involved in further disturbances," observed Tom Kiernan, Community Development Officer with Luton Borough Council.

The local Luton News subsequently referred to Exodus as the "Pied Pipers of Hamelin".

Some of the Bedfordshire Police's hesitancy to credit Exodus for its contribution to stopping the violence was explained by Chief Inspector Woolf:

"I've got to be careful here because in the past Exodus have been to the courts and some of them have been subjected to an injunction as to whether or not they should be holding raves. It does make it an extremely delicate situation, they've been asking for a public

enquiry into the handling by Bedfordshire Police of their activities which in effect stopped Exodus having raves in the Borough three years ago."

In fact these injunctions may have stopped Exodus having raves in theory, but certainly not "in effect". They have been holding regularly well attended dances ever since, a fact that hasn't escaped the notice of Bedfordshire Police. Indeed, police helicopters can be seen hovering over the events and ground-based officers sit in panda cars



watching the convoy go by every two weeks.

Furthermore, Exodus have been granted a full-scale public enquiry by Bedfordshire County Council's Policy and Resources Committee, in a decision reached unanimously bar one Tory Councillor's vote. The Council have applied for Home Office funding for the enquiry and Michael Mansfield QC has offered to chair it. (For the latest news on the public enquiry see 34)

In local warehouses, quarries, bams and landfill sites Exodus have, over the last three years, set up their speaker stacks and pumped out a music to which local youth have flocked. The events are marshalled by Exodus peace stewards, attended by their own first-aid van and situated out of the way of residential areas. One New Years Eve dance organised by the Collective attracted 10,000 people.

"They play the rave music which I cannot stand," says Cllr Larry McGowan. "But I think they do very good work with the youngsters in the town. They were labelled by the police as these raves where the drugs are, but Exodus actually counsel the youngsters on drugs and when they have a rave they don't charge. Some kids can afford a few bob, some can't."

Using donations collected in a bucket, Exodus have occupied a derelict hospice on the outskirts of Luton, reconstructing it for use by homeless people. They have also squatted a dilapidated farm next to the M1, rebuilding the bams with old pallets and stocking it with animals. Now with geese, sheep, goats and a third generation of Vietnamese Pot Belly pigs, the Long Meadow Community Farm is about to open up to visits by local school children. In association with the Marsh Farm Residents' Association, the farm animals have also been brought to the estate for family fun-days, the latest of which occurred this September. Both the hospice, renamed HAZ (Housing Action Zone) Manor, and the farm, now have licences.

Jacki Bridger, has lived on Marsh Farm

At 3.30pm on Sunday morning members of Exodus received a call from BBC Radio Bedfordshire to say that the streets of Marsh Farm were now solely populated by riot police, with not a rioter in sight.

Estate for the last seven years and now works as secretary to the Long Meadow Community Farm:

"It makes being a mum so much easier. I can't afford to take them anywhere but now they're helping out on the farm instead of hanging round the streets damaging bus shelters."

"I helped build some of the bams on the farm," explains Stuart, another Exodus member. "When we come to these derelict places we see what it could be, we've got vision and nothing is beyond us. I didn't think I could build a bam but now I've helped build a farm."

"That's the thing," adds Nobby. "There are people here willing to teach and there are people willing to learn."

However, not everybody in area saw the value of Exodus's work.

Among a long list of police operations, set to become the subject of a major public enquiry, was the collapse of a drugs charge brought against Paul Taylor, a member of Exodus, in 1993. The jury dismissed the case after police failed to explain a multitude of inconsistencies in police statements and how they had managed to find two separate caches of drugs within two minutes of entering a blacked out farm house. The jury's decision was made without Taylor even speaking in his own defence.

In another incident also taking place at the beginning of 1993, police arrested around 35 members of the Collective on the night of a planned rave. Four thousand dancers subsequently surrounded Luton Police Station, demanding the release of the Exodus members and the return of the sound equipment.

Despite a Daily Express headline claiming "4,000 Turn Rave Into Riot", the protest had been kept peaceful, with demonstrators dancing to car stereos outside the station. Chief Inspector Mick Brown of Bedfordshire Police even went on record to praise their conduct: "The crowd left the demonstration with some panache. They even tidied up after themselves and put their rubbish in bags. I thought that was quite a nice touch really."

The arrested Exodus members were subsequently released and the sound equipment returned. (See Exodus - 'The Battles' SQUALL 8).

Originally Chief Inspector Brown was given the responsibility of cultivating a liaison with Exodus and grew to respect them for their community efforts; finding his own work as a policeman easier on their dance nights: "Licensed premises were experiencing a fair amount of loss of trade, loss of customers. People might pop into the pub for a quick drink but then they'd be off for the rest of the night. As a consequence, there was a lessening of alcohol related offences, gratuitous assaults, bottle throwing, and random disorder that generally goes with town centres and drink."

However, high level decisions were made and strategic police operations against the Collective began, with Chief Inspector Brown caught in the middle:

"I was rather put on the spot. I heard that a number of Members of Parliament had written to the Chief Constable saying this should stop and that the police ought to get on the case. At about the time the decision was made to pull the plug

on negotiations [with Exodus], there were some Members of Parliament advocating drastic measures."

Shortly after this, Chief Inspector Brown was transferred away from the area to an office job in Kempston. He has now retired and lives in Scotland.

Interestingly, the two local MPs are Sir Graham Bright (Con MP Luton South), ex-parliamentary private secretary to John Major, now vice chairman of the Conservative Party and author of a successful private members bill against raves in 1991, and John Carlisle (Con MP Luton North) who spoke of the need to "break up" raves during the debate on the recent Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.

When John Carlisle visited Marsh Farm Estate after the recent riots, he was pelted with an assortment of vegetables by residents. In a verbal exchange in front of camera, Marsh Farm resident and ex-councillor, John Jefferson, told Carlisle: "It takes a riot to get you here, you are just sitting on your hands and playing the politician."

The local Luton on Sunday newspaper reported the incident, describing Carlisle as "speechless".

However, it isn't only Conservative MPs who are the subject of Jefferson's political dissatisfactions.

After four years as a Labour Councillor, sitting on the education, police, social services and public protection committees, John Jefferson has recently resigned both his position as councillor and his membership of the Labour Party.

"The Labour Party are hopelessly out of touch with the youth of this country," he says, citing their current Tory inspired taboo on cannabis as just one of many examples. "Pub culture is history for us," agrees Exodus's Glenn Jenkins. "They say there's a massive percentage of young people who smoke weed and then they treat their own kids as if they're aliens. There's a big culture difference."

"National government has lost the plot, it's all about window dressing. They should free up local government to help the enabling process with local groups."

Which brings us back to the disturbances on the Marsh Farm Estate. For as long as the erosion of mutual respect continues between youth and the politicians responsible for legislation, disturbances such as these will continue.

"There is a certain amount of alienation and isolation felt by young

people and perhaps not only by young people," observes Luton Community Development Officer Tom Kiernan.

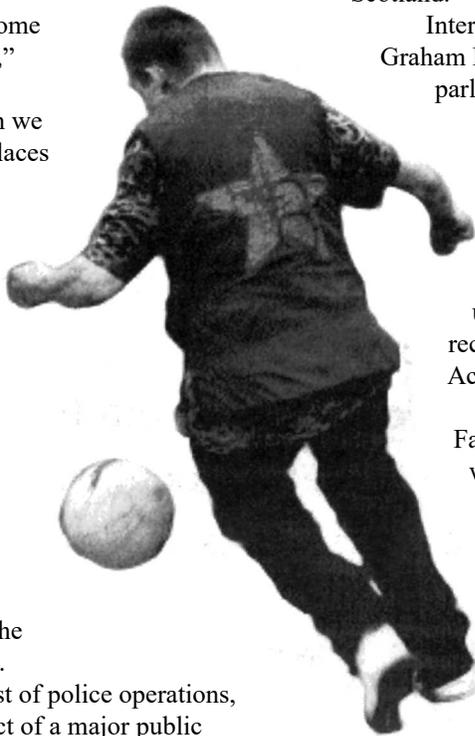
"I think one of the things we've been very bad at in society as a whole is pretending that young people are homogeneous. What you need is a range of different things happening for young people all the way through from scout groups to very very informal situations."

"There are certain young people who want to do things at night and it is normally the commercial sector that has offered those opportunities but then the cost of getting to a night club, paying to get in and paying whatever they expect you to pay for drinks is a very real barrier for young people."

"It's no good, a load of old fogeys sitting down round the council chamber assuming they know what's best for the youth," adds Luton Borough Councillor Tom Shaw. "We have organised community centres, sports and leisure facilities but a lot of youngsters don't want that. It's all right looking after the nice, white, middle-class kids, they're the ones that fit into the local authority youth service, but what happens to the rest?"

At the end of last year, Luton Borough Council published a Survey of Youth, subtitled: 'What can be done to improve the quality of the lives of young people living in Luton?'. Borough Councillor Larry McGowan believes the survey's findings should be heeded and applied:

"One of the main findings of the survey was that the youth were more interested in organising themselves than being organised by someone who they saw as being a figure of authority: that is why Exodus are so successful. It's freedom for the kids, where there is organisation but not the way the Borough Council do it. It's the kind of activity missing everywhere in the country."



SQ

The Lutonites and the Planners of Babylon

Planning is the most subjective procedure in the country. An official 'favour' susceptible to subtle power games. The Exodus Collective's latest cultural proposals have pitched them against those who hold the local planning reigns. Of course, exposures follow.

“It seemed to me that Exodus on this occasion, and not for the first time, were being treated less fairly than a good many other applicants,” said David Franks on the steps of Luton Town Hall. And Franks should know. As well as leading the Liberal Democrat group on Luton Borough Council, he has also been a member of the local Planning Committee for 13 years and is well placed to notice anything unusual about the way planning applications are dealt with. He is also keen to see that all groups get equally fair treatment. “I can't see why Exodus should be treated any different from any other applicant,” he says.

The application Franks is referring to is the Exodus Collective's proposal to turn a central Luton warehouse, empty for the last three years, into a community centre. It's the latest in a long line of confrontations with officialdom that is turning the Exodus story into an ongoing investigation into who exactly runs our counties, towns and cities. And indeed, how they don't take kindly to being challenged. The latest log jam in the cultural river is Chief Planning Officer for Luton Town, David Watts MRTPI, FRICS, FIMgt, etc.

The history is simple. Exodus submitted a proposal to the Luton Borough Council Planning Committee for a much needed community centre in central Luton. The Borough Council's own youth survey, conducted in 1994, had already shown that such a venue was necessary. The disaffected boredom that provided much of the dry kindling for the Marsh Farm riots this summer merely confirmed what was already known. A venue was required where the youth of Luton could find some sense of collective gathering; a place where the disaffected could dance and vent their Arndale Centre allergies.

The Exodus proposal included measures to curb the noise disturbance for the local community and facilitate car parking in the area. However, when Luton's Chief Planning Officer submitted his report to the planning committee, he failed to mention either of these measures. As car parking and noise production are two of the foremost planning criteria for a public venue, his omissions are unusual. Feeling cheated by the report, Exodus asked to address the committee itself, so bypassing the Chief Planning Officer's selected interpretation of their proposal. Glenn Jenkins, spokesperson for the Collective, held the ears of the committee for 27 minutes as he explained how Watts' report had missed out most of the important elements of the proposal. The Planning Committee were so concerned that the Chief Planning Officer's report was one sidedly dismissive of Exodus' proposals, that they agreed to suspend a decision and pay a visit to the warehouse site. On the day of the site visit, members of the Exodus Collective arrived to

show the committee what they had in mind but were told that they were not permitted to speak with any member of the committee. Instead the guided tour of the site was given by Watts.

“I have not been obstructive,” insisted David Watts on the steps of the Town Hall.

At the second planning meeting, members of Exodus arrived at the Town Hall to find that, without discussion, their proposal had been turned down, despite a request that the decision be further suspended pending a public meeting. The suggested public meeting was designed to facilitate an opportunity for Exodus to meet and answer any fears held by objectors to the proposal. It is highly unusual for a planning committee to refuse a decision deferral on the basis of a pending public meeting, but in this case they had done so. Why?

It transpires that only Watts was aware that Exodus had asked for a deferral and that he had omitted to tell the Committee of their request when the decision had come before the meeting. In truth, David Watts is not under any obligation

The Koladome proposal was the subject of hundreds of objections, whilst Exodus' proposal was opposed by just six. The Koladome was given planning permission..... but Exodus' proposal was not.

to remind the committee of what was already in their paperwork, but Exodus' deferral request had been buried on page 165 of the committee's documents for the meeting. It transpires that not one member of the committee had read it of their own accord.

This in itself is a testament to fickleness of the planning committee process, rendering it open to the abuse of selectively chosen applications and the subtle steering of the committee's attention.

At the first planning meeting, Exodus' request had been considered alongside a proposal for a massive entertainment complex called the Koladome, to be backed by Luton Town Football Club and Whitbread Breweries (Whitbread's HQ is in Luton and Samuel Whitbread is Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire). The Koladome

proposal was the subject of hundreds of objections, whilst Exodus' proposal was opposed by just six. The Koladome was given planning permission first time round by the planning committee but Exodus' proposal was not. Anonymous leaflets were also posted through letterboxes near to the site of Exodus' proposed community centre saying: “Do you wish to oppose permission to use premises in Bolton Road by Exodus for all night rave parties every month. These will attract up to 3,000 people and will mean noisy music, people wandering the streets all night and increased traffic. Please write to David Watts, Chief Planning Officer, stating your objection.”

Although a negative decision had already been made by the planning committee, a reminder of Exodus' request for deferral persuaded members of the committee to reconsider their decision. As a result, they voted to defer the decision pending a public meeting.

The public meeting was held and eight objectors showed up. The local press rather unusually reported the event favourably towards Exodus. At last giving public vent to Exodus' previously ignored proposals to deal with the car parking and noise problems arising from running such a community centre.

The final planning decision was made on September 27th at a meeting packed to the town hall brim with members and empathisers of the Exodus Collective.

The chairman of the planning committee stood up and announced that planning permission was to be denied and that the committee would not allow any member of Exodus to speak.

At this point the entire contents of the room stood up and walked out.

“We came here to speak to our elected representatives and we were denied that right,” said an Exodus spokesperson. “We've used up all their red tape.”

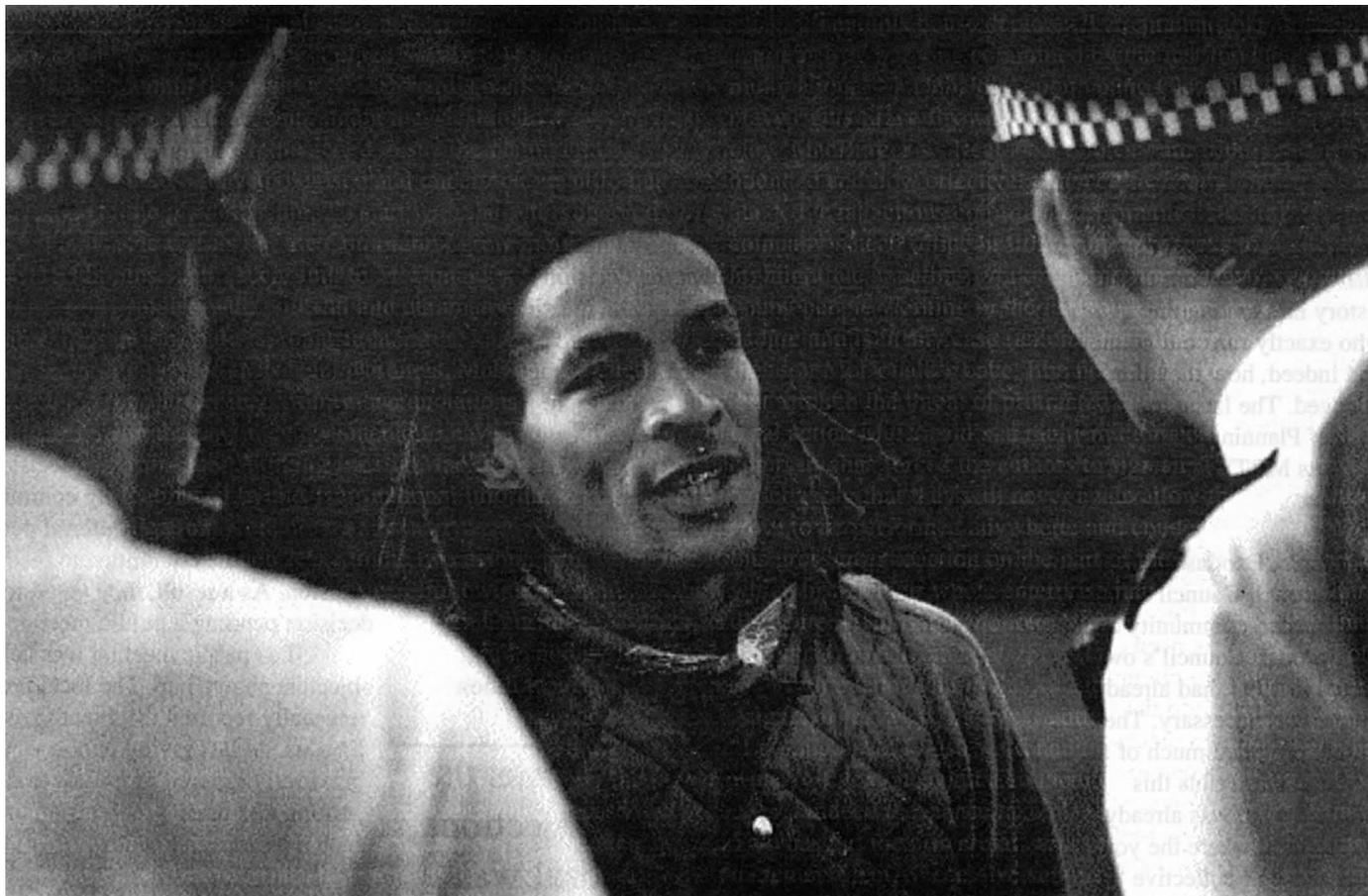
David Watts has told Exodus that any complaint they have about his conduct can be registered through the local authority ombudsman. Exodus on the other hand consider they have got better things to do with the years it takes to process an ombudsman's complaint.

“There will now be regular dances in this county - planning permission or no planning permission, injunction or no injunction,” says an Exodus spokesperson.



The Lutonites and the Plotters of Babylon

The latest state of play in the Exodus Collective's long and eventful march towards justice.



Nick Cobbing

Michael Howard has said 'No'. Not surprising really when you consider what is at stake. A full scale public inquiry into both strategic police tactics and the involvement of politicians at local and national level. All voted for by Bedfordshire County Council and due to be chaired by Britain's top civil rights QC, Michael Mansfield.

The persuasive evidence, some of which has been reviewed in previous SQUALLs, is due to provide an irrefutable exposure of the manipulative mechanisms of social control that pass for democracy in this country. More than that, they will undoubtedly expose a maliciousness of official intent due make any citizen shudder. The choice will become apparent for every individual - to stick one's head in the sand or to stand up and say 'this shall not prevail'.

No wonder Michael Howard says No.

In the last issue of SQUALL, we published a letter sent by Dennis Cleggett, Chief Executive of Bedfordshire County Council, to Michael Howard. The correspondence followed an almost unanimous decision by the Council's policy and resources committee to support, and press for, a public inquiry into the unlawful activity of police and others against the Exodus Collective.

The decision of the committee was that nothing less than a full scale public enquiry would suffice to address the level and extent of operations directed against the Collective. Councillors on the committee argued that the seriousness of the charges demanded the use of a rarely used clause in the Police Act 1964, which makes provision for a local authority-supervised public enquiry when the implications of the evidence are serious. Councillors also argued that smaller complaints associated with local police conduct towards the Collective had produced unsatisfactory

replies and investigations under the usual procedures conducted by the Police Complaints Authority (PCA).

Thus they argued the Police Complaints Authority were not the appropriate investigating body for allegations that were so serious and wide ranging.

The problem with Bedfordshire County Council's decision was that they do not have the money to fund such a public inquiry. The figure for a full public investigation, to be chaired by a prominent QC, is estimated at between £100,000 - £150,000.

Thus the Council committee decided that the Home Office should be asked to fund the enquiry.

As can be read in the last issue of SQUALL, there was some consternation about the letter sent by Dennis Cleggett which, contrary to the Council's original request, asked the Home Office to conduct the inquiry

rather than merely to provide the money to fund it. Neither Exodus or the Council policy and resources committee, wants the Home Office to conduct the inquiry itself. In many ways the potential exposures that would result from the inquiry were as likely to implicate certain people at the Home Office as they were certain members of Bedfordshire Police force. For this reason, it was considered that asking the Home Office to conduct the inquiry was little better than asking the Police Complaints Authority.

Nevertheless, a reply was awaited from the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, although few people expected him to be enthusiastic about funding an investigation that could have such major political ramifications, detrimental to his own way of operating.

Indeed, when a reply was received to the

“It’s a poison chalice, anyone who doesn’t drink knows what’s been going on.”

Chief Executive’s letter, it was a person of little political consequence attached to the F2 division of the Home Office that drafted it.

In order to give followers of this saga the full story, SQUALL reprints the Home Office’s reply below:

“Dear Mr Cleggett,

Thank you for your letter of 10 May to the Home Secretary bringing his attention to a resolution passed by the County Council calling for an inquiry into the activities of the Bedfordshire Police against members of the Exodus Collective and others. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

Successive Home Secretaries have taken the view that inquiries under section 32 of the Police Act 1964 should be reserved for the most extreme circumstances, for example where the whole efficiency of a force is called into question, or where there has been serious public disorder. These amount to circumstances where other ways of enquiring into the behaviour of the police would be inadequate.

I appreciate the County Councillors’ concern that allegations of police malpractice should be investigated, and that the motion proposing an inquiry was only passed after lengthy consideration of these matters, but I am afraid that the events surrounding the Exodus Collective do not fulfil the criteria I have outlined.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) laid down procedures for handling complaints against the police which are now well established. In particular, we now have the Police Complaints Authority to provide independent oversight of the investigation and consideration of allegations against police officers. The Act gives the Authority important powers to assist it in discharging its statutory functions, including the right to direct that disciplinary charges are brought against any officers suspected of misconduct. I understand that the Police Complaints Authority has dealt with one allegation against an officer arising from these allegations which was voluntarily referred to them by the Bedfordshire Police.

We are, therefore, satisfied that the arrangements laid down in PACE provide a suitable avenue for allegations of police misconduct to be thoroughly investigated and

independently considered.”

One very interesting selection of words comes at the beginning of the letter.

In Dennis Cleggett’s original correspondence it says that the Council voted for “an inquiry into the operations by police and others [italics] against the Exodus Collective and others.”

In the Home Office reply, it says “operations by police against the Exodus Collective and others.”

Spot the difference.

It is an indication of why neither Exodus nor Bedfordshire County Councillors want an inquiry of such magnitude to be conducted either by the “police” (PCA) or by the “others” (Home Office edicts and local MPs).

Remember that before being transferred out of the area and then retiring to Scotland, Chief Inspector Mick Brown of Luton Police said on record: “Some MPs were advocating drastic measures.”

As it stands now, Exodus have sent letters to all the major political parties on the council, asking what they are going to do in response to the Home Office’s negative reply. They also wrote to Shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, outlining their case, enclosing press-cuttings and saying they hoped he would show more interest than Michael Howard.

Jack Straw wrote back to say he was “very sympathetic” but could not do anything to help. In an obvious admission that he had not read any of the enclosed material about the case, Straw suggested to Exodus that they contact their local MP “who will be able to help you in this matter”. Exodus’ local MPs are of course John “Banish all gypsies into the wilderness” Carlisle (Con MP Luton North) and Sir Graham Bright (Con MP Luton South), vice chairman of the Conservative Party. Both MPs have been involved in manoeuvres against the Exodus Collective and will undoubtedly be a part of the public inquiry into “Bedfordshire Police and others”. Exodus have written back to Jack Straw, suggesting that he reads the letter this time.

“It’s a poison chalice,” says Glenn Jenkins, an Exodus spokesperson. “Anyone who doesn’t drink knows what’s been going on.

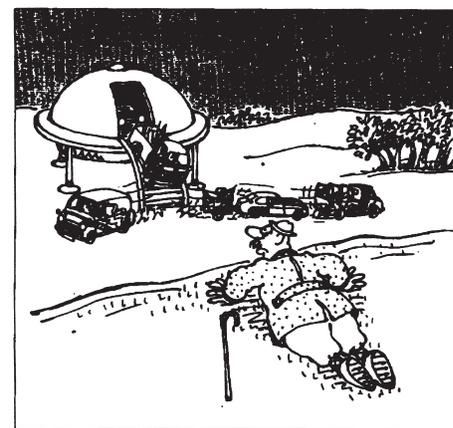
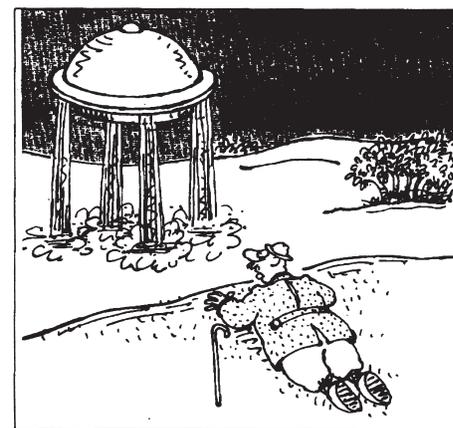
And of course anyone who is informed of the implications of such social poison and yet fails to warn people of its existence, is indeed implicated in the attempted murder of justice.

Meanwhile, Home Office funding or not, moves are afoot to start up a ‘justice fund’ in order to collect the cash. Indeed, if the Home Office are under impression that, without their money the inquiry won’t happen, they are about to get the first unpleasant surprise of many.

Watch this space.

Exodus Collective on Channel 4

Spectacle Productions, the people who brought you ‘The Battle of Trafalgar’ and ‘Truth, Lies and Rostock’, have made a new film about the Exodus Collective to be shown on Channel Four on the 11th of November at 11pm.



Sisters on the Decks

Debbie Shaw takes a look at the increasing number of female DJs battling to get their tunes on the twin decks, with Mizbehaviour as a prime exponent.

At the end of the 80s when DJs were stars and names like Andy Weatherail and Daniel Rampling pulled massive crowds, Gizelle was playing at a South East London club alongside the big names, but hers never once appeared on the flyer.

"I used to play all night, from 8 till 2. The punters were happy, it was good fun and I was well paid but I never felt I was really credited for what I did. I've got no proof that I was ever part of that scene." Now a core member of the Mizbehaviour multi-media collective, Gizelle says that, despite having been a DJ for eight years, it's only in the past three, since she began working with other women, that she has really gained confidence in what she does.

Caroline (aka Sexy Rubber Sole), another member of Mizbehaviour, says she was motivated to start playing out herself when she grew angry that there seemed to be so few women actually on the decks. "I used to play drums with a DJ and a Didge player at Zero Gravity parties. All the time I wanted to hear music that I really liked and I wasn't really hearing it. I began actually organising the parties with a couple of other people and it was then that I decided I wanted to play out. I'd been messing around on decks. I'd borrowed decks at home. I knew what I was into. Organising the parties gave me the courage to get started. Having some control over what was happening made me more

confident"

DJ Wild, who started up the Lilith co-operative earlier this year, agrees that the scene can be intimidating for women: "I just didn't know if there were any other women DJs out there. I was playing out on the commercial scene and found it very male-dominated. They always assume that you're some bloke's girlfriend or just someone who happens to be hanging around. They don't take you seriously as a DJ."

Lilith is now seven-strong, playing music ranging from ambient, through trip-hop, house and dub to new-energy techno. As well as organising parties, like Mizbehaviour, Lilith aims to offer a support network for other women DJs. Wild herself is excited by the underground scene and has found that, in comparison to the commercial clubs, it offers her more scope to experiment and she finds the men considerably less aggressive. However, as Caroline points out: "There's a certain amount of tokenism going on. Male promoters will sometimes pull in a few female DJs to do a women's night but everyone will know that it's the men that are getting the thing off the ground. They may genuinely want to get the women heard but it's still within the confines and restraints of that overall hierarchy."

H, who plays out with Bone Idol, calls it the 'boy's club'. At the massive Teknival festival in Normandy, Northern France at the end of May, out of upwards of twenty sound systems, she noticed only about three other women DJs. "I really wanted to play but the whole thing was so competitive. You couldn't really hear any individual system. There was no room to vary the tempo or try something different. It was just constant hardcore."

Julia, who plays out under the name BiBi (Black Bitch - a parting gift from an ex-boyfriend who wrote it on her bedroom wall) got started when a DJ who rented her spare room wanted to pay her in vinyl. Like H, Caroline and Wild, she originally started off playing at home. She now runs The Breakfast Club, which happens every Sunday at Silverfish, where DJ Scanner recently scanned two prisoners breaking out of Wandsworth during his set (it will be available on record next year). The Breakfast Club is an import from Japan where BiBi spent three months earlier this year, having been invited to play at a club in Tokyo. "I got really pissed off. At one point they didn't feed me for six days. The work wasn't really there. But I met some great people in Tokyo and since I've been back, I've been able to bring over some of the best Japanese DJs."

BiBi feels that her visibility as a

DJ has contributed to the verbal sexual harassment that she has recently been subjected to but has some advice for other women finding themselves in the same situation: "Just tape everything he says and make sure he knows that you'll use it if you have to."

Trill, who arrived here from Japan eight years ago, describes playing out as "Excellent but horrible". Starting out at a happy hardcore club at the Marquee in London in 1991, she now also plays with Zero Gravity and Mizbehaviour. She says that, even after four years, she starts shaking every time she takes her turn at the decks. "I still feel awkward every time I go into a record store and I'm the only woman, and I still haven't got much confidence with machinery."

H, who plays mostly roots reggae and dub, is suspicious of the recent rise in popularity of Gabba, a fast hardcore sound from Rotterdam, which BiBi calls 'Nazi music'. H finds it alienating. "I was watching the floor during a Gabba set and there were all these men posing and punching air. Then I caught on to the sample and it was going 'Suck my dick bitch'. That's what keeps girls away. Well - it made me leave."

"I play music that captures my imagination and I can feel it when it's having the same effect on the floor."

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that some women feel reluctant to make the move from the floor to the decks and find what Gizelle calls "that niche where they feel comfortable playing".

Wild thinks that, given the chance, women are more adventurous than men and are more adept at reading the vibe from the floor. "I play music that captures my imagination and I can feel it when its having the same effect on the floor."

Another member of the Bone Idol crew, Ged, agrees that women are often more willing to experiment and offered an open invitation for other women to join them: "It makes for a better vibe at a party - less aggressive." However, Caroline points out that both men and women can become aggressive on the decks. "If you're trying so hard to prove how good you are you basically block out the response from the floor. If you're too busy trying to compete with the men then you're not going to look into yourself and find your own way of doing it. What makes a good DJ is energy and men and women's energy is different."

But the fact remains that the boy's club still has all the best toys. When Mizbehaviour recently played the Deptford Urban Free Festival, they put



Vanessa Jones

DJ Trill, over from Japan, playing out at Fordham Park

out a call for other women with their own rigs to join them. Disappointingly, they got no response. Caroline thinks this may be down to the fact that women are still reluctant to perceive themselves as technicians. Traditionally, women are discouraged from actively engaging with technology and it is still the case that men have more resources at their disposal. Although, in theory, as BiBi points out, "anyone who can plug in a home stereo can set up a rig," in practice, women are often reluctant to take the first step.

Gizelle was lucky enough, while working for the BBC, to be sent on a technical awareness course for women where she was invited to join Brazen, London's first all-women radio station. But women are rarely given the opportunity to experiment in an environment where there is no pressure.

For H, it was a matter of familiarity. "I learned about sound because I was helping set up a system and then take it apart again at the end of the night and so I gradually got familiar with the technology and began to feel comfortable with it." But, as Jane, co-founder of Mizbehaviour, points

out: "Women feel they have to prove themselves on a technical level before they're allowed to experiment."

As organisations such as Lilith and Mizbehaviour prove, sisters will always find a way of doing it for themselves. But Gizelle offers a word of warning: "I'm all for women playing together but the next step has to be for us to get recognition because of our skill as DJs - not just because of our sex."

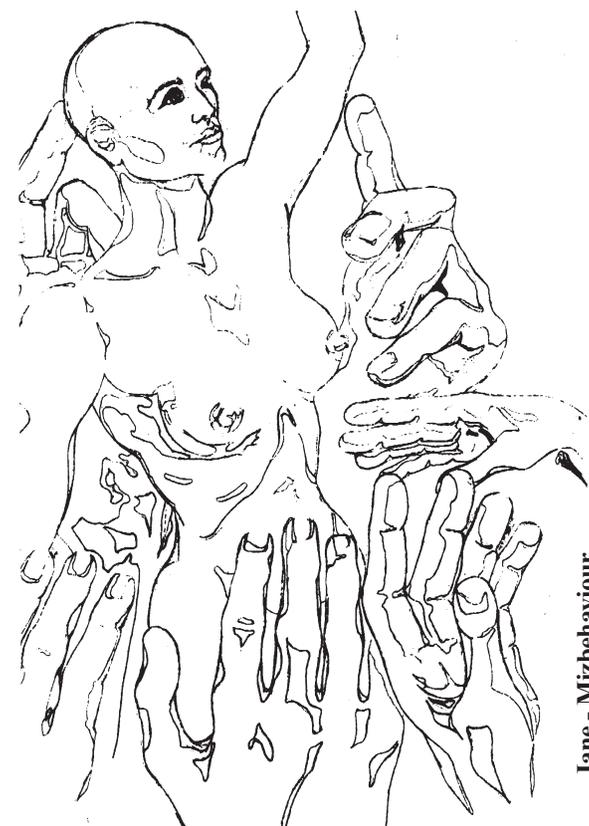
The Breakfast Club takes place every Sunday at Silverfish, 142 Charing Cross Road, London, WC2. 6am - midnight.

Bone Idol would welcome the chance to work with more women DJs. Call them on 0181 519 6832 and ask for H or Ged.

Lilith can be contacted on 0181 806 5820 (ask for Fraser).

Mizbehaviour can be contacted on 0181 211 0663 (ask for Caroline).

Vox Populi need women DJs for a predominantly female list. Call on 0181 694 6477.



Jane - Mizbehaviour

Mizbehaviour in the House

"Ultimately we've got three aims. We want to go out there and do big fuck-off parties, mixing performance and rave and representing ourselves as women without having to compromise."

Sunday night at On-U Studios, Dalston, East London. Caroline has finally abandoned her crutches, acquired after a run-in with a man who assaulted her in the street. When I spoke to her the day after the attack she had persuaded someone with a car to take her to a record shop - the need for new vinyl overcoming small inconveniences like not being able to walk.

This is the spirit of Mizbehaviour, a group of women for whom putting on parties, playing music, exploring their own creative energy and encouraging other women to do the same is, as they say, "a way of life".

Tonight's party is the result of a 50/50 collaboration with Liberator (even the flyer was a joint production), reinforcing Mizbehaviour's assertion that they are not, definitely not, about separatism. "It's about that old cliched thing of going away with a group of your peers, finding your identity and then going out into the world with the knowledge and self-confidence that you've got from relating to people who are like you," says Jane, a founding member of the collective and an experimental artist whose UV and moulded latex backdrops are an integral part of Mizbehaviour's aim to provide a complete multi-media experience.

Jane and Caroline first met two and a half years ago when Caroline and a trapeze artist/performer called Lou, returned from a techno festival in Berlin with the idea of putting on a women's night. Also involved was Christie, a costume designer, who Caroline had met while doing a music workshop at a circus school for children in Hertfordshire. The result was an event called Tuff Fluff, which took place in Tottenham, North London in December 1993. Caroline explains: "It was hardcore performance interspersed with DJing, live music and Capoeira. We ended up with a crew of between 38 to 40 women."

Tuff Fluff fired their enthusiasm for more events but money was tight and so Mizbehaviour

was born, initially, with the modest aim of providing backdrops for raves. About a year before, Caroline had started to co-organise Zero Gravity parties and asked Jane along to do some painting "because one of the first things that I did when I started getting involved in the organising was to try and pull in more women". The collective evolved to its current form when Caroline met Gizelle, now the third core member, when she was invited to DJ for Brazen. "It's still germinal," says Caroline. "Ultimately we've got three aims. We want to go out there and do big fuck-off parties, mixing performance and rave and representing ourselves as women without having to compromise. We want to find women that are doing things, or want to do things, and give them the support that they need. And we want to start running community workshops - teaching women and children the skills that we can pass on."

Those skills are considerable. Caroline, who plays keyboards, kit drums and clarinet, is a classically trained musician. Jane's backdrops testify to her skill as an artist. Gizelle has been working as a DJ for nearly a decade and the wider collective can offer anything from fighting skills to circus performance. As Gizelle says: "We've all come together from different parts of the same scene and we've all got experience of putting on clubs which requires a whole range of skills."

Caroline points out that women on the scene have always been heavily involved in organising clubs and events but "The presumption is still that it's men running everything. Unless it's advertised that it's a female crew then it's assumed, because the DJs are the only women visible, that they have just been invited in to play. Women are not thought to be in there organising things. I used to see women doing lots of work at clubs and raves but they weren't getting any recognition. They weren't invited to meetings or consulted about anything. They were used as background support but their contribution wasn't acknowledged".

If, even in the brave new world of DIY culture, women are still perceived as 'background support', then Mizbehaviour's aim of 'doing it, not just theorising about it' becomes a rallying cry for all women that have dreamed of doing it their own way and without compromise. But are women being pushed into the background or is it lack of confidence that keeps them there?

In an article in a recent edition of The Big Issue, celebrating women's involvement in DIY culture, journalist CJ Stone expressed the opinion that female energy is the driving force behind the movement. While this may be true, it is still the case that, in a practical sense, women are disadvantaged by their traditional non-involvement with the hardware that is a vital part of any event. As Caroline, Jane and Gizelle will concede, men involved in DIY culture tend to be more supportive and sensitive to women's needs, but it is still the case that many women feel disempowered in an environment where traditional male skills are to the fore. "We're not blaming men for anything," says Jane, "if anything, they go out of their way to help. But sometimes, that's the problem." In other words, what women need is to feel that they are able to take control. Mizbehaviour's skill-sharing ethic provides for women to come together and learn from each other without feeling undermined. And, of equal importance is what Caroline calls "the translation of what we are, into something creative".

Creating an environment that reflects the energy of the women involved is an important feature of Mizbehaviour events. For Zero Gravity's third birthday party they met at the crack of dawn to rescue some trees that had been cut down by the local council in Hertfordshire, which they then wove into a grotto to form the centerpiece of the event. Tonight, a suitably ironic giant breast with a glowing bright red nipple dominates the dance floor. One of Jane's sculpted mannequins hangs suspended in a metal cage, dripping green candle wax and flowers. The stunning fighting is courtesy of Karen from Lobestir, another regular Mizbehaviour collaborator.

In a year in which women's issues were the subject of a high-profile UN debate in Beijing and Lynne Franks thought she has the answer to What Women Want (a Body Shop neck rub?), Mizbehaviour provide a poignant metaphor for the lessons that a fractured and demoralised feminist movement can learn from DIY culture. As Caroline points out: "We've got nothing to prove. We're not out there waving banners or stamping our feet. We're just getting on with it."



Consultation Exercise

Claimants caught up in pilot studies for the Job Seekers' Allowance say their benefit offices are close to riot zones. **Andy Johnson** reports on the wide ranging opposition to the national nightmare due next October

Pernicious is a good word. It means wicked (evil), extremely harmful or deadly. Of all the words used to describe the new Job Seekers' Allowance, and their have been many, pernicious is perhaps the best. Fire "This Pernicious Bill" from the tongue and it hits the target of understanding pretty near the centre.

Only it is not a bill anymore. On June 28 Royal Assent was given to the Job Seekers Act and it became law.

From October 1996, when JSA will be introduced, it is estimated that 70,000 people will no longer qualify for unemployment benefit or income support.

Pernicious.

It is estimated that 85,000 people will receive less benefit, and 95,000 people will be means tested for their benefit. Pernicious.

From October 1996 it is feared that countless numbers of people will be forced into unsuitable low-paid work, bringing down wage levels across the board. Pernicious.

It is feared that many disabled people will find themselves in the "Twilight Zone". No longer able to qualify for the new incapacity benefit due to the new stringent tests, they will neither be "available" for work because they are "incapacitated". Pern - see what I mean?

During the "consultation" period for the new act anybody with a modicum of decency pointed out these, and many more, pernicious

results to the government. A list of some of those involved in the consultation process is given below.

Despite intensive lobbying the government only agreed to a few amendments which would not detract from Mr Lilley's or Portillo's (for indeed this is the child of their union) "harsh benefit regime".

Squall 10 carried a full brief of the new rules and regulations, so dig a copy out. There isn't a most pernicious aspect of the Act, in a parade of perniciousness they all share the prize. But for now, it is worth remembering that the JSA will be means tested after the first six months and the income of the claimants family with whom they live will be taken into account.

It is also worth bearing in mind that the JSA can be suspended for up to four weeks without hardship payments if the so-called job seeker refuses to take a job (regardless of pay level); attend a compulsory course; reply to an advert; or

From October 1996 it is estimated that 70,000 people will no longer qualify for unemployment benefit or income support.

undertake any other direction given by their claimant adviser. For the last clause read appearance - hairstyle, piercings, attire.

A road protester could very well find themselves "directed" to take a job as a security guard.

The JSA was originally to be introduced in April 1996, but was delayed for six months at the last minute. However, this meant that the government would lose £25 million in savings. So they kept the bit about reducing unemployment benefit entitlement from twelve to six months on schedule. This part of the new regime comes into effect in April.

Who Wanted What and What They Got (Which was Not a Lot)

Low Pay Network - are worried about the effect of the JSA on wage levels. Helen Flanagan, from the network, said that people will be forced into jobs that otherwise they wouldn't do, because of the meagre remuneration. But this will take away an employer's incentive to offer higher wages for dispiriting monotonous jobs they can't fill. A major concern is that once this incentive is removed, employers will pull down their wages across the board, knowing that people will be forced to take them by the employment service.

"We tabled one amendment," said Helen Flanagan, "that people should not have to take a job that pays less than £4.00 an hour, which is the lowest 10 per cent of earners. People should not

be forced into a job that pays them less than that. We do not have a minimum wage in this country and there are jobs paying as little as £2.00 an hour in the security industry. The amendment was thrown out."

In effect, the impoverished will find themselves with a job, be just as poor, if not poorer, and have no chance to find something they want to do.

Low Pay Unit - are mainly concerned about the reduction in entitlement of Unemployment Benefit (UB) from six to twelve months and the means-testing regime. "Many women with young children will see an immediate reduction in benefit because their partners are claiming," said Bhati Patel from the unit.

This aspect is of particular concern because although UB will only be payable for six months instead of twelve, the level of national insurance contribution, which is paid as insurance for unemployment, is being increased from 9 to 10 per cent.

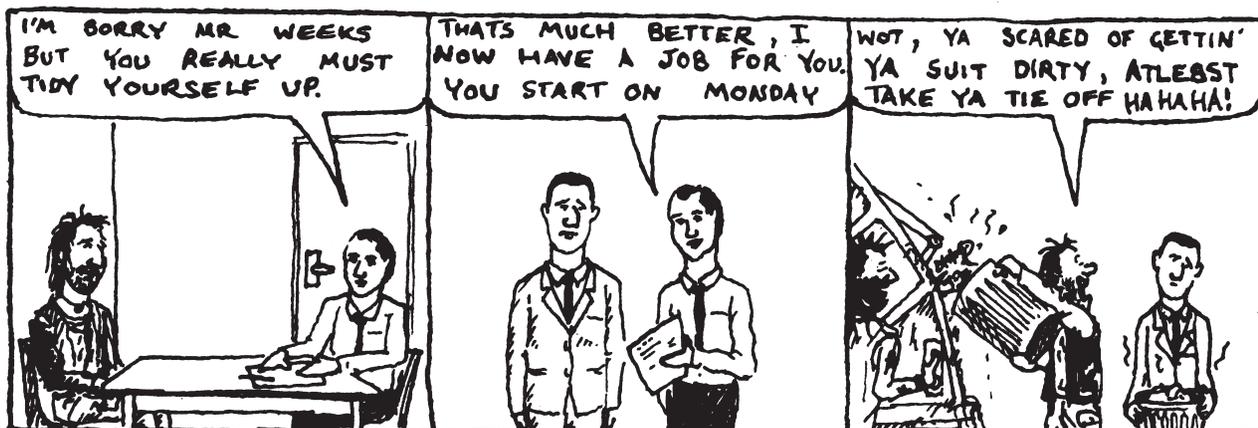
"People are putting more in but will be getting less out, particularly at the lower end of the scale where people come in and out of work and on and off benefit.

"The amendments that we put forward were to retain the existing rules on UB. None went through. It was very difficult to get anything through because the government wasn't being concrete about anything. A lot of things in the Act are being left to discretion (of the local employment centres who will assess entitlement)."

Church Action on Poverty

CAP's main concerns were about the effect of the new benefit on young people and low pay. Clause 6 of the Act, which details new rules regarding availability of work, were a particular objection.

"We wanted to make sure that people wouldn't be penalised on the grounds of religion, belief or conscience," said Catherine Shelley, of the group. "Clause 6 changed quite substantially and now



Frog

incorporates the right to restrict availability on these grounds. The government have also said they will allow a commons debate on availability in the next session of parliament.

"But it is still a pernicious act. It still has clauses that you can't refuse work on the grounds that the pay is too low. That's pernicious.

"That they've halved what people are getting back from their national insurance contributions and getting back to means-testing is fairly pernicious. It doesn't target benefits. It helps to create and feed an underclass."

CHAR - the charity for single homeless people, have a plethora of objections to the new act. In particular is a sneaky amendment to schedule five of the 1992 Social Security Act tacked on to the end of the JSA Act. This removes the duty of the secretary of state for social security to provide shelter for homeless people, or those "without a settled way of life". These used to be the old spikes - night hostels for the homeless. The responsibility will move into the private/voluntary sector.

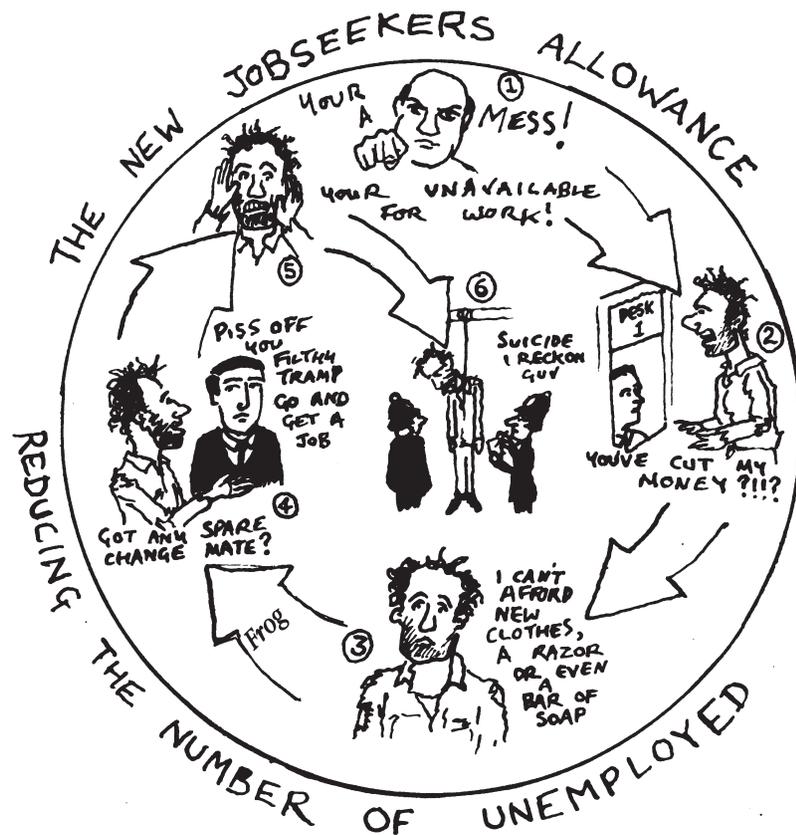
"The government called this a tidying up exercise," said Heather Petch of Char, "because things are already moving that way. But the voluntary sector has its own procedures and targets. So it can be argued that direct access provision (ie turn up on the night) will be lost. This will mainly effect older homeless men. Spikes are appalling places, but often the only places that will accept them. If they are drinkers and drunk, they are more likely to be turned away from the voluntary sector. What worries us is the fact that the word 'duty' has been taken out. And voluntary sector funding has only been granted until the end of the decade, which is only five years away."

CHAR are also concerned about the discretionary powers given to employment service staff and the compulsion to do things the JSA will impose on the unemployed. The insecure accommodation, or complete lack of accommodation, experienced by the homeless does not help in the soon to be compulsory job seeking department.

"It's already a problem but will get much worse," said Heather Petch. "Homeless people will be even more discriminated against within the benefits system than they are now."

Young people will also suffer because of the JSA, according to CHAR. The Act specifies that if young people turn down two "reasonable" offers of training then they will no longer be entitled to benefit.

"The JSA takes away discretion," said Ms Petch. "We've been doing a lot of work on hardship payments. Currently if benefit is suspended because people don't



fulfill career requirements or turn down offers there are loopholes in the legislation which allow us to push the benefits system to grant hardship payments for young people, especially 16 and 17-year-olds (who do not qualify for unemployment benefit or income support). But with the JSA there is no grey area to do that left. They will definitely not get any hardship payments."

CHAR laid down several amendments, particularly to reinstate the word "duty" on homelessness provision. None went through.

Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation - As with other disability groups, RADAR's primary concern is that disabled people would no longer qualify for Incapacity Benefit because of the new stringent tests, yet be too "incapacitated" to be available and actively seeking work.

Two hundred thousand people who qualified for the old Invalidity Benefit under the old tests will not pass the Incapacity Benefit tests. Ninety thousand new claimants will not receive Incapacity Benefit, but would have qualified for Invalidity Benefit.

"These are people that would have satisfied the old criteria," said Margaret Lavery of RADAR. "They have a significant level of impairment or disability."

The only financial recourse left to these people will be to either get a job or claim JSA.

But to qualify for JSA "they will need to prove that whatever restrictions they have aren't unreasonable," according to Margaret Lavery.

A study carried out by RADAR and the Disability Alliance looked at 77 people who had been found fit for work or fit for work within limits by the new tests. Of these, 22 had difficulty being

accepted as being able for and actively seeking work.

"The thing about the new incapacity tests," says Margaret Lavery, "is that it looks at people's capacity to perform daily living tasks. Such as 'can you walk up 12 stairs, bend down, stretch, pick up a pen?' It does not consider your chances of finding work given your condition."

Disability Alliance - an umbrella group for over 200 organisations pressing for a secure income for disabled people, shared RADAR's concerns that disabled people will fall between the two benefits. But their briefing paper also outlines some other pernicious affects the new benefit is likely to have on disabled people.

A road protester could very well find themselves "directed" to take a job as a security guard.

If a disabled person fails the new incapacity test they can appeal. During the consultation process for the JSA the government announced that after April 1995 new Incapacity Benefit claimants who failed the test and appealed would lose 20 per cent of their Income Support unless they signed on as unemployed pending the appeal.

With the problems disabled people face being accepted as able and actively seeking work, this was seen as a disincentive to appeal.

There is also a problem with 'vulnerability'. If JSA is suspended no hardship payments will be made unless the person comes from a 'vulnerable' group, ie has children, cares for an elderly or disabled relative.

Disabled people are classed as vulnerable only if they qualify for a disability premium or have a serious medical condition.

An amendment put to the House of Lords to widen this definition of vulnerability was lost.

According to the DA briefing: "Ministers indicated that medical health problems would not be included in the definition of a 'serious underlying medical condition'."

Whether a disabled person is classed as vulnerable or not will be left to the discretion of individual adjudication officers. No clear guidelines have been laid down. However, the government has argued that "the best route for disabled people is to get back to work".

"It's been quite difficult for the voluntary sector to get anything through," said Marilyn Howard, of Disability Alliance. "A lot of the issues raised were clarified during the consultation process. But overall it's not good news for disabled people anymore than it's good news for anybody. It really is giving the state too much power. It's dependant on what happens in practice, whatever the policy intention maybe."

Disability Alliance is also concerned about the delegation of decisions regarding suspensions and hardship payments to frontline staff at job centres rather than specialised Adjudication Officers (AOs).

Currently, employment officers advise AOs who make the actual decision. In 1993 AOs reinstated 54,000 claimants who had been referred by the Employment Service for breaching availability and actively seeking work rules. This was 42 per cent of all decisions referred.

National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux - with much experience of advising unemployed people, were concerned about "the range and severity of sanctions against unemployed people" which would cause "grave financial difficulties" for their clients.

Although they accepted "the need for some sanctions to protect the National Insurance (NI) fund" they thought these were "overly punitive". They were also concerned about the quality of compulsory training and the "coercion" of unemployed people.

With much experience of advising sick and disabled people, Nacab were also concerned that "disabled people must not be left between two systems - too fit for incapacity benefit, but not fit enough to be actively seeking work".

According to a Nacab consultation report, JSA will hit women, young people, unemployed people with savings and couples the hardest. A couple with one partner working will see their UB income

halved. Young people under the age of 25 who have worked and paid NI will find their benefit cut by 20 per cent - to the present income support level of £36.85 per week. Citizens' Advice Bureaux have reported cases where young people, unable to survive on this amount of money, fall into debt, can't pay their rent and end up homeless.

NACAB made numerous suggestions for amendments to the government, from increasing free school meal provision for low-paid families, to advising that training schemes would be more effective if they were voluntary, and suggested by the employment service, rather than compulsory.

They squeezed one concession from the government. That JSA would be paid while doubts about voluntary unemployment were considered. (Benefit will continue to be suspended for 26 weeks should a claimant voluntarily leave their job).

"The government want this benefit to be seen as being more hardline," said Sean Roberts of Nacab. "So it was made very clear that this concession was against a much harsher background generally."

Civil and Public Servants Association (Civil Service Union) - Civil service unions' main worry is for the employment agency staff who will have to implement the new benefit and make decisions regarding the suspension of JSA. Already the focus for frustrated claimant's anger, the CPSA believe the risk to their members will increase.

"We are concerned about the impact of the benefit on the unemployed," says Chris Kirk, who worked with the CPSA's consultation. "But also we're concerned for our members who will have to deliver an unpopular benefit. Our members will be put at risk, and so will their jobs."

"The unpopular decisions at the moment are given by Benefits Agency Staff (the Dole Office). If you do not qualify

A fundamental problem of the Act is its vagueness.....

Because the Act merely outlines general guide-lines, purposely, much is left to individual claimant advisers to interpret the rules.

for unemployment benefit then the last port of call is the social security office. Unpopular decisions are related by Benefit's Agency staff and sometimes there is a confrontational situation because people are desperate. So there are security measures such as screens.

"With the JSA the decision is given by the employment office (job centre) where there are no screens."

Trade Union Congress - The TUC expressed many concerns, regarding the effect on employment, civil service staff, women, the young and disabled. These fears are covered elsewhere.

They lobbied the government over many things, particularly less non-entitlement clauses and a tightening up of the rules regarding actively seeking work, so they are more uniform and not left to the discretion of individuals. Only one amendment was successful: that part-time fire fighters would not lose entitlement to benefit under the JSA.

The government's argument for JSA is that it will help people back to work while at the same time clamping down on fraud. But it is also designed to save money and, in the words of Helen Flanagan from the Low Pay Network, "create and feed the underclass".

A fundamental problem of the Act is its vagueness, which all groups mentioned. Because the Act merely outlines general guide-lines, purposely, much is left to individual claimant advisers to interpret the rules.



The Consultees:

For the Homeless - CHAR, Homeless Network
For the Impoverished - Unemployment Unit, Low Pay Network, Low Pay Unit, Child Poverty Action Group.
The Disabled - Disability Alliance, Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, Disablement Income Group, the ME Association, Royal National Institute for the Blind, Scope
The Young - National Union of Students, Coalition of Young People and Social Security (includes Church Action Group on Poverty, Youth Aid, Barnardos and the Children's Society).
Unions - Civil and Public Public Servants Association, National Union of Civil and Public Servants, Trades Union Congress.
Others - National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux, National Council of Voluntary Organisations, Child Action Poverty Group, Unemployment Unit,

What they say:

"It is still a pernicious act. It still has clauses that you can't refuse work because the pay is too low. It doesn't target benefits. It helps to create and feed an underclass," Catherine Shelley, Church Action on Poverty:

"Homeless people will be even more discriminated against within the benefits system than they are now. The Job Seekers Act is a real disaster for older homeless people," Heather Petch, CHAR

"It is the most arbitrary power I have ever seen conferred in English law. It gives one person total control over the life of another. In fact, it comes remarkably close to forced labour," Earl Russell, Lib Dem Peer.

"People will be forced into a job that pays as little as £1.00 an hour. It will pull people into poverty and remove the option of entering employment to get out of poverty," Helen Flanagan, Low Pay Network.

"We have a lot of concerns about the JSA. I could go on for hours about all the things I dislike about the JSA," Richard Exell, TUC.

"JSA will be a modern benefit designed specifically to help the needs of unemployed people and get them back into jobs," Job Seekers' Allowance White (consultation) paper.

"Disability Alliance is concerned that the JSA is another cost cutting exercise, designed to save £140 million in its first year. The government argued that the best route for disabled people was to get back to work," Disability Alliance briefing paper.

"Nothing I have heard has persuaded me that this Bill is not perverse at its very core," Baroness Hollis of Heigham.

"The change in attitude at the benefit office has been dramatic. They used to be civil, now they treat you like scum, presumably so you'll do anything not to go back there. My benefit office is close to riot," Jay, a UB40 in Norwich, a pilot area already operating the JSA.

PRISONERS

JIM CHAMBERS and STUART EDWARDS

Jim Chambers and Stuart Edwards are currently in Pentonville. They were both sentenced to 18 months for causing £36,000 of criminal damage to cranes and diggers on the Finchley section of the North Circular road-widening scheme. An appeal is pending due to countless discrepancies during the trial. A vigil in their support was held outside the prison in*?*. Similar actions are planned.

Jim Chambers, PB2504
Stuart Edwards, PB1864
HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Road, N7

SQUALL has received a number of letters from prisoners who make it clear that outside contacts are very important to them. The knowledge that someone other than your family and friends cares about what happens to you can make all the difference to a day inside. All the prisoners mentioned here would welcome letters of support from SQUALL readers.

Letter from Mark Skelly

Dear Squall,

I was arrested on the Criminal Justice Bill Demo in Hyde Park on October 9th 1995.

I was charged with causing an affray and received 12 month in jail (first offence)!

I am an international traveller and have lived on many sites in England. I have been very depressed due to my lack of freedom and the very strict regime in this shit jail (Brixton) (*Mark has now been moved to Renby - SQ*). I am hardly getting any support and wondered if you could forward my name and address to anybody printing newsletters, magazines etc, in the hope of receiving letters.

I was active politically when I was still free and would love to receive any information regarding anti-CJB activities, any left-wing activities whatsoever.

Please see what you can do for me and I look forward to any feedback. It's very lonely in here.

Yours

Mark Skelly
F.H. 1589
HMP Ranby
Retford,
Nottinghamshire.

Vote Early and Avoid the Rush **X**

with the **SQUALL**
General Election Voting Form

Raw Mammon	
Dodgy Handshakes	
False Preachers	
The Cheshire Cat	
Ian Greer	
The New Oxford Dictionary of Verbal Sweeties	
Don't Know	

Also complete the following sentence in no less than 12 words:

"I love new democracy cocoa-pops because:

.....
.....

WARNING: This information is required by Law - Representation of the People Act 1983.





press **'PLAY'**

Monica Garnsey reviews Undercurrents 3, Conscious Cinema 2 and 'Life in the Fast Lane'

Three canny things to do with a camera courtesy of **Undercurrents 3**; prove a policeman is lying by recording the time on his wristwatch; film your friend's head being jammed in the gate of a cherry picker (a shot that later won a court case); or strap a hidden camera to your leg and walk into the House of Lords.

When Undercurrents 2 turned the tables on the security forces with surveillance cameras by watching the detectives, it succeeded brilliantly in showing the way for the radical camera; to show the inside story, in technicolour, and in close-up, of the direct action events that are so distorted by mainstream media accounts.

And Undercurrents 3 provides another two hours of activist inspiration, including how to fight roads with cider and face-paint, protester's amongst the shareholders in the Lloyds AGM, killing cars in Pollock, and bulletins from Northern Ireland, France, Holland, Australia and the U.S. The films are at their best when they state their case simply by presenting events, and less good when they veer into local news territory with slightly self-conscious interviews. But Undercurrents 3 has managed to recruit a new crop of natural performers, including the Green Man and the Anti Road movement's very own beat poet in the form of Jeff, taking us on his anti-road trip to Carhenge ("I don't think the protest is going to be entirely green," worries his fellow driver. "I mean, I think they're going to burn plastic.")

But for the most part the footage is strong enough to do the talking. Highlights are thus the Mad Max style car torching in Pollock or the office invasions of 'Going to the Top'; it's so much more interesting watching an activist interrogating a sulky Managing Director over his own desk ("Do you think much about the ethical implications of your work then?"), than hearing her generalise about it afterwards, however articulately. Some campaigners are perhaps so used to justifying their actions to the unsympathetic that, even when preaching to the converted, they feel the need to restate their aims in the most general terms.

Conscious Cinema, the Brighton video magazine made with help from Small World, Justice! and giros, is on its second issue and going strong, with succinct and well-told stories about Newbury, Springfield, and Blue Peter style instructions for staging a French product boycott in Sainsbury's. The films also benefit from Conscious Cinema's excellent presenters, with or with or without plastic ears, who link the episodes from their vantage points in oak trees.



Neil Goodwin and Mayyasa Al-Malazi's two year long M11 project is now complete; the result, 'Life in the Fast Lane' is an impressively coherent narrative of two years of direct action, from the Wanstead Common saga, through Wanstonia and Cambridge Gardens, explaining again the extraordinary build-up of anger and energy that culminated in the wars of Claremont Road, compiled from footage of many cameramen who were recording life behind the siege walls.

Neil is currently organising distribution; contact him with an S.A.E at **56a Crampton Street, London SE17.**

Get your **Undercurrents** subscription from **Small World, Box no. 5, 46 Rymers Lane, Oxford OX4 3LB**; £32 Waged, £20 Unwaged, for 4 editions. Single editions are £9.50 waged and £6.50 unwaged. All prices include p&p. Undercurrents 4 will be out in December.

Ring **Conscious Cinema** on 01273 679544 for information about contributions or copies.



EARTH X FIRST!

SUPER QUARRY SHUT DOWN

3-4 Dec

Earth First! national action to close down Whatley Quarry, Somerset.

Non-Violent Direct Action

Please arrive 12 noon on Sunday 3rd December for a full briefing and training session. Come prepared and self-sufficient for 2 days outside although there will probably be some marquee accommodation. Bring tents/marquees, waterproofs, food, musical instruments, transport and anything else you think will make the day run more smoothly. - NO ALCOHOL or DOGS.

Contacts:
 01935 825074 S-West 01404 815729 S-West
 01508 531636 East 01635 521770 South
 01222 363383 Wales



Bokki - alive but angry after her kidnap ordeal.

“Bokki has not been quite the same since,” sighs Advance Party Andy. “The security of her home was disturbed and it lingers on her memory .”

In many ways, three year old Bokki (Afrikaans for Girl) was the fall gal for the Mother Festival, spending more time in police cells than anybody else arrested on the 7th of the 7th.

When Andi and Michelle returned back home to find police crawling round their flat, Bokki was already gone. Little did they know that they weren't to see her for another nine and a half hours.

After spending the afternoon in the cells themselves, Andy and Michelle were released from Kilburn Police Station at 11pm that night.

“Bokki is normally a sausage of love,” Andy told SQUALL. “But when Michelle went to pick her up from the dog jail, she puffed herself up, put her head down and let out a deep and menacing growl towards the policeman. Michelle had to hold on to Bokki to make sure she didn't get food poisoning.”

Police chiefs concerned with community policing would do well to heed Andy's observations about Bokki's change of attitude since her incarceration.

“She's developed a right disliking for the police,” observes Andy, “And I think it's ingrained for life.”

Police, who arrested Bokki and her guardians on suspicion of conspiring to cause a public nuisance under the Criminal Law Act 1977, can count themselves fortunate not to have become the subject of a counter suit.

“They wronged my dog,” says Andy, “and that's criminal.”



Andy Johnson taps in to the philosophies of the newest video activists.

Brighton based Conscious Cinema are producing monthly video round-ups of protest and social justice activity up and down the country.

Inspired by Smallworld's Undercurrents, the footage is aimed mainly at activists rather than punters to keep different groups informed of what their justice-hungry colleagues are up to.

According to Kevin Doyle, overworked video activist, Conscious Cinema will complement the more analytical biannual output of Undercurrents; but the intention is to give an immediate update, and alternative angle from the mainstream media, while an item is still “news”.

The video is available on loan with the expectation that it will be shown in a communal venue, such as someone's front room or church hall. Hopefully the showing will be followed by a discussion and donations to pay for the video. Conscious Cinema is currently funded out of the team's generous unemployment allowance and as Squall goes to press mailing has been suspended until Giro day.

“We're trying to get away from people going out, buying a video, saying I'm glad I've seen that and

putting it on a shelf,” says Kevin.

The Conscious Cinema team are also addressing the environmental impact of their endeavours. Taken out on loan, the video has to be returned so that the next bulletin can be recorded over the last.

“Video technology is toxic and horrible,” says Kevin, “and I refuse to be responsible for that. All the tapes we use have been skipped. Because the items go out of date so quickly there is no problem with recording over the last one. If people don't send the video back they don't get the next one. That's not a threat, but if they don't come back we have nothing to put the next video on.”

It is the activists themselves who put their own films together. Conscious Cinema have a basic, easy to use, editing suite which they train activists to use.

The group are also aiming to be as diverse as possible. Because of it's immediacy the production is not as polished as Undercurrents. But a little roughness around the edges is to be expected with immediate information.

The first video included footage on open cast mining, Mumia Abu Jamal, the Battle of the Beanfield

and the alternative VE Day celebrations. Number two included a piece on Joy Gardner and Brian Douglas, how to point out to supermarkets that French goods are no longer fashionable and a little bit of road protesting.

Part of Conscious Cinema's intent is to establish the link between all forms of social justice; civil rights, environmentalism and racism. They currently have black groups filming in London, and the Joy Gardner, Brian Douglas and Mumia Abu Jamal pieces are intended to make the connection between the death penalty and its insidious presence in this country.

“We're trying to show how everything is connected, it all works together,” says Kevin. “We're trying to get across that people have to change things themselves. There is no point voting.”

Videos are available by writing or e-mailing

Conscious Cinema at:

PO Box 2679, Brighton, BN2 1UJ

or: Cinema@Phreak.Intermedia.Co.UK.

Full back issues are also available on request.

Donations are positively encouraged.



Outing the Corporation

What happens when a trans-national company creates a religion to sell an unhealthy product. What happens when two environmental campaigners have the opportunity to cross-examine top corporate executives on their techniques of market manipulation? **Jim Carey** reviews the dam-burst of evidence spilling from the mouth of a cornered corporation.

“It is our objective to dominate the communications area.... we are competing for a share of the customer’s mind,” said McDonald’s UK Marketing Services Manager in High Court room 35.

Indeed, a recent survey suggests that the \$1.4 billion spent each year on McDonald’s marketing is achieving its objective. After only forty years of competing for the “customer’s mind”, the golden arches of the McDonald’s Corporation is now credited as a more globally recognised symbol than the Christian cross.

In the world of corporate business this is a major success. McDonald’s rapid and extensive domination of the global junk-food market is an advertising coup envied throughout the industry, a corporate conquest commanding an annual global turnover of \$26 billion. In the UK alone, £41 million is spent on advertising, with one new McDonald’s burger bar opening every week.

It is criticism of the techniques used to ensure this conquest that has become the subject of the longest libel trial in British legal history. The biggest public grilling ever to draw blood from the manicured reputation of the McDonald’s Corporation recommenced in the High Court on September 25th.

“Their influence is out of all proportion,” says Dave Morris, one of the two defendants accused of libelling the Corporation. “After all what are they? No different to a hot dog stand outside a football ground on a match day. They just add huge amounts of hype with their ketchup.”

One look at the McDonald’s UK marketing team gives an indication of the kind of soldiers hired to media-facilitate the Corporation’s market march. Head of Communications for McDonald’s UK is Mike Love, previously the Conservative Party constituency manager for Margaret Thatcher. Non-executive director for McDonald’s UK is the notorious Sir Bernard Ingham, Margaret Thatcher’s press secretary during her spell as Prime Minister. It is no co-incidental irony that the headquarters for

McDonald’s UK is located in the Finchley constituency for which Margaret Thatcher was MP. Indeed, she opened the building in 1983.

Meanwhile, in High Court room 35, one of Britain’s top libel lawyers, Richard Rampton QC, has been hired at the cost of £2,000 a day to nail two unwaged corporate critics - an ex-postman and a part-time gardener. But things are not quite going according to the Corporation’s plan.

Throughout the years, a long list of organisations daring to criticise McDonald’s has included newspapers, TV companies, environmental campaigns and trade unions. Every one of these organisations has been threatened with the wrath of the Corporation’s legal department, and every one has consequently backed down, apologised and agreed to tread carefully in future. Any freelance journalist commissioned to write about McDonald’s

The golden arches of McDonald’s Corporation is now credited as a more globally recognised symbol than the Christian cross.

is forewarned by editors to avoid any remotely libellous controversy. In the world of corporate advertising, this is considered a job well done; the “customer’s mind” is captured, the critical tongues are tied, the reputation kept shiny and the market sewn up.

But with McDonald’s huge advertising campaign as the ammunition behind its global conquests, public embarrassment is both its major enemy and the Achilles’ heel now permanently in the sights of the two people McDonald’s are suing. After a forty year history of relentless marketing, the tenacity of two individuals and their support campaign is providing the Corporation with the greatest threat yet to its carefully cultivated image.

National and international media have referred to the case as a modern day re-enactment of

the David and Goliath story. The biblical comparisons are not exaggerated either. For the usurping of the Christian cross by the golden arches as a recognisable global symbol has been achieved via a mechanism used throughout history to establish religious predominance. The McDonald’s marketing managers appearing in the High Court witness box have used words like “persuasion”, “loyalty” and “brand awareness” to describe their marketing strategy. As every advertising executive or copywriter will tell you, these are common terms and certainly not exclusive to McDonald’s. However, the extent and success to which McDonald’s have promoted their type of food, which in the light of current evidence has serious implications for human health, presents a major cause for concern over the galloping lack of ethics involved in modern marketing.

David Green, McDonald’s Senior Vice President of Marketing, revealed to the court that McDonald’s internal code for their advertisements includes the aim to induce “a warm empathy towards the commercial”.

To some extent, Planet Earth is already governed by trans-national corporations. In future this control will become more established as traditional national boundaries fade in economic significance. As such, anyone interested in the future of human politics should be interested in the techniques of trans-national corporate domination. The McLibel trial is an early and accessible window on that world.

The stance taken by the McLibel defendants is undoubtedly the stuff of modern myth. It is a battle for those “customers’ minds”, rounded up into the burger church via the use of psychologically targeted advertising. For it is fair to say that “the McDonald’s experience”, as their marketing executives refer to it, is a cult. The fact that the two defendants in the trial are the heretics of the story is an exposure, for all those with eyes and ears, of the gods to which modern society offers its worship.

The Motives behind the Mask

Ladies and gentlemen of the wider jury, the evidence on diet and deception.



In one of 'The Omen' films, Damien - the devil's child - manoeuvres his way into a political position as controller of youth education. The symbolic implications of the movie are obvious - children are the future and children are vulnerable to manipulation. Thus, of course, they exist as innocent fodder for Damien's not so grand designs. As David Green, Senior Vice President of McDonald's Marketing, said in court: "[children are] virgin ground as far as marketing is concerned."

Indeed, one clandestine look at the official and confidential 'McDonald's Operation Manual' confirms the Corporation's intention to fully capitalise on what in the advertising industry is known as "pester power":

"Children are often the key decision-makers concerning where a family goes to eat..... [Offering toys] is one of the best things.... to make them loyal supporters", using McDonald's birthday parties as "an important way to generate added sales and profits" and Ronald McDonald as "a strong marketing tool".

The Operations Manual goes on to explain: "Ronald loves McDonald's and McDonald's food. And so do children, because they love Ronald. Remember, children exert a phenomenal influence when it comes to restaurant selection, This means you should do everything you can to appeal

to children's love for Ronald and McDonald's."

The manipulation of love? Damien would be proud.

Under cross examination from the McLibel defendants, John Hawkes, McDonald's UK Chief Marketing Officer, stated that whenever opening an outlet in a new country or region, McDonald's first advertises itself to children: "One of the tactics is to reach families through children" and that by teaching them McDonald's songs it "would keep the memory of McDonald's at the forefront of their minds so they can again ask their parents if they can come to McDonald's."

Children are virgin ground as far as marketing is concerned.

Hawkes further admitted that McDonald's advertising campaigns were often specifically directed at 2 to 8 year olds, saying that between the ages of 8 and 15 "they do not pester their parents to go to McDonald's. It

does not work in the same way".

An important thing to bear in mind when reading these quotes is that the psychological manipulation of children is one of the accusations levelled at McDonald's in the critical 'Factsheet' central to the libel suit.

Paul Preston, McDonald's UK President claimed in court that the character of Ronald McDonald was intended not to "sell food" to children but to promote the "McDonald's experience". Ronald McDonald, he claimed, is "a spokesman to children".

McDonald's primary medium of advertising is television, and yet the Independent Television Commission (ITC) advertising code expressly forbids advertising that "manipulates the emotions" of children. However, few observers of televisual advertising will argue that commercials come anywhere near adhering to these codes of practice. Their effectiveness as a regulatory control on unethical advertising is viewed as laughable both inside and outside the advertising industry. Indeed, directly contrary to the code of practice was a UK seminar held last year for members of the advertising

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The Diary of a Stance

1985 » London Greenpeace, a radical group of civil rights and environmental campaigners independent of Greenpeace International, launch a campaign intended to expose the 'reality' behind the advertising mask of the McDonald's Corporation.

1986 » London Greenpeace publish a leaflet entitled 'What's Wrong with McDonald's? - Everything they don't want you to know.' The leaflet is critical of the Corporation's treatment of animals, promotion of unhealthy food, effects on the environment and exploitative employment practices. The leaflet contains the phrases McTorture, McCancer, McMurder, McGreedy, McDollars and McProfits.

1987 » A mobile vegetarian food service called 'Veggies' from Nottingham is threatened by

McDonald's with legal reprisals, if they continue to use the words 'Murder' and 'Torture' to describe the rearing and slaughter of animals for McDonald's products. Their literature was a copy of the London Greenpeace leaflet.

Veggies change these words to 'slaughter' and 'butchery' and amend the destruction of rainforest section to refer to the burger industry in general but not specifically McDonald's. No more is heard from the McDonald's legal department and Veggies continue to distribute the leaflet.

October 1989 - September 1990 » McDonald's send undercover private investigators to infiltrate London Greenpeace. The 'spies' take minutes of meetings, answer letters and make friends with members of the group. They also follow people back to their homes to ascertain their addresses and 'purloin' the group's letters. These undercover investigators are later to become court witnesses appearing on behalf of McDonald's.

September 1990 » The McDonald's

Continued
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Nick Cobbing

industry entitled "Pester Power - How to reach children in 1994".

Sue Dibb, commissioned by the National Food Alliance to research the effects of food advertising on children, attended the seminar and also gave evidence in the McLibel trial. In her view "the cumulative effect of much food advertising does result in harm to children, in the sense that it encourages inappropriate nutritional practices which will have implications for children's health and their health in later life."

The targeting of children by the McDonald's Corporation was further highlighted by the resignation of Geoffrey Giuliano, the actor who had played the Ronald McDonald clown in the eighties. He issued a statement, read out during the McLibel trial, saying: "I brainwashed

youngsters into doing wrong. I want to say sorry to children everywhere."

Embarrassment?

This was just the tip of the iceberg.

For having captured the "customers' minds", the quality of the food product actually sold to people 'under the influence' is crucial to the trial. The allegedly libellous 'Factsheet' claimed a connection between a diet of the kind of junk food sold at McDonald's and a multitude of degenerative diseases including cancer. McDonald's obviously took exception to these suggestions, citing it as one of the major issues of the libel case.

However, the Corporation's stance looked decidedly shaky when one of its own witnesses appeared in court. Dr Sydney Arnott, an expert in cancer, was asked under cross examination what

he thought of the following statement:

"A diet high in fat, sugar, animal products and salt and low in fibre, vitamins and minerals is linked with cancers of the breast and bowel, and heart disease."

Dr Arnott replied: "If it is being directed to the public then I would say it is a very reasonable thing to say."

The court was then informed that the statement had come directly from the leaflet over which McDonald's was suing. During the pre-trial hearings, McDonald's legal representative, Richard Rampton QC, had cited this section as the most "defamatory" in the leaflet, saying that if proven, it would be the "kiss of death" to a company like McDonald's. Now, however, the Corporation's own witness finds the statement "reasonable".

Another scientist brought in by



McDonald's, Professor Verner Wheelock, didn't help their case much either when he stood by a statement he had written previously: "We have now reached the point where we can be very confident that diet is the primary factor in the development of most of the degenerative diseases in many industrialised countries." He also said it was "not sensible" to encourage the eating of foods high in fat, sugar and salt and low in fibre.

When Dr Neal Barnard, President of the US Physicians' Committee for

"I brainwashed youngsters into doing wrong. I want to say sorry to children everywhere."

Responsible Medicine, took the witness stand the links between a McDonald's junk food diet and ill health were further established:

"Many of the products sold at McDonald's are high in fat and cholesterol and low in fibre and certain vitamins," and as a result "contribute to heart disease, certain forms of cancer and other diseases."

And yet in the nutrition guides given out at McDonald's outlets, it is claimed that "every time you eat McDonald's, you'll eat

Corporation issue writs for libel against five members of London Greenpeace considered responsible for distributing the 'What's wrong with McDonald's?' leaflet. Three of the five people subject to the writs formally apologise after legal advice is given pointing out that legal aid is unobtainable for libel cases and that the case will probably be huge and costly and is unlikely to proceed beyond the pre-trial hearings because of the complex pre-trial legal procedures which have to be followed.

Two of the five, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, refuse to apologise. Libel defences do not qualify for legal aid, so the defendants decide to represent themselves. The three members who formally apologised issue a statement criticising oppressive libel laws and pledging support for Helen Steel and Dave Morris.

September 1990 - June 1994 » Twenty eight pre-trial hearings are conducted during which McDonald's put a number of legal obstacles in the

way of the defendants. These include persuading the judge to make an order requiring the defendants to produce all the witness statements backing up their defence within three weeks. To the surprise of both McDonald's and the Judge, the defendants manage to gather over 65 witness statements within the allotted time period. McDonald's replace its barrister with Richard Rampton QC, one of Britain's top libel lawyers for a reputed fee of £2000 a day plus a briefing fee.

The Diary of A Stance

1990 » The McLibel Support Campaign is set up to back up the two defendants in their stance.

1991 » The defendants unsuccessfully take the British Government to the European Court of Human Rights, demanding the right to legal aid or the simplification of libel procedures. Without a full hearing, the court rules that, as the defendants had put up a "tenacious defence", they could not say they were being denied access to justice!



McDONALD'S

good, nutritious food". Once again, evidence suggests that this was a marketing strategy, specifically designed to counter a growing public concern over the quality of McDonald's food. In 1987, McDonald's own internal magazine announced a new wave of advertising "to neutralise the junk

also nutritious. The new campaign appears intended to pull the wool over the public's eyes."

The McLibel defendants forced McDonald's to disclose as court evidence, an internal company memo from a high level meeting in March 1986. The memo revealed quite clearly how McDonald's respond to prevailing negative imagery: "McDonald's should attempt to deflect the basic negative thrust of our critics.... How do we do this? By talking 'moderation and balance'. We can't really address or defend nutrition. We don't sell nutrition and people don't come to McDonald's for nutrition."

However, despite these private admissions, the thrust of McDonald's publicity still continues to reinforce the impression of healthy eating.

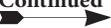
The 'nutrition' guide given out in its burger outlets states: "Quality is very important to us. We will only serve our customers food of the highest standards of quality, nutrition, hygiene and food safety.... To help our customers eat a healthy diet we are constantly making our menu even more nutritious."

Under cross examination from the defendants, Edward Oakley, Senior Vice President of McDonald's UK, proclaimed that 'nutritious' meant "foods that contained nutrients". When asked whether this included coca-cola, he said: "Coca-cola has a good source of energy, no question about that. It can be nutritious."

When his colleague, David Green, Senior Vice President of

Marketing, was asked the same thing, he said that coca-cola "provided water and I think that is part of a balanced diet."

The McDonald's 'nutrition' guide further states: "At McDonald's we have a

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McDonald's concept of a balanced diet is "meaningless". He told the court that using such a definition: "You could eat a roll of sellotape as part of a balanced diet."

food misconception about McDonald's good food". When Stephen Gardner, former Assistant Attorney General of Texas, appeared in the witness box, he informed the court of US state reprimands to McDonald's over the deceptiveness of its advertising.

In a joint letter sent to the Corporation, three American State Attorney Generals registered a complaint that was unusually overt for those in such high-level legal positions. It read:

"The Attorney Generals of Texas, California and New York have concluded our joint review of McDonald's recent advertising campaign which claims that McDonald's food is nutritious. Our mutual conclusion is that this advertising campaign is deceptive. We therefore request that McDonald's immediately desist further use of this advertising campaign. The reason for this is simple: McDonald's food is, as a whole, not nutritious. The intent and result of the current campaign is to deceive customers into believing the opposite. Fast-food customers often choose to go to McDonald's because it is inexpensive and convenient. They should not be fooled into eating there because you have told them it is



Sir Bernard Ingham, Knight of the Realm, ex press secretary to Margaret Thatcher and a non-executive Director of McDonald's UK since 1991.

In his regular column for PR Week, Sir Bernard described the petrochemical company Shell as "contemptible" for failing to dump the Brent Spar oil platform. He described the decision as "utter capitulation to the anti-commercial forces of eco-terrorism". Presumably then, Sir Bernard wasn't informed of the arrival in London of three McDonald's Corporation Directors. They had flown over from the US to offer the McLibel two a payment to a third party if they would agree to allow the Corporation to back out of their increasingly embarrassing battle with 'the anti-commercial force of two eco-activists'.

Shell's new PR team, the old one was sacked after the Brent Spar debacle, must be chuckling at their drawing boards.

Mammon on Trial

Late 1993 » On behalf of McDonald's, Richard Rampton QC applies to the court for a non-jury trial. McDonald's submit that the scientific evidence necessary to examine the links between diet and disease are too complicated for a jury to understand. The judge agrees. Dave Morris and Helen Steel apply unsuccessfully to the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords to reinstate the trial with a jury. McDonald's also apply for an order striking out certain parts of the defence

on the grounds that the witness statements gathered by the defendants does not sufficiently support those areas of the defence. The judge agrees with McDonald's. However, in a landmark legal decision, the Court of Appeal restores all parts of the defence on the basis that the defendants are entitled to rely on the witness statements, on future discovery of McDonald's documents and on what they might reasonably expect to discover under cross-examination.

March 1994 » McDonald's publish a leaflet entitled 'Why McDonald's is going to court' and distributes 300,000 of them to customers via its burger outlets. In the leaflet McDonald's say: "This action is not about freedom of speech; it is about the right to stop people telling lies." The name given on the leaflet for further information is Mike Love, ex-Conservative Party constituency manager for Margaret Thatcher and now Director of Communications for McDonald's UK.

April 1994 » Dave Morris and Helen Steel issue a counter-claim for libel against McDonald's for the company's accusation that they are telling lies. With the counter-claim, McDonald's now have the onus to prove that the statements contained within the London Greenpeace leaflet are "lies" and that the defendants knew them to be so. Under the original libel suit brought by McDonald's, Morris and Steel have the onus of proving that the statements in the allegedly libellous leaflet are true or fair comment. The

Continued 



Nick Cobbing

responsibility to help our customers eat a healthy balanced diet.... McDonald's meal combinations can form part of your balanced diet."

According to Tim Lobstein, co-director of the Food Commission, McDonald's concept of a balanced diet is "meaningless". He told the court that using such a definition: "You could eat a roll of sellotape as part of a balanced diet."

As a result of this torrent of adverse evidence, McDonald's was forced to rethink its court strategy, consequently changing its Statement of Claim (the basis of the libel action). Previously the Corporation had complained about the 'unsubstantiated' link made between a junk food diet and ill health. With the weight of evidence mounting against this position, they changed their complaint, so trying to force the defendants to prove the statement (not found in the 'Factsheet') that "McDonald's sell meals which cause cancer of the breast and bowel, and heart disease in their customers".

The judge dismissed objections from the two defendants, who argued that changing the accusations levelled against them would be unjust to the preparation of their defence, particularly in the light of the fact that most of the evidence on nutrition had already been heard by that stage of the trial.

However, despite McDonald's efforts to salvage a legal point from the damning witnesses, the evidence kept coming.

Dr Neal Barnard, President of the US Physicians' for Responsible Medicine, quoted a statement made by a Dr William Castelli, director of a major US study into cancer. It read: "When you see the Golden Arches, you're probably on the way to the Pearly Gates."

It is easy to see why McDonald's were keen not to have a jury for this libel case. They successfully applied to have a non-jury trial on the basis that a jury would not understand the scientific evidence. However, far from being scientifically complex, the expert witnesses appearing on behalf of both the defendants and

the plaintiff, have confirmed the links between a junk food diet and degenerative disease in overt and easily intelligible ways. The evidence coming out of court 35 is certainly not beyond the capacity of a jury to understand, a fact reflected in the media coverage given to the trial. The media require digestible versions of events, and the overt statements being made in the McLibel witness stand have been providing just that.

Indeed McDonald's concern over the escalating public relations damage caused by the trial has led to their recent decision to withhold the official court transcripts from the

"When you see the golden arches, you're probably on your way to the pearly gates."

defendants.

McDonald's pay £700 a day for a typed-up copy of each day's proceedings. As part of an agreement made on the eve of the trial, they have up until now passed over a copy to both the defendants and the judge at the end of each day.

Richard Rampton QC made no bones about why McDonald's wanted to break the agreement, saying: "What it would prevent, and this is what this is all about, is their disseminating [extracts from the transcript] to journalists and the McLibel Support Campaign and similar like-minded [people]". There was some court consternation when Rampton went on to talk about the longhand note-taking that the defendants would have to do as a result of not having the transcripts. He said: "It is hard work of course, and I know that in some senses the defendants are resistant to that.". This slighting comment is rendered more audacious when considered alongside the fact that Rampton, who earns £2,000 a day, has people hired to carry his bags and files into court. The McLibel Two, on the other hand, earn nothing for their stance, literally carrying the weight of the entire case on their shoulders. The judge said that if the defendants were not to be given

the court transcripts then he should not have them either.

As there is no jury in courtroom 35, the McLibel Two consider it important that the evidence uncovered by the trial should be considered by a wider jury, in the form of the general public. Despite being unwaged, and despite their disqualification from legal aid, the McLibel defendants are now required to find the £350-a-day required to pay for the transcripts, essential to both their ability to conduct their case and to the presentation of the significant spoken evidence to the widest possible jury.

The McLibel Support Campaign say they have every intention of raising the money necessary to buy the court transcripts.

The sheer quantity of expert evidence adverse to McDonald's position has undoubtedly induced a rare unease in the usually triumphant Corporation halls. Withholding the transcripts is just one of a number of manoeuvres reflective of a growing nervousness.

In August 1994, members of the McDonald's US Board of Directors set up a meeting with the McLibel defendants and offered to pay an undisclosed sum of money to a "mutually agreed third party" if they would only cease in their criticisms of the Corporation. The defendants refused. In June of this year, McDonald's US executives again flew over to meet the defendants and once again the defendants refused their request to curtail the trial. Instead the McLibel Two publicly issued their own pre-conditions. These included an apology from McDonald's and a commitment never again to sue any individual or organisation over criticisms similar to those in the 'London Greenpeace Factsheet'.

It is small wonder that McDonald's are keen to find a way out of the mess.

Profit and sales depend on an image and reputation manicured through advertising. Public embarrassment initiates the potential for financial disaster.

McDonald's can still consider themselves very successful with their intention to capture the "customer's mind", the customer's children and the customer's money. Indeed it is likely that the publicity from the trial has yet to have had any major effect on global sales.

But, with more and more adverse evidence slipping out of courtroom 35 and into the public domain, the potential for serious commercial damage increases with each new revelation. The Achilles' heel of one of the most blatant symbols of global mammon gets sorer with each new day in court.

"We obviously think there is no foundation in the things that are being said," says Mike Love, McDonald's UK Director of Communications. "We believe that those taking part in the action should look at the facts and be aware of the truth."

As the newly appointed jury, what say you?



Burger Bulldozing

Public consultation means different things to different people. In a future likely to be economically dominated by trans-national corporations - where does the community stand?

“We take the views of local people in any locality where we are already doing business or where we hope to do business very seriously indeed. That is why we would listen to local residents,” says Mike Love, Director of Communications for McDonald’s UK.

In 1994, Camden Council’s Development Committee rejected a planning application from the McDonald’s Corporation to build a burger outlet in the post office building at King’s Cross in London. The Committee concluded that a 26th burger bar in the area was unnecessary and would “add to environmental problems - to the detriment of the quality of life for residents and workers alike”.

However, in a simultaneous contradiction, the Committee also gave estate managers the go-ahead to alter the post office building in line with McDonald’s intentions, apparently sure that a public outcry and a council planning refusal would not stand in McDonald’s way.

Indeed, by the beginning of this year, the Development Committee had reversed their original decision and given McDonald’s the go-ahead.

“We had a sizeable petition [1,384] signed by local MPs Glenda Jackson and Frank Dobson,” says Harvey Bass, vice-chair of the King’s Cross Neighbourhood Association. “A lot of locals were against it because all that’s coming to King’s Cross at the moment is take-aways and burger bars.”

The local newspaper ran with the headline: “We don’t want a McPost Office!”

However, McDonald’s took a different view.

“We weren’t aware there has been a lot of opposition to the King’s Cross proposal - it went

through very smoothly,” says Mike Love, Director of Communications for McDonald’s UK.

Local opposition is, of course, nothing new to the McDonald’s Corporation. Just up the road in Hampstead one of the fiercest local opposition campaigns saw a 5,000 named petition and packed town hall meetings attempt to prevent the Corporation from opening a burger bar on the high street in 1980. The force of local vehemence was enough to stall McDonald’s intentions, but not for long. By 1991, McDonald’s had bought a site on the high street with a pre-existing hot food licence and there was no stopping them.

McDonald’s Mike Love describes the ten year wait to build the burger bar as “ten years of consultation”.

In Camden Council’s second report on the King’s Cross proposal it records how, since their first refusal, McDonald’s had offered to provide “upwards to a hundred full or part-time jobs to locals including school leavers.... all benefiting from continuous company training”. Also recorded is McDonald’s offer to give money to local charities, sports equipment to local youth clubs, coffee mornings for pensioners and the organisation of ‘business days’ for the development of contacts between businessmen and local schools. “Bribes to the community” is how Harvey Bass describes them.

At one stage the Development Committee’s report says: “McDonald’s have been asked if they would include any of the advantages described above, but particularly the local employment policy, as part of the legal agreement. However, they do not wish to do so.”

Despite this however, the Council Committee voted to accept McDonald’s appeal and allow the burger bar to go ahead.

“If there are concerns in an area about a restaurant opening then meetings would be held

with residents,” claims Mike Love. “That is a matter of routine in the very few cases where there are local objections.”

According to Harvey Bass, McDonald’s never put their case to either the King’s Cross Neighbourhood Association or the King’s Cross Partnership, a quarterly liaison meeting between local police, residents, councillors and businesses. “They don’t deal with people, they just deal with council officers,” says Bass. “It’s just money, money with them.”

“At the end of the day, people can do a petition and a campaign, but it’s totally out of your hands, even if you’ve got good reason.”

“The local authority is there to exercise planning law and to give permission or not,” says McDonald’s Mike Love. “In doing so they have a legal obligation to consult the local neighbourhood. It’s the responsibility for the local authority to consult. That’s in statute.”

“At the end of the day, people can do a petition and a campaign but it’s totally out of your hands, even if you’ve got a good reason,” says a frustrated Harvey Bass. “The community didn’t want them but to me it’s a simple thing - multi-nationals get what they want in the end, don’t they?”

Meanwhile Mike Love, previously Conservative Party constituency manager for Margaret Thatcher, sees things differently: “We would take every concern, even if it was by one person, very seriously indeed,” he claims. 



Mammon on Trial

defendants are also required under British libel law to provide ‘primary sources’ of evidence to substantiate their case. This means witness statements and documentary proof but not press cuttings or common conceptions.

June 28th 1994 » The full libel trial, presided over by Mr Justice Bell, commences in court 35, High Court, The Strand.

July 1, 4 and 5th 1994 » Paul Preston,

McDonald’s UK President, appears in the witness stand. Born in Ohio, Preston joined McDonald’s at age 16. In 1974 he came to Britain to manage the first UK McDonald’s Burger Bar in Woolwich, south London. He was recently quoted as saying: “McDonald’s isn’t a job, it’s a life.” He also said: “McDonald’s employees have ketchup in their veins.”

July 6th 1994 » Evidence commences on environmental effects of McDonald’s packaging. The court

hears how a recycling scheme advertised in the Nottingham branches of McDonald’s was billed as “recycling into such things as plant pots and coat hangers”. Edward Oakley, Chief Purchasing Officer for McDonald’s UK, admits that the polystyrene packaging collected over the several years that they advertised the scheme was simply “dumped”. He also says in court: “I can see [the dumping of waste] to be a benefit, otherwise you will end up with lots of vast, empty gravel pits all over the

country.”

July 18th 1994 » Evidence commences on the McDonald’s nutritional record.

An internal company memo disclosed during the trial says: “McDonald’s should not attempt to deflect the basic negative thrust of our critics.... How do we do this? By talking ‘moderation and balance’. We can’t really address or defend nutrition. We don’t sell nutrition and people don’t come to McDonald’s for

Climbing Mountains

In their relentless drive to stamp out all dissent, the McDonald's Corporation appear to have issued one libel writ too many. So what's it like to be a David and watch Goliath get seriously worried? **Jim Carey** talks to the heretics.

“I’ll be over the moon when I get my life back,” says Helen Steel. “It’s not like I haven’t got a life now but there’s things I’d rather be doing.”

Talk to Helen about her life and you can see her point. Prior to the attention of the McDonald's Corporation, she was happily digging her allotment. She worked for a time as a gardener and did both voluntary and paid work chauffeuring kids, pensioners, play-groups and people with disabilities around the north London borough of Haringey. She also worked with the civil rights and environmental group London Greenpeace: “It was all about people getting involved with their community and taking action for themselves rather than just writing off to politicians and asking them to take action for us.”

One of those actions was to distribute an A5 leaflet critical of the conduct of the McDonald's Corporation. Should the reader have wanted more information, the leaflet suggested sending off for a ‘Factsheet’ called ‘What’s wrong with McDonald’s?’. It is this second leaflet over which the McDonald's Corporation has since issued libel writs.

According to Helen, the decision to run a campaign critical of the McDonald's Corporation was made because of a perceived imbalance between the reality of the Corporation's conduct and the friendly mask presented to increase its sales.

“They were continually promoting this

image of being an all-caring company and people felt there was a need to counter the endless stream of propaganda. At the time I was more involved in a campaign against the World Bank. I supported the McDonald's Campaign but I didn't have a big grudge against McDonald's.”

Five years after the campaign started, five members of London Greenpeace were issued with writs by the McDonald's Corporation, who demanded both a retraction and an apology for their involvement in distributing the ‘What’s wrong with McDonald’s?’ factsheet. As libel cases do not qualify for legal aid, three of the five decided to avoid a long legal struggle with McDonald's and formally apologised.

“The legal advice we were given was that we faced a completely uphill battle because the laws are so complex,” recalls Helen. “We were told that we’d end up spending a lot of money we didn’t have and at least a couple of years trying to fight the case. We were told we’d be better off just backing down and saving our money and energy for some other campaign.”

But for Helen Steel's threshold of retreat, this was not an option.

“The only way we could get out of the court case was to apologise and I just felt they’ve got a big cheek even daring to ask us to apologise to them. They try and portray it that we chose to fight this case but I don’t really see it as much of a choice to apologise for something that doesn’t

deserve an apology. To me it's just really offensive and there's no way I'd do it. Didn't really have an option - had to fight it.”

As a result, Helen committed herself to standing against the McDonald's Corporation whether or not anyone else would stand with her.

The fifth member of London Greenpeace under threat was Dave Morris, an ex-postman. When McDonald's issued their threat, Morris was more than busy looking after both his partner at the time, who was recovering from a serious accident, and their one-year-old son Charlie.

“Dave had loads of problems to sort out on the home front,” recalls Helen. “When the other three said they were going to apologise, Dave said he would go with the flow because he knew he would not be able to take it on his own. But then Dave said that if I wanted to fight it, he would come in with me.”

Ironically, Dave Morris considered that London Greenpeace had done enough to initiate the leaflet campaign against McDonald's and was in favour of moving on to other issues. That was before a McDonald's agent walked up to him in the street one day and handed him a libel writ.

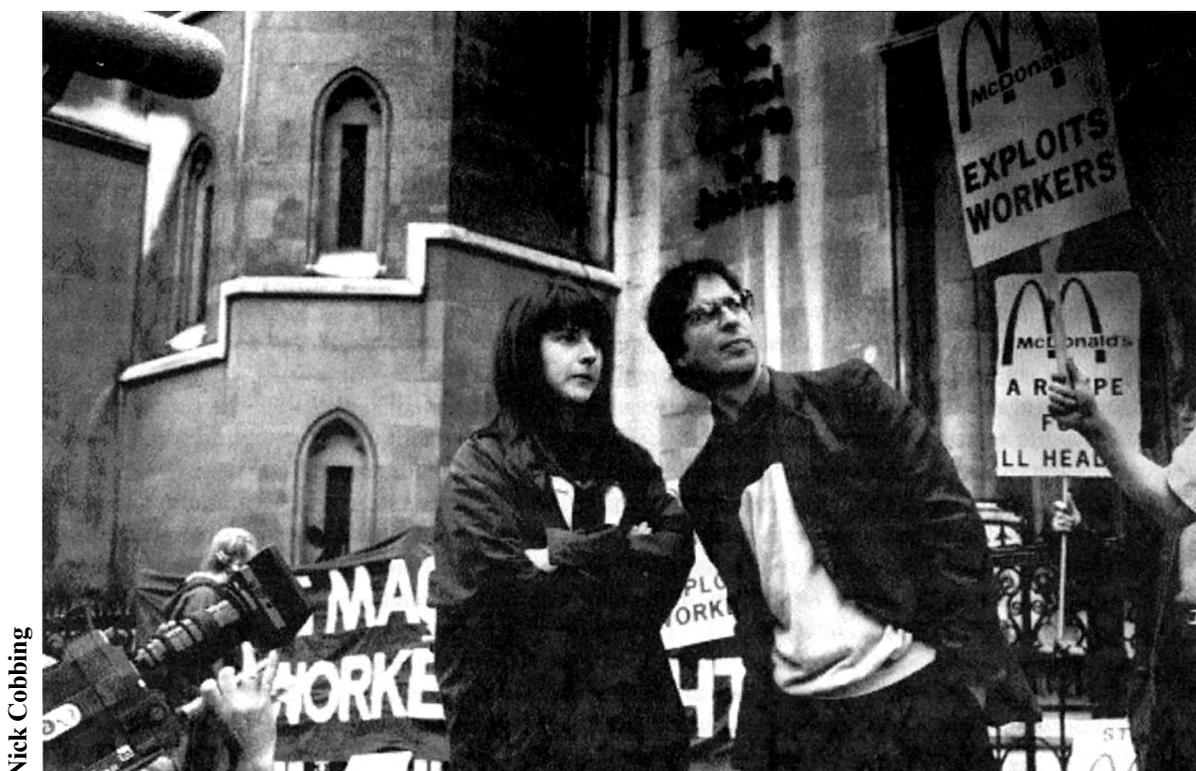
“Politics is not a luxury, it's an essential - it's part of life,” says Dave. “I did have substantial domestic problems at that time but it doesn't matter what else is happening in your life, you've got to do what you've got to do. You've still got to go to the toilet, you've still got to eat and you've still got to fight the system. You just have to fit it all in the best you can.”

The two defendants took their case to the European Court of Human Rights asking for legal aid to be reinstated for libel cases or a simplification of the legal process. Unbelievably, before their case received a full hearing in the European Court, it was ruled that the “tenacious defence” put up by the defendants so far showed that they were not being denied access to justice by the current UK libel laws.

“It was Catch 22,” comments Dave. “You've no chance if you can't fight the case and you're penalised if you do.”

“By that stage we'd been through so many pre-trial court hearings where judges had just ignored everything we'd said and yet listened to everything McDonald's had said,” recalls Helen. “They had treated us in a really contemptuous way and I was getting sick of bashing my head against a brick wall.”

McDonald's must have been surprised that two individuals had decided to take them on at all. A previous history of proliferating



Nick Cobbing

Helen and Dave outside the High Court

libel threats had only ever brought them retractions and apologies.

“For the first two years McDonald’s seemed to drag their feet as if they were hoping we’d just get fed up with the cumbersome legal procedure,” recalls Helen Steel.

After five years involvement with London Greenpeace, Helen moved to Yorkshire, determined to get away from London and spend more time working on the land.

“We didn’t know whether the case was ever going to happen and if it did happen, no-one had ever said it would last longer than a few weeks,” she says. However, her aspiration to spend more time with the soil was soon nipped in the bud when the world’s largest fast-food corporation decided to change gear.

Once it became obvious that Helen Steel and Dave Morris were determined to see it through, McDonald’s legal department went straight on the offensive, pushing huge quantities of legal work on the two inexperienced libel defendants.

“Politics is not a luxury, it’s an essential - it’s a part of life.... you’ve still got to go to the toilet, you’ve still got to eat and you’ve still got to fight the system. You just have to fit it all in the best you can.”

“The case expanded massively, so I had to move back to London,” says Helen.

The legal pace of the pre-trial procedures picked up dramatically.

“We were under continual stress from the winter of 92/93,” says Dave. “We actually didn’t know what was going on half the time because it was all new to us.”

Indeed the stress of being plunged into a full scale legal head-to-head with a transnational corporation took an initial toll on Helen:

“I developed eczema and felt like my health was deteriorating. If it didn’t improve pretty soon I felt like I was gonna have to pull out. I would never have apologised to them. Effectively they would have got an injunction without a trial and could then have had us jailed if we handed out leaflets. At the time I felt like that couldn’t be as stressful as the huge amounts of legal work and court procedures we were having to endure.”

One of McDonald’s most aggressive legal manoeuvres was to persuade the judge to issue an order demanding that the defendants produce

witness statements to back up all areas of their defence within three weeks. Due to the extensive subject range of the allegedly libellous ‘Factsheet’, this was a huge task. Nutrition, employment, rainforest destruction, animal welfare, advertising techniques, diet and disease are all massive subjects in their own right and the ‘Factsheet’ contained information on all these. Under British libel laws every accusation had to be proven with primary evidence, such as witness statements.

It was then that Dave really clenched the bit between his teeth, collating 65 signed witness statements from around the world, all within the three week allotted time period. Both the judge and McDonald’s legal representatives were visibly surprised when the defendants managed to meet the strict deadline.

“A few friends helped out and I got some statements, but most of it was down to Dave being pushy with people,” recalls Helen. “I felt better after that and things picked up. “I’m just good on the phone,” offers Dave by way of explanation. “It was a mountain to climb but people climb mountains.”

“The next day we had a hearing in front of another judge who was slightly more human than the others,” recalls Helen. “He actually listened to what we said. McDonald’s were pushing for an early trial ’cos they knew we hadn’t finished preparing and were hoping to steamroller the case through without giving us all the documents we were entitled to. The judge agreed to put the trial date back. That and managing to get the 65 witness statements were enough to keep me going.”

Soon after that came the summer recess and a chance to breathe again after the initial onslaught. If the first rounds of the contest had been tough, the legal battles were due to get tougher, with McDonald’s successfully arguing in court that the evidence to be presented in the case was too complex for a jury to understand. Thus the trial would be conducted without one, to the disadvantage of the defendants.

“McDonald’s were insulting the intelligence of the public,” says Dave Morris. “In reality, a jury would have been outraged that this case was ever allowed to be brought at all. However, the public are now in effect the jury and they can draw their own conclusions based upon the evidence that has come out.”

McDonald’s next move was to make an attempt to nullify the defendants’ collation of

witness statements, asking the judge to strike out some parts of Helen and Dave’s defence on the basis that witness statements had not been obtained to substantiate all the allegations made in the ‘Factsheet’. This mainly involved international issues such as trade union disputes and rainforests, subjects on which it had obviously been harder for the defendants to obtain statements on within the three week period. Once again the judge agreed with the Corporation. However, in a landmark ruling, the Court of Appeal reinstated the whole defence, saying the defendants were entitled to rely on the cross-examination of witnesses during the course of trial to strengthen their case. Significantly, this meant that McDonald’s were now required to disclose all relevant company documents on the reinstated issues, an obligation they had resisted so far. For Helen and Dave this was their first legal triumph.

Realising that the court case was going to be more substantial than it had originally thought, the McDonald’s Corporation replaced its barrister and hired top British libel lawyer, Richard Rampton QC, at the cost of £2000 a day. His briefing fee for the introduction to the case is estimated at around £500,000.

“It is really stressful having to be in court everyday and doing all the preparations, especially with Rampton hurling insults at us,” says Helen.

Anyone who has attended what the national press have referred to as “the best free entertainment in town”, will have heard the idiosyncratic Richard Rampton QC grunt and snort his way throughout the entire course of the proceedings. Just before the summer recess this year, McDonald’s decided to withdraw an agreement by which they passed copies of the costly official court transcripts to both the judge and the defendants. The reason given by McDonald’s for this turnaround was that they objected to the McLibel Support Campaign’s use of the transcripts in its media briefings. Rampton said in court that the consequential extra note-taking the defendants would have to do would be “hard work”, suggesting that the unwaged defendants would be “resistant to that”. The defendants say this is just one of many cross-court comments made by Rampton to ruffle their confidence in court.

Continued →



nutrition.”

In contrast, the court was reminded of the contents of the McDonald’s ‘nutrition’ guide given out to the public via its burger outlet. The ‘nutrition’ guide says: “Every time you eat McDonald’s, you’ll eat good, nutritious food.... McDonald’s meal combinations can form part of your balanced diet.” Tim Lobstein, co-director of the Food Commission tells the court that McDonald’s concept of balanced diet is “meaningless”. “You could eat a roll of sellotape as part of a

balanced diet” he says.

July 26th 1994 » Evidence commences on McDonald’s animal welfare and food poisoning record. Dr Neville Gregory, an expert witness appearing on behalf of McDonald’s tells the court that McDonald’s egg suppliers keep chickens in battery cages, five chickens to a cage with each bird having less than the size of an A4 sheet of paper of space to live in. Edward Oakley, Senior Vice President of McDonald’s UK, describes these

conditions as “pretty comfortable”. He also goes on to say: “Hens kept in batteries are better cared for.”

September 12th 1994 » Dr Sydney Arnott, McDonald’s expert witness on cancer, inadvertently admits that a statement made in the allegedly libellous leaflet connecting diet with disease is a “very reasonable” assessment.

October 28th 1994 » Evidence commences on McDonald’s use of

advertising techniques. The official and confidential McDonald’s Operation Manual is read out in court. It reads: “Ronald loves McDonald’s and McDonald’s food. And so do children, because they love Ronald. Remember children exert a phenomenal influence when it come to restaurant selection. This means you should do everything you can to appeal to children’s love for Ronald and McDonald’s.” Paul Preston, McDonald’s UK President, tells the court that Ronald McDonald is not intended

Continued →

“He doesn’t miss an opportunity to say something nasty and it’s completely unnecessary,” says Helen.

“I think its pathetic,” adds Dave. “Looking at it from his point of view, he’s just sitting there week after week with us putting McDonald’s on trial. He’s the prosecutor, the great QC, but in reality he’s been sidelined. I think he feels left out.”

“He’s the prosecutor, the great QC, but in reality he’s been sidelined, I think he feels left out.”

Despite Rampton’s conduct in court, the defendants still found that the unspoken rules of the court process worked in his favour.

“Judges assume that because lawyers are lawyers they are going to be honest, know what they’re talking about and wouldn’t mislead the judge. Everything they say is a kind of gospel,”

observes Helen.

One primary example of this came over the disclosure of documents pertaining to an advertising campaign conducted by McDonald’s in the United States. As a result of the campaign, the Corporation had received a reprimand from three American State Attorney Generals for “pulling the wool over the public’s eyes”.

“McDonald’s had to hand us a document about the advertising campaign but it had loads blanked out,” recalls Helen. “Rampton argued that the blanked out parts were not relevant. We argued that since the memo was all about the different ads that had been run in the campaign, how could any part of it not be relevant? However, the Judge said ‘Well I have to take Mr Rampton’s word - if he says something’s not relevant then I have to assume that is the case’.”

It is part of the code of court that no legal representative should mislead the judge and, based on that assumption, the judge accepted Rampton’s argument. The only way round this situation is to directly prove that the blanked out document is relevant, which of course is difficult

if you are unable to ascertain what has been blanked out. Nevertheless, circumstance provided the defendants with a rare opportunity.

“Eventually we did get that document - it was quite funny,” recalls Helen. “Rampton happened to go out of the court room just at the moment Dave was about to start questioning the witness about what was in this document. If Rampton had been there he would probably have objected to the questions. We got enough information out of the witness [David Green - Head of McDonald’s Marketing] to show that the blanked out parts of the document were relevant and so the judge ordered that it should be disclosed.”

It was a victory but one which was still difficult to capitalise upon.

“It’s the thousands of activists all round the world standing up to McDonald’s and all that they stand for, that is what this campaign is all about.”

“By the time the document was disclosed, the witness had left the witness box so we couldn’t ask him questions about the information in it,” says Helen.

The McLibel Support Campaign, set up in 1990 to back up the defendants stance, has played a major part in the co-ordination and dissemination of information exposed by the trial. The group is small in number but has acted as a focal point for sympathisers from all over the world. “It’s the thousands of activists all round the world standing up to McDonald’s and all that they stand for, that is what this campaign is all about,” says Dave.

The McLibel Support Group also plays an essential part in collecting donations to pay for the running costs of the trial such as photocopying, telephone bills and witnesses fares. The office from which the Support Group is run is situated in a 15’ by 10’ spare room in central London, the floor of which also doubles up as the bed for the central co-ordinator, Dan Mills.

“It’s really amazing what Dan is doing - the way he’s kept it all together is a vital part of the work,” says Helen. “If we didn’t have Dan working in the office then I really think the whole thing might have collapsed.”

Mills is a qualified solicitor having spent two years working for the solicitor’s firm of Lovell White Durrant. Up until March last year, he had been stationed out in Lovell’s New York office where he had used his spare time to write a

Helen, Dave and Dave’s son Charlie outside the first UK McDonald’s branch in Woolich on the Corporation’s 20th UK birthday in October last year. The little man in between, with the Polka dot tie, is Mike Love, Director of Communications for McDonald’s UK



Chris Carson

Mammon on Trial

to “sell food” to children but to promote the “McDonald’s experience”. David Green, McDonald’s Senior Vice President of Marketing, tells the court that “[children are] virgin ground as far as marketing is concerned”.

January 1995 » David Walker (Chairman of McKey Foods, the sole supplier of McDonald’s UK hamburgers) admits that he personally organised the direct import of the consignments of Brazilian beef for use

in UK stores in 1983/4. The court is told of a letter sent by a member of the general public concerned about rainforest destruction in Brazil. In a letter read out in court, the McDonald’s Corporation replied: “We can assure you that the only Brazilian beef used by McDonald’s is that purchased by the six stores located in Brazil itself.”

A statement made by Ray Cesca (Director of McDonald’s Global Purchasing) is also read in court. In the statement is an admission that

McDonald’s used beef reared on recently de-forested rainforest when they first opened their stores in Costa Rica in 1970.

March 13th 1995 » The 102nd day in court breaks the previous record for the length of a British libel trial (beating the 101 day record set by Daily Mail V The Moonies [1982])

April 1995 » Evidence commences on McDonald’s employment record. Sid Nicholson, McDonald’s UK Vice

President, claims in court that McDonald’s are not anti-union and that all staff had the right to join one. He then says that workers “would not be allowed to collect subscriptions.... put up notices.... pass out any leaflets.... organise a meeting for staff to discuss conditions at the store on the premises.... or to inform the union about conditions inside the stores.” (‘Gross Misconduct’ and a ‘Summary sackable offence’). He also admits to the court that for crew aged 21 or over, the company “couldn’t actually pay

The Diary of a Stance

'Vegan Guide to New York'.

"I'd heard about two people being sued by McDonald's before going to New York," recalls Mills. "I thought good luck to them but I didn't think they had a hope in hell of getting anywhere with it."

The last six months of his stint with Lovell's was spent back in London, working in the shipping litigation department, a subject that hardly engaged his interest. "I was definitely the odd one out," he chuckles.

During his last few months with the firm, Dan became increasingly interested in the legal stance taken by the McLibel defendants. "I used to go to the McLibel office during my lunch breaks, go back to work for the afternoon and then return again in the evenings," he recalls.

After emerging as a newly qualified solicitor in September 1994, he joined the McLibel Support team full time.

"It was a once in a lifetime opportunity," says Dan. "I wanted to get involved in the animal rights movement and to get away from being a corporate lawyer and at the time what was needed was for someone to set up and co-ordinate the McLibel office."

Since making the decision to lend his support, Mills has found himself learning more than he ever expected.

"I came into it on an animal rights interest but since then I've had my eyes opened to so

"McDonald's are really not coming out of this very well at all and there's a great energy that comes from that."

many other issues - advertising, nutrition, employment practices - the lot.

"The fact that they would take two unwaged people to court to try and stop them distributing a leaflet which really wasn't going to make great inroads into their business provokes a reaction from people. McDonald's advertising seems to be particularly insidious. They have this clown figure Ronald McDonald who is aimed towards children giving over this loving/caring/happy/fun/circus image, when the reality is totally different. What goes on behind closed doors is pretty horrific."

The lifestyle turnaround for Dan couldn't have been more dramatic. As a working solicitor he had helped represent major banks, large landlords and huge shipping firms. Now he finds himself sleeping on the floor of a small office with international faxes regularly bulging out of the machine at four in the morning.

"It can be a bit much sometimes, living

and working in the same place. I have very few possessions here - I've kept my clothes to a minimum because it has to be an office principally. It doesn't really bother me that I have to bring in my mattress and make up a bed, although sometimes I feel like I want to have space to myself."

However, for Dan Mills, there are certainly no regrets.

"I get great motivation from being involved in this campaign. McDonald's are really not coming out of this very well at all and there's a great energy that comes from that. We're very much hand to mouth most of the time here, relying on donations coming in all the time, but it's definitely making waves."

Despite the legal mountain the defendants have been forced to climb, the journey has only persuaded them that they are on the right track. According to Helen, the opportunity to quiz a corporation's top executives is one not to be missed.

"Although it's been tedious being in court every day for the last year and a couple of months, it has produced a great amount of information about the inner workings of the company - things you don't normally get to hear. It's been great to cross-examine executives because normally if you do a protest outside the company's gates or you go up to head office, they just give you the brush-off or a prepared statement; they can deflect any questions you have. In the witness box they can't turn around, walk away, ignore your questions and avoid telling you what's going on. They do try and do that in the witness box but if you're persistent you can force them to give an answer. We're quite lucky to have that opportunity."

McDonald's application to have the trial conducted without a jury, as well as their decision to withhold the court transcripts from the

"In the Witness box they can't turn around, walk away, ignore your questions and avoid telling you what's going on."

defendants, seems to run contrary to the Corporation's assertion that they have nothing to hide. "Those taking part in the action should look at the facts and be aware of the truth," asserts Mike Love, Communications Director for McDonald's UK.

But the 'truth' is something both the defendants constantly refer to as their main driving force.

"People should ask themselves how we've managed to come this far in the case," says Helen. "If we weren't defending the truth, we wouldn't have lasted a week against such a massive multi-national with a top legal team and limitless financial resources at its disposal."

So is truth without finance bigger than lies with economic backing?

"The truth is always stronger in the end if people stand up and fight for it," observes Helen.

"It's dominated our lives but it's worth it," affirms Dave. "I get more determined every week. The main thing has got to be their success in promoting themselves - totally fanatical, egocentric and idiotic promotion of their completely non-descript company. They have forced their way into our streets, our living rooms

"If we weren't defending the truth, we wouldn't have lasted a week...."

and our minds. It's not just McDonald's that our case is about, it's about telling the truth and fighting back against an oppressive and destructive economic system. McDonald's happen to be a bubble waiting to burst and we are determined that the truth behind the glossy image comes out."

Meanwhile, the defendants, having climbed several legal mountains, prepared themselves to climb yet more when the case recommenced on September 25th.

"We spend virtually our whole time on this case, it's exhausting and does get a bit much from time to time," says Helen. "You have to get out and go for a walk or visit friends every now and again, otherwise you would just go mad."

In an attempt to keep herself "sane and effective", Helen recently took her bicycle to Scotland.

"Every time I thought about McDonald's, I said to myself 'stop, don't think about them'," she laughs. "But I climbed up Ben Lomond one day and I was only up there a few minutes and this guy strolls up wearing a Flintstones McDonald's t-shirt. On the design it said 'McDonald's - 90 billion people served'. I just so happened to have a couple of leaflets in my bag so I gave him one, I thought it was quite funny in a way. But I dunno, climb a bloody mountain and there's still a reminder of them." 



any lower wages without falling foul of the law".

April 15th 1995 » The 40th anniversary of the McDonald's Corporation. The defendants are invited to the United States to attend an anti-birthday celebration outside the first McDonald's burger bar (now a McDonald's museum) in Des Plaines, Illinois. McDonald's abandon plans to hold a birthday celebration in the museum on that day. Numerous anti-McDonald's demonstrations are held

in over 20 countries around the world.

May 28th 1995 » The Australian Television programme '60 Minutes' runs a feature on the McLibel case which includes the exposure of a McDonald's media strategy document.

The document marked 'highly confidential' is entitled '60 Minutes Strategy - McDonald's Australia'.

The document says: "We know that 60 minutes has been in Chicago filming in various locations with the two defendants and a group of

supporters. They are scheduled to be in the UK where we can only assume they will be doing more of the same." In a section on how McDonald's might explain a refusal to be interviewed, it suggests claiming no knowledge of the programme: "We don't know what 60 minutes are doing - only what we've seen on the promo [run a week before the programme is shown]."

They go on: "We could worsen the controversy by adding our opinion/perspective (this could add another dimension)... We should play

down any importance or significance of the 60 minutes programme."

Under the heading "Who should we talk to?" are a list of three named journalists. The document says they should "all be handled by Peter Ritchie [Head of Public Relations McDonald's Australia] because of his relationship with the presenters".

Under the heading "Who should we not talk to?" the document says "Any ABC radio or TV station Australia wide because they have given significant coverage to the case

The End of an Era of Capitulation

For years, successive submissions in the face of financial might had induced a cold climate of fear amongst critics of the McDonald's Corporation. Now, however, the tenacity of the two 'dominoes' who refuse to topple is turning corporate libel on its head and rescuing free speech from its coffin.

“The McLibel two would have the right to speak their opinion in the United States. It would be a violation of their constitutional rights to try and shut them up,” observes Keith Ashdown of the US Cancer Prevention Coalition.

It should be of no small political concern that the march of the McDonald's Corporation is a phenomenon that cannot be safely criticised in many of the countries populated by its all American burger culture. Huge neon 'M's on the sides of motorways, cinemas, and civic buildings brand the logo on our minds. In the United States, its citizens have the right to criticise but here in the UK, woe be unto anyone who dares object to the cultural foist of Ronald McDonald and the “McDonald's experience”.

Indeed the list of UK libel casualties is extensive and the question provoked by each one is ‘Who can stand up to the financial resources of McDonald's?’.

Under British libel laws, the onus lies on the critics to prove that their statements are either true or ‘fair comment’ based on fact. In order to do this the defendants must provide what is known as ‘primary evidence’. This entails direct witness statements but not commentary material such as books and press cuttings. For instance, if the defendants wanted to use information contained in a World Health Organisation report on say the links between a high fat diet and disease, they would have to bring an expert on the subject into the court room rather than just the written report itself.

Whilst it is possible to enter sworn statements from witnesses who live abroad, such statements carry less weight than a live witness because their evidence cannot be cross-examined before the judge.

It is rare to find expert scientists and food

professionals willing to give up their time in order to appear personally in a witness box. Indeed, the McDonald's Corporation pay the witnesses appearing on its behalf. Straight away this introduces a major financial advantage in being able to afford the costs of the flight, hotels and appearance fee.

It is a testament to how well regarded the defendants' stance is that the 80 witnesses appearing on their behalf, are doing so for free. Usually the McLibel Support Campaign has been required to find the money for fares and accommodation; sometimes not. When Dr Neal

...what is more obvious from McDonald's history of suing every dissenting voice coming to its attention, is the Corporation's fervent intent to preserve its jolly family image.

Barnard came over from the United States, the US Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine, of which he is President, paid his bills as their contribution to the defendants' case.

The defendants themselves of course are both unwaged, rendering legal representation completely unaffordable. As libel suits do not qualify for legal aid they have no choice but to learn the legal ropes and represent themselves. Their unwaged status also means that McDonald's stand to gain no immediate financial benefit from winning the libel suit against them. Indeed, what is more obvious from McDonald's history of suing every dissenting voice coming to its attention, is the Corporation's fervent intent to preserve its jolly

family image. Helen Morris and Dave Steel are in the unusual position of being sued for libel and yet having no financial resources. The fact that McDonald's have pursued two unemployed people is indeed reflective of the degree to which they will go to protect their reputation. However, contrary to the Corporation's manicured market drive, it could well prove to be one libel suit too many.

The McLibel trial currently in progress is undoubtedly the greatest level of opposition ever encountered by the Corporation in the courts. For the history of the many libel suits, either threatened or brought by McDonald's, is a history of capitulation; a domino cascade of back downs and legally forced apologies where one submission has induced another in an epidemic of withdrawn dissent.

Take this simple sequence of events.

In 1987, the Transnational Information Centre - a London based organisation conducting investigations into the workings of trans-national corporations - published a well-researched document called ‘Working for Big Mac’. The booklet's primary subject was the employment conditions of McDonald's workers. As a consequence of publication, the Information Centre was sued by the McDonald's Corporation and, unable to raise the money necessary to fight the court case, were forced to withdraw the booklet and formally apologise. The Guardian newspaper, which had published an article using information contained in ‘Working for Big Mac’, also apologised. As a consequence of the booklet's withdrawal, the Transnational Information Centre went bust.

Then in 1991, two Scottish actors wrote a play for children called ‘MacBurger's - Real Neat Scotch Fair’. The play was set in a Scottish burger bar and satirised the burger industry in general. It was performed several times by children between

in a positive perspective”.

The 60 Minutes programme is shown in Australia with a full exposure of the strategy document and an accusation that McDonald's are actively manipulating the media. The programme is syndicated to up to 60 other countries.

May 26th 1995 » At the McDonald's Corporation Annual General Meeting in Chicago, Michael Quinlan - Chair and Chief Executive - attempts to placate a concerned shareholder by

stating that the libel case would be “coming to a wrap soon”.

June 6th 1995 » McDonald's hire Ruskin Park in south London for three days in order to shoot a television advertisement. The project is abandoned at a cost of £100,000 after demonstrators keep popping up in front of camera with ‘McGreedy’ banners.

June 28th 1995 » First anniversary of the trial. National media report that

settlement negotiations between McDonald's and the defendants are under way. The defendants read a statement outside the High Court to clarify their part in the story. In the statement it says that McDonald's initiated settlement discussions and on two separate occasions flew over members of the US Board of Directors to meet the McLibel defendants. An article in The Economist (1/7/95) reveals that McDonald's had offered money to be given to a third party, if the defendants under take a legally

binding agreement not to criticise the Corporation again. The defendants refuse the offer, stating that their pre-conditions for the termination of the trial are as follows:

1. That McDonald's give an undertaking not to sue any organisation or individual for making statements similar to those contained in the London Greenpeace fact sheet.
2. That McDonald's apologise to those people they have sued in the past for such statements.
3. That McDonald's pay a

The Diary of a Stance



... HAMBURGER - IZING THE WORLD. "

the ages of 7 and 15 at places such as the Stirling District Youth Theatre, a local junior school and the East Kilbride Village Theatre. At no point within the play was McDonald's mentioned specifically. Once again the McDonald's Corporation threatened to sue the playwrights unless they apologised and undertook never to put the play on again. To start with the actors ignored the threats but the Corporation grew more insistent. According to McDonald's: "The play is riddled with political and defamatory anti-McDonald's propaganda".

In their legal warnings, McDonald's cited no fewer than twenty-one quotations or references in the play they considered to have been extracted from the 'Working for Big Mac' booklet published by the Transnational Information Centre.

In their letter to the two actors, McDonald's lawyers say: "Following the issue of proceedings for libel in the High Court in London, McDonald's received a full apology for these allegations in Open Court both from Transnationals and from the Guardian." The threat was clear. By basing their case on the references within the play similar to those in the 'Working for Big Mac' Booklet, any libel case involving the 'MacBurger' case would of course take into account the fact that the Transnational Information Centre and the Guardian had apologised. In court terms this implies that the organisations backing down did not have the evidence to support their allegations.

In a public letter, the two Scottish actors wrote: "Our own lawyer believes that we do have the basis of a case against them. However we are not in a the position to fund a long and protracted battle against them in the courts. We had little choice but to sign their undertaking."

The undertaking signed by the actors stated that the play was "defamatory and untrue". The actors were also forced to enter into a legally binding agreement never to perform the play again. There was an outcry in the Scottish press but they in turn had to be careful what they said. The only avenue left for the expression of local anger was to use the relatively safe waters of parliamentary impunity and submit a House of Commons motion.

Proposed by Scottish MP George Galloway and supported by 11 other MPs, the motion read:

"That this house deplores the reprehensible act of artistic bullying committed by the fast food multinational McDonald's, upon young Glasgow playwrights Steve Brown and Jenny Fraser, whose play 'MacBurger's - Real Neat Scotch Fare' first hounded and now effectively banned by heavy handed legal actions co-ordinated from the company's head office in Illinois, simply seeks to highlight the appalling working conditions many young people working in the fast food industry endure and is in any case fiction which does not mention McDonald's once; [the house] is appalled that through the threat of protracted and expensive legal action McDonald's, a multi-million pound company, has forced the authors to sign an undertaking that they will never again allow their work to be performed anywhere; and condemns this gross over-reaction on the part of the company which brings their whole enterprise into disrepute." (Hansard: Motions No. 153/1198 'Conduct of McDonald's' 25/7/91)

In a letter sent to the McLibel defendants in August of this year, the two Scottish actors wrote: "Looking back, I wish we'd had the courage to do what you've done and taken them on."

Indeed the stance taken by the McLibel Two has put the proverbial carpet back under dissenters' feet. Successive submissions to the McDonald's legal department had not only given the Corporation a stream of guilty admissions to wave at future judges, but it had also created a fear induced silence amongst the Corporation's

potential critics. The Guardian, The Sunday Correspondent, Channel Four, BBC Television, the Transnational Information Centre, the Vegetarian Society, the Bournemouth Advertiser and the Scottish TUC are just some of the organisations who have apologised for, and retracted, published information about the McDonald's Corporation.

However, for a small publishing company in Poland, knowledge of the McLibel stance has come just in time. They were threatened by the McDonald's Corporation after publishing a textbook for primary school fourth-grade students entitled 'Biology 4: Man and Environment'. In the book are criticisms of McDonald's connection with the destruction of rainforests, unhealthy food and environmentally unfriendly packaging. The Polish publishing house were unsure whether they could afford to fight the case and were considering both a retraction of the allegations and a commitment to remove the offending passages from future editions, as demanded by McDonald's. That was

After speaking with the McLibel Two, the small publishing house in Poland is examining the possibilities of defending themselves in court.

before they heard about the McLibel Two in London and made contact with the Support Campaign.

Huge quantities of information about the workings of the McDonald's Corporation has been brought into the public domain courtesy of the McLibel trial. It is information that will stand up as evidence in any future libel suits McDonald's may dare bring against its critics. After speaking with the McLibel Two, the small publishing house in Poland is examining the possibilities of defending themselves in court.

Every court case establishes a precedent, whether it be one of submission or one of stance. Up to now the mighty McDonald's Corporation have forced submissions more through financial might than through just and truthful arguments. However, this long era of capitulation to such corporate control has finally been brought to a close by two environmental activists for whom an apology was too galling a prospect to contemplate.

Ⓚ



Mammon on Trial

substantial sum to a mutually agreed third party in lieu of compensation to the defendants of the present libel trial.

July 3rd » McDonald's decide to end an agreement by which a copy of the official court transcripts that they pay for, is passed to the defendants. The reason given is the amount of court evidence finding its way into the national and international media.

July 18th 1995 » A full front page feature article appears in the Wall Street Journal (18/7/95) headlined

'Activists put McDonald's on Grill'. The article is part of a spate of media coverage that swept across America following the first anniversary of the trial which included 4 minutes on prime time CBS National News.

July 26th 1995 » Summer recess begins.

September 25th 1995 » Summer recess ends and the trial recommences.

December 1995 » The trial will become the longest civil case of any

kind in British legal history.

Projected timetable:

Still to be heard in the trial:

- Some further McDonald's witnesses on their employment record followed by 30 ex-employees and trade union officials called by the defence.
- The evidence on McDonald's connections with rainforest destruction through cattle ranching (estimated to last two months)
- There is also further evidence on nutrition, pesticides, packaging,

The Diary of a Stance

food poisoning, marketing and on the publication of the leaflet itself McDonald's must prove that Helen Steel and Dave Morris were responsible for the distribution of the leaflet. Witnesses include the undercover spies employed by McDonald's to infiltrate London Greenpeace meetings (estimated to last four weeks).

- Closing speeches (estimated to last six weeks).
- Judgement estimated to come between April and June 1996.

Ⓚ

Opencast Mining

After destroying the coal-mining industry in the eighties, saying there was no market for British coal, the UK Government are now keen to facilitate high-profit, low-employment opencast mining. Ursula Wills-Jones looks at the monocracies and the environmentalist's response.

"When the miner comes up from the pit, his face is so pale it is noticeable even through the mask of coal dust. Their exhausted faces, with grime clinging in all the hollows, have a fierce, wild look," wrote George Orwell in 1937, describing the poverty, pollution and dangers which were the lot of mining communities.

Mining, unlike other industries, seems to possess a kind of mythical status in the national psyche. From a lethal, gaseous hell epitomising the horrors of the industrial revolution, it became a symbol of working class solidarity and of national pride and production. Finally, it was mythologised as the socialist demon of the 1980s, and there it died. When Michael Heseltine shut down most of Britain's remaining deep coal pits in 1993 it was seen as marking the end of an era. The official line was that there was no more market for coal. The deep pits which fuelled Britain's industrialisation

locals' concerns, apart from the visual impact, is the effect on people's health. They believe that the dust from the mine and pollution from lorries will cause health problems like asthma. They also complain that property values have plummeted, and that other types of industry have been put off investing in the area. There are houses within 200 yards of the proposed site, a Site of Special Scientific Interest which contains mature oak trees and a colony of endangered butterflies. There was no planning enquiry into the proposal, and dozens of other opencast sites are proposed in the area.

In a neat parallel to the situation at Twyford Down which began the anti-roads movement, locals had been campaigning for years against the project but were largely beginning to feel that it was inevitable. Then, quite recently, members of the local Earth First! direct-action group moved in and set up a camp on the site, erecting tree houses, and the campaign took on a whole new lease of life.

equipment being donated by sympathetic villagers. "The way the local people have been dealt with is unbelievable. Local and national democracy has failed them badly," says Andy Lorax of Cardiff Earth First!

Selar has also attracted several international visitors. One of these is Daniel Zapata, a native American from the Black Mesa in Arizona. He's in the UK campaigning against opencast mining on indigenous land by a British company, Hanson, and is keen to see the similarities between his own people's situation and that of the native 'Cymri'. "It's all native lands, I don't care what countries they say they are, it's all indigenous peoples' lands. We're all tribal people," he enthuses.

If some of the locals are surprised to find themselves portrayed as an oppressed indigenous people, it's a perspective which makes a certain amount of sense to Eric Evans. "Only those who have been part of a community whose roots go back generations can appreciate the horrendous effect of opencast mining," he says. "It might be the disappearance of a familiar, beloved hill with all its historical and childhood associations, or it might be old farms, fields, with their names in the Cymric language. Our history is being taken from us. It is that feeling of once being part of something which is then gone forever. It's like a death."

Another visitor has been a representative of a NGO which is fighting opencast mining in the Cordillera region of the Philippines, where the giant British mining corporation RTZ is planning to mine indigenous lands in search of gold and copper. The indigenous Igorot people of the area, who have practised small-scale, sustainable mining for centuries, would probably recognise the tactics of the Earth First! protesters camped at Selar. In the past they have repulsed other mining ventures by, among other tactics, erecting barricades and lying down in front of bulldozers.

Opponents of the corporations who want to opencast Igorot lands in the Philippines contrast traditional mining with the practices of the multi-national corporations. They say

that indigenous mining methods use no chemicals, produce very little waste, and involve women in production. The proceeds are shared throughout the communities. Large-scale mining, on the other hand, uses cyanide and mercury, destroys forests, communities and culture, and gives work only to the men.

If this sounds like a familiar tale of third world folk, things don't change so much closer to home. Just down the road from Selar stands Tower Colliery, the only remaining deep mine in the area. Tower became the only worker-owned pit in Britain when its workforce pooled their redundancy money to buy it. Profitable, unionised, safe, and democratically run, Tower Colliery could eventually be threatened by cheaper coal from nearby open pits. In both cases, it seems hard not to conclude that a solution is being replaced by a problem.

The NUM, what's left of it, is unequivocally opposed to opencasting. Mick Appleyard, a former miner and trade union official from Garforth, near Leeds, is campaigning against a rash of opencast proposals in the old Yorkshire coalfields. "There are 17 million tons of imported coal coming into this country, and 17 million tons of opencast coal in Britain where greenfield sites are being ripped up. Heseltine closed 30 collieries which could have provided 34 million tons of coal at a low cost and kept the miners in work," he says. Opencast provides far fewer jobs than deep mining, one of the reasons is it is cheaper. Like campaigners in South Wales, he is more than happy to see direct action groups like Earth First! getting involved in the issue. In Yorkshire, there has already been one action at an opencast site which resulted in 19 arrests, and activists are planning more protests.

So, would Orwell recognise a miner in 1995? One thing is certain: he would find the poverty, unemployment and industrial illness which he recorded in 1937 there in plenty. But the foul air which poisoned the lungs is more likely to be above ground than below, and the only exhaustion is the result of surviving on the dole. As for those grimy faces with the fierce, wild look, he might just find them if he looked in the right place - probably chained to the underneath of a bulldozer.



Andrew Testa

Aerial defences at Selar opencast mine.

went, and with them, the country's strongest union, not to mention the heart and soul of dozens of communities. But replacing them is a new kind of coal mine. Opencast mines, vast holes in the ground from which coal is simply ripped out and carted off, are springing up in all the old coal mining areas.

One of these, Selar, near Neath in South Wales, has become the focus for protest against opencast. Among the

One person who was glad to see the arrival of new protesters was retired lecturer Eric Evans, who has been campaigning against the opencast for years.

He describes the relationship between local people and the inhabitants of the camp as one of "mutual respect". The protesters claim they enjoy almost unanimous support from the local communities, with the majority of their food and

Michael Heseltine: “Freemarket Nimby”

A delegation of budding entrepreneurs recently investigated the possibilities of an opencast mine in Michael Heseltine’s back garden. Johnny Minor, one of the delegates, reports on the possibilities of coal-extraction from Hezza Manor.

Michael Heseltine MP, First Secretary of State and Deputy Prime Minister, is notorious for (amongst other things) closing 31 of the last modern deep mine pits, throwing whole communities on the scrap-heap on the grounds that there was “no market” for their coal.

Curiously, a “market” seems to have been found again. In coalfields all over the country, even in places where mining ceased many years ago, licences have been granted for opencast extraction of coal near the surface, against the opposition of local councils and local people.

Opencast involves ripping up acres of fields and woods, including the open spaces around pit villages which contribute to their character and have served generations for recreation. Heavy earth-moving plant creates shattering noise; wildlife is exterminated; huge quarry trucks roar through streets, causing damage and menacing pedestrians; the area is blanketed in coal dust, which penetrates into homes, increases respiratory diseases, especially amongst children, kills plants and makes the garden washing-line useless. Neither does it employ many redundant miners. Non-union labour, bused in for low wages, is one of the ways the opencast conglomerates make their bucks.

All this is a long way from the scrupulously maintained splendour of Thenford House, a multi-million pound mansion set in 600 acres of beautiful park and farm land, where Hezza rolls out his doss-bag at night. Yet the opencast threat hangs over him too.

A planning application to rip up the sward between his bedroom window and the ornamental lake in the middle distance is currently being considered by Northamptonshire County Council, and has been duly posted on official notice-boards in the village. Only two obstacles to the cost-effective extraction of coal from this valuable site remain. Heseltine’s consent will be needed before work can start. Would the Deputy Prime Minister wish to stand in the way of progress or try to avoid the necessary nuisance suffered by others? Surely not?

The other niggling doubt concerns the identity of the applicants who have devised the scheme. It turns out to be MSG Associates. The ‘MSG’ stands for Miner’s Support Group and the ‘Associates’ are a front for No Opencast, a campaign uniting coalfield communities, including

redundant mine-workers and Women Against Pit Closures, with environmental activists, land campaigners and supporters from around the country.

There have been actions at several opencast sites and members of Leeds EarthFirst! have been charged under the CJA for chaining themselves to

plant at the hugely destructive Garsforth site. The villagers of Thenford may have some doubts, but MSG Associates are earnestly pursuing their scheme. A “site visit” in May attracted national publicity and is thought not to have exactly delighted Mikey.

He was even less pleased when, just back from holiday, he found that mining had actually begun at 5am on a quiet Sunday. A little in advance of the planning consent, let alone his consent - of course, but what are such bureaucratic quibbles to go-getting entrepreneurs?

Activists from Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and London, complete with helmets, head-torches and luminous jackets, had roped off a site in front of his bedroom window, erected contractor’s signs on behalf of “Heseltine Opencast Mining pic”, and started digging. The disturbed turf was used to form two huge slogans reading “NO OPENCAST!” on nearby slopes. The local police were bemused and, apparently, waiting for a lead from the First Secretary of State. Despite two hours’ banging and shouting outside, he was still in bed - or pretending to be. A yacht siren was brought, and that did the trick!

Hezza appeared at a window, livid but ludicrous in lavender pyjamas. “I thought we’d sorted out this trespassing,” he ranted at the constabulary, “clear them off!” However, four cops were unable to clear off 60 determined but peaceful “opencast miners” and they simply retreated to the terrace to guard the mansion against anyone wishing to use the toilets. Another CJA failure! Rumour had it that a rave in the area that night had stretched police resources.

Opencast operations continued with songs and discussion, whilst a spade served as a bat in a raucous and lengthy game of cricket, in which the yacht siren played a frequent but undefined role. The media arrived in force and a collection for campaign funds even elicited contributions from two policemen. After six hours it was decided to end the operation for the day as everyone was exhausted.

Departure was organised, NUM style, “in good order”. A banner-waving parade skirted the mansion and circled the crunchy gravel to deliver a final loud message at the Deputy Prime Minister’s imposing front door before marching out through the main gates. Police numbers had increased to a



Justin Cooke

dozen by this time, but they had missed an important opportunity; only a few hundred yards away, the campaigner’s vehicles were parked and police were desperately trying to scribble down registration numbers as people drove off in different directions.

The most inspiring aspect of this action was the wide range of people taking part and the links made between them. Equal numbers of men and women turned up, a large proportion of them over 50. Ann Scargill and Women Against Pit Closures were joined by No Opencast activists from various places, London squatters and trades unionists, and an inspiring van load of EarthFirst!ers. The spirit of the event was summed up at the end as the Leeds crew, sporting dreads, painted faces and colourful clobber piled into their battered hunt-sabbing transit. Mick, staunch socialist and NUM veteran, now co-ordinator for No Opencast in Barnsley, still neat and trim in windcheater and slacks, saw them off with “Good luck, comrades. See you at’t next meeting”.

Note to Entrepreneurs: Anyone can apply for planning consent to do anything on any land, provided proper notice is given to the owner. The application then has to be publicised to see if anyone objects and considered by the council planning committee before a decision is made.

Note to Tory-haters: Next time you see Hezza raving on TV, don’t switch off, don’t smash the set. Just narrow your eyes and envision the lavender pyjamas!



Reclaiming The Street Politic

Andy Johnson lets the tape roll on an RTS brainstorm



Nick Cobbing

Reclaim the Streets have been out and about over the last few months making a stand and delivering on our crowded and polluted highways.

In London, the original Camden debut hold-up was bettered with Street Party Two in Angel, Islington. Scaffold tripods, an idea borrowed from Australian anti-logging campaigns, via Twyford Down, proved a most effective development in road-blocking technology. Children had a sand pit in which to while away the sunny day and the grown-ups were entertained with an armoured personal carrier put to better use as a sound system.

A couple of weeks later RTS sprung an audacious blockage of Greenwich High Street during the morning rush hour; and again at the beginning of September with a

morning rush-hour hold-up of Streatham High Road in Brixton.

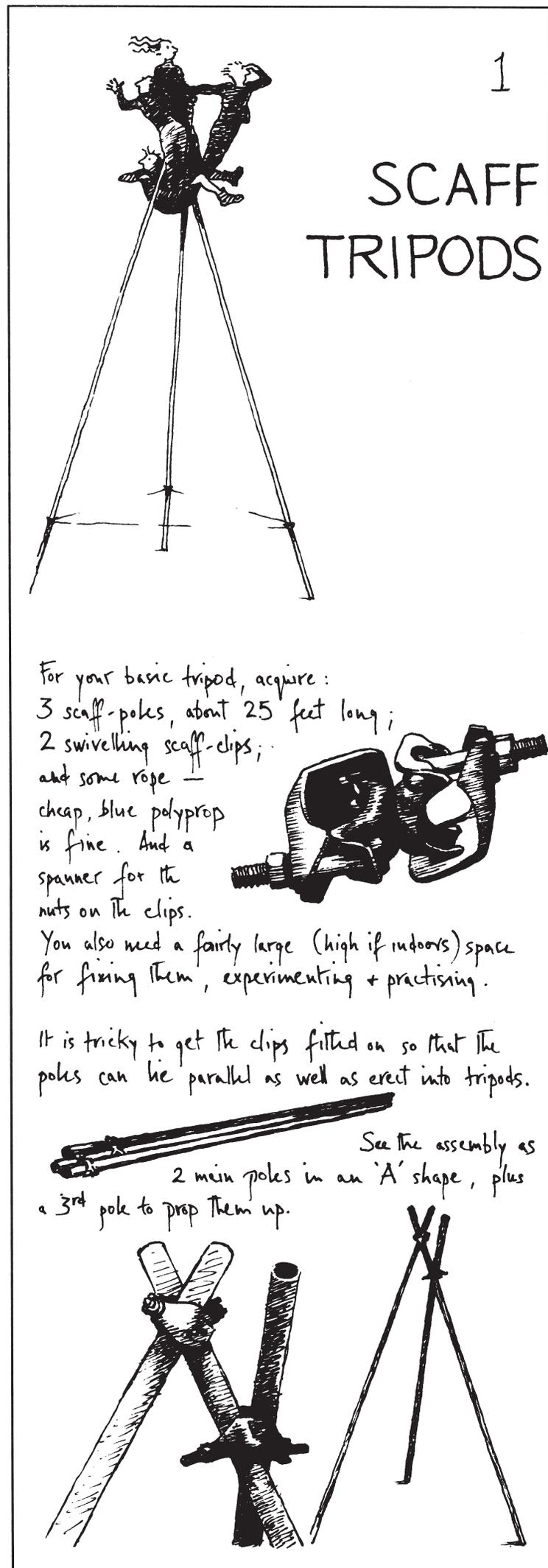
In the midst of all this, Birmingham RTS held up a main thoroughfare in Mosely and RTS groups have been springing up in Reading, Wales, Blackburn, Oxford, Southampton, Brighton and Nottingham.

Just after the Angel and Greenwich actions SQUALL got the beers in and settled down for a long chat with the new knights of the road in London. And a most interesting chat it proved to be:

SAM: After the M11 we were going to open up a squat because at Claremont we'd been protecting buildings. But we felt we had to move the debate on from anti-road to anti-car. We were originally going to do two actions. The street party in Camden and subvertising.

PHIL: But subvertising didn't really happen because the street party took up so much time. The idea was to trash as many car ads as possible, put up ads of our own and get the debate into the press.

SAM: We did get some press coverage, there was a phone-in



Road Wars

debate on GLR, but press coverage doesn't affect the decision on actions. What it does do is raise awareness and get the message out.

PHIL: The thing about street parties is the fact that they are so massive, that they involve a couple of thousand people - it's much more important than actions involving a handful of people. Having a thousand people come from Battlebridge Road (the meeting point before the party, just behind King's Cross station) to Angel, who didn't know where they were going, who didn't know whether or not it was working, and then getting there - to an empty street without cars and a party. Organising that sort of experience is what I'm into. That's much more important than media success. But media success encourages people to come to the actions.

SAM: Media's a general kind of advertising.

PHIL: The Greenwich action got more press coverage than the street party. Mainly because it was rush-hour, a weekday, and Greenwich has the worst pollution in London.

IAN: It got the Guardian to do its poll (*Which said that most people wanted cars to be restricted in city centres*).

SAM: And there was a poll two months ago in the Guardian that said 62 per cent of people agreed with direct action.

PHIL: We had much more press before the street party than after it, which is how you want it because you want people there. Greenwich was a pollution and smog thing. But the media didn't pick up on it. They treated it as an RTS protest - blocking streets again. I was concerned how they merged the two things together - Oh, they're blocking the streets again but doing it during the rush hour. They're not interested in technique, so in their eyes Greenwich, Camden and Angel were the same thing.

SAM: Greenwich was a solidarity thing. GASP (*the local anti-pollution campaign*) were there and we were supporting their campaign. Greenwich has the worst smog and pollution in London and the local community were trying to do something about it.

PHIL: After Angel we'd decided to do another action and we were looking for a venue. We decided to do it on the Tuesday and did it on the Friday (*August 4*). We couldn't get in touch with every one but lots of people from Greenwich were there and we left it up to them to network. At the beginning I envisaged it as a question of staying there until the police got us down, but they showed no intention of moving us.

SAM: It would have meant getting a cherry picker to get us down. When we said to the police Chill out, it's only for two hours' the sense of relief on their faces was visible.

PHIL: One of the differences between Greenwich and the street party was that we wanted the actual party side of it to be a success, so we put a lot of thought into how traffic could be redirected. At Greenwich the idea was to try and block the traffic. To make it wait. One was creating a car-free space, the other was about blocking cars. We reckon street parties are the answer to the CJA. Street parties are in a public place where it's much more dangerous for the police to go in. And the media are there so the police can't get out of hand.

SAM: And the location is kept secret. It's the same skills as putting a party on indoors, with one or two exceptions. The Mother Festival, for example, had the location on the phone lines 15 hours before it was due to start.

PHIL: It's also easier to go from tube stations where the police can't use their radios, so they can't do anything until there's so many people there they risk a public order problem.

SAM: Country lanes are easier to block, and at street parties the police can't tell the difference between activists and ordinary folk. The idea of the CJA is to criminalise communities, so that they can't have space. Street parties are about reclaiming space - to do what you want to do. It's resurrecting space for people.

PHIL: If you think what streets have been since the beginning of cities - right back to ancient Greece - they have been places where crowds gather, people meet and exchange ideas. The grass-roots of democracy takes place in public spaces on streets. The car undermines that democracy because it dissolves the space. A lot of anti CJA activity has been about creating mini public spaces.

SAM: Roads are now used for cars and there is no public space. There are no spaces that aren't owned by people and everything that goes with that - fear, paranoia and neighbourhood watch schemes. There is no forum for debate. You can't talk to people or meet people because of roads and congestion. The car is a metaphor for all these things. We're using the car to illustrate other things - urban planning, space, cars for profit: Capitalism. It's really amazing how quickly people understand these issues.

PHIL: Pollution as well. Everyone is aware of the environmental impact of cars. But what they can't do is talk about space. So as the campaign develops we get more into these issues. Before it was the environmental impact now it's the social impact. Cars are not a solution that would ever have been chosen collectively by a society. By their very nature they always represent a purely individual solution. The sum of everybody's individual ideas is complete chaos. But they're not intrinsically wrong. Technology isn't intrinsically wrong.

IAN: And that obsession with uninventing the technology is the mirror image of the technological fix of making cars greener. It takes the argument away from the issue that cars are really bad socially.

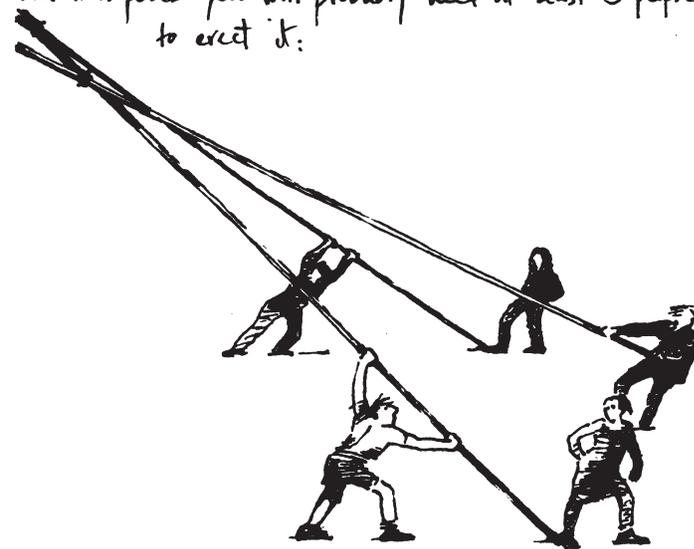
SAM: Cars create a need for themselves, such as out of town shopping centres and long journeys which are too expensive on the train. In cities, on an individual basis, individuals need a car. The

Continued

2

The clip for the 3rd pole has to be about a foot below the main poles' clip, to allow the main poles to close over it, and the central swivel of the clip should be at roughly 120° round the pole from that of the main clip. Experiment until you get the clips placed so that the poles can lie parallel + open into a tripod.

With iron poles you will probably need at least 5 people to erect it.



At least one strong person to lift each of the 2 main legs by walking down beneath it from apex to base; one person to do the same with the 3rd leg and, at a crucial moment, to swing this leg out to prop up the 'A'; and one person with their foot braced against the base of each main pole to stop it skidding forward. With lighter aluminium poles you might manage with 3 people.

ONCE IT'S ERECTED, at least one person must shin up a pole at the speed of light, to be out of reach at the top.



A simple circumference rope tying the 3 poles together about 3 feet from the top can be fixed in advance and then stood on by up to 3 people.

A hammock sling is more comfortable and rather stylish. Make it out of a length of strong, light material, such as rip-stop nylon, knotted at either

Road Wars

reason they do is because everything is so far away. In a rural area it's not intrinsically bad because everything is far away anyway and not developed around the car.

PHIL: But even in the countryside there are other forms of transport. Cars dissolve the city, in the countryside they may be spread over a wider area but they still have a lot of disadvantages.

SAM: Transport reflects life. Slow it down, so that it's not as important to travel and always be in a hurry. This society is based on moving people around as quickly as possible.

IAN: In an organic way it's like saying driving is morally bad. There's no point thinking it's going to disappear overnight. But can we come away from it? It's not a case of goodness or badness, but of shifting the social parameters. Keeping it in the realms of social change that is necessary for a decent public transport system.

PHIL: Car emissions have got to be quelled and that's a massive reason why cars are bad.

IAN: The way our message has come across is that we hate cars. It's a simple and easy message to get across. But the whole problem is that the issue gets taken up in a negative way. That individuals have to give up cars and make sacrifices, rather than being seen as a social problem that has to be addressed in a coherent, social, way - through transport policy and urban planning.

PHIL: The problem is what we might want and how we are going to realistically achieve that. On the one hand we talk about public space, eradication of the car, the car as a metaphor of consumer, capitalist, private lifestyle that has to go. But the question is, what effect will we have? At the moment the anti-car message is getting across really well, the World in Action programme (on RTS) presented it really well. Cars, like fur coats and cigarettes, are going out of fashion. People aren't into them anymore. But the problem with that is that it's easy for the government to use the anti-car message and do a green wash by doubling the price of petrol so cars can't be used by poor people but putting nothing into public transport.

SAM: Which we're not into. In the short term we're arguing for more public transport. But in the long term we're questioning the reason for

transport anyway. We have to have viable alternatives, because the major argument now is that there are no viable alternatives.

PHIL: You have to recognise the ways you are likely to be misunderstood and misinterpreted. It's a question with public transport in particular. Unless it's actively struggled for it may not happen.

SAM: Direct action is an end in itself and also more a means to an end. It's doing something here and now with something you're not working to achieve here and now.

PHIL: People's sense of powerlessness is overwhelming. People feel in general their ability to influence anything has been taken away from them.

IAN: It's the last resort.

SAM: It's the first resort. You don't have to be clued up to put actions on.

PHIL: We were surprised by how easy it was. Blocking the road part was easy.

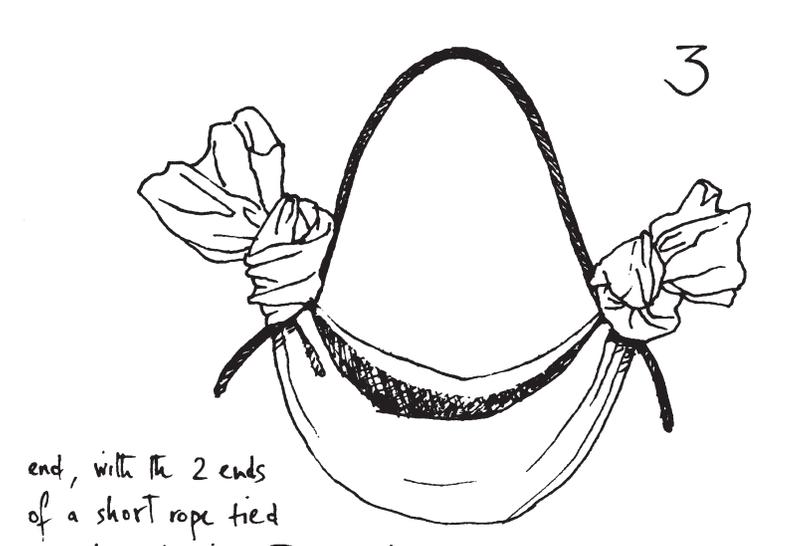
IAN: It was inevitable that it (Angel) went so well.

SAM: We were more worried about Camden because we hadn't done anything before. We knew there would be a lot of people there, but we couldn't predict the police reaction. So it was a good test. If you have enough people, such as at Camden, the police can't tell the difference between activists and everyone else, so they're more concerned about numbers. We knew from Camden that it was possible to do a party. It's experience. Every time you do it you push the boundaries further.

PHIL: What we were also doing is putting together an information pack. Ideas for actions, how to do a street party, dealing with the media, setting up an office. So that there will be lots of autonomous groups. It's not the way to do it for people to rely on London.

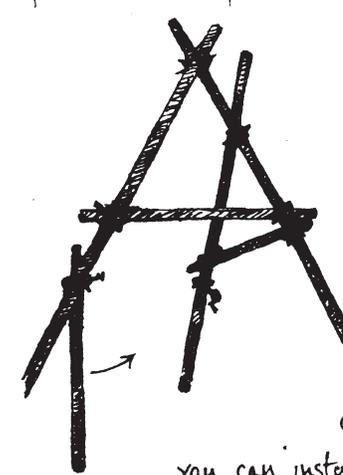
For information see **CONTACTS** page 87.

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end, with the 2 ends of a short rope tied securely just inside these knots.

The rope can be slung over your shoulders as you shin up, and slipped over the poles at the top.



For extra stability + a convivial number at the top, you can instal 3 short horizontal poles — with clips. Leave each short pole dangling from one clip until the tripod is up, then do up the 2nd clip. Don't forget the spanner. A climbing harness and slings make this job easier. The augmented tripod will be heavier. You may need more people to lift it.

A tripod lacking these extra bars can be stabilised against accidental slippage, though not against attack, with a circumference rope linking the legs a couple of feet above the ground. Exhaust-clips are useful to stop this rope riding up.

PRACTISE putting it up. Shambles develops into lightening expertise.

— B. Dahl.



Nick Cobbing

Newbury Bypass: Battle-lines Drawn

Ian Freeman introduces the contestants
in the Third Battle of Newbury.

Great end to the transport debate wasn't it? Seven months after calling a twelve-month halt to the Newbury by-pass for a "review", just half an hour before he was shuffled out of the transport office, Brian Mawhinny gave the go-ahead for Costain to start ripping up the land once again. Costain just happens to be one of the biggest donors to the Tory Party, which just happens to be in debt. And who looks after Tory Party funds, or lack of? The new chairman. Who? Brian Mawhinny of course.

So, into the job of commander of the combined corporate forces of environmental destruction comes the cycling baronet Sir George Young, who has vowed to continue the road scheme. Then, as the European Court decides Britain is contravening its habitats directives and sends notice of its actions against the British Government for failing to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment, he calls another six month halt, this time to re-tender the contract.

Whichever way you look at it, the end of the road is nigh. Which, come to think of it, kind of pre-supposes the end of the debate. Doesn't it?

European Directives didn't stop the destruction of Twyford Down, however. The extent of the land threatened with destruction at Newbury involves three Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including the River Kennet (one of the cleanest in the country), areas of woodland and wetland and habitats of supposedly protected species.

Independent traffic studies indicate that the by-pass would only remove about 15 per cent of the traffic problem from the centre of Newbury. Due to traffic increase it will become as congested as the current situation in only five to seven years. It is a monster of blind economics that is being pushed along by property developers and sold to the local people as the only solution. But it is still unlikely the road will be defeated by the European Court.

In fact there is every possibility that the initial contractors, Mott MacDonald, could move in and start trashing soon, so ending the European case anyway, ie. no endangered environment - no case. Buildings on the route have been demolished and engineers have been sniffing around.

But have you been down to the woods lately? On Snelsmore Common a camp has been established for over a year now and you can lounge around on an extensive system of walk-ways connecting several lush tree dwellings. Meanwhile, down by the river bank, a delegation from the so-called 'University of Road Protest' on the proposed A30 down at Fairmile, near Honiton, has thrown up a tree village in under a month. And, although at the moment the ground is dry, as soon as it rains it will be no place for foot nor machine. Hence their ground benders are on stilts, and they'll probably be there until the amphibious cherry-picker is invented. Kennet is possibly one of the most defensible bits of woodland in the country. And there's more!

The 'Third Battle of Newbury' is a growing collective of local people providing excellent support and getting numerous pledges to stop the bulldozers. Together with Friends of the Earth they are doing good works at all levels whilst working on alternatives. If ever there was a chance of stopping a road with direct action, it's here at Newbury.

There are on-going actions against Costain and Mott MacDonald; they keep leaving their

files in the most obvious of places, like their offices! Why not give Mott MacDonald's project Manager, Chris Hodges a ring on 01962 866300 ext 168?

Meanwhile the pro-road group, comprised of the Local Council, the Tory MP and Vodaphone - the town's largest employer, are busy churning out misinformation in their campaign. At the same time they are quite openly buying and selling land around the proposed route making fortunes in the aggregates and motorway services boom. The slavering packs of property developers are falling over themselves to do deals to destroy the land. Having bought up local and national politics and politicians, they have the power to use all the resources of the state in

protecting their feast.

The armies of the Council of England were halted at Newbury once before when, in 1643, the king was prevented from returning to London. Whilst the people were pre-occupied with the visible head of state, Cromwell was busy changing jobs and signing deals with his sponsors.

So, what's new? Well they're calling it the proposed route of the A34. All sound systems to the front, it's time for a party!

To join the 'Beat the Bulldozer' pledge contact the 3rd Battle of Newbury: 01635 45544 / 45545

For more information on this and other road schemes contact Road Alert: 01635 521660



Nick Cobbing

Wells Relief Road

Protesters stopped work for half a day at Dolcote, part of the Wells Relief Road Scheme.

Fencing was being erected by DoT contractors to fence off cattle from the route. Fifteen people invaded the site where the JCBs and other plant were working. Protesters climbed on to machines, on the roofs and into the buckets. More security guards were called in and the police alerted.

The site was vacated as police arrived and there were no arrests. The Wells Relief Road Scheme is set to destroy two school playing fields, bringing traffic and fumes closer to a local school, all at a meagre cost of £14 million.

For more information contact: Save Our Space, c/o West Side Bookshop, Sadler St, Wells BA5 2SE. Tel: 01749 880639

End of the Road for M-Way construction

A Department of the Environment spokesman has admitted that the "number of new roads you can build is almost non-existent now".

The statement came in July as officials in the Transport department studied new ideas to make the best use of existing road space.

These included stopping drivers using congested motorways for short journeys; putting traffic lights on slip roads to control the rate of access onto motorways and introducing variable speed limits.

"We're looking at making the most of existing roads as it becomes less and less possible to build new ones," the nameless official said. "It isn't budgets as such but the fact that the number of new roads you can build is almost non-existent."

Green Mania

After six months of peaceful protest, Greenmania, one of the last bastions of action against the M11 extension, was finally evicted in early September.

The site, a small village of tree houses connected by cargo nets and ropeways, on the Green Man roundabout in Wanstead, had been occupied since March.

Mid-morning on September 5th, the first platforms were erected to remove protesters from the lower branches. Twenty minutes after the first tree was felled, to allow the cherry

pickers access to the site, the press and onlookers were herded behind a row of police vans, effectively preventing any close inspection of the action on the ground.

Sophie, who was locked onto the ground, suddenly found herself surrounded by police and bailiffs: "I was shaking because I suddenly realised that I was on my own. They weren't prepared to dig or drill or cut me out. It seemed they just wanted to do it as quickly and violently as possible". The bailiffs stood and watched as two police women wearing surgical gloves yanked Sophie's head backwards. Her arm was dragged out of the lock on and she was carried, shaken and sobbing, to the space behind the police cordon.

Ian's release, which required a mechanical digger, was witnessed by representatives from The Daily Telegraph and ITN but

the rest of the press were, inexplicably, refused admission to the main site. SQUALL's photographer was finally allowed in but was told he would only be permitted five minutes. Ian admitted to being pleased with the result: "I didn't have a karabiner, I only had a strap. But the lock on was massive and mostly steel. It took them forty minutes to dig me out."

As the chain saws arrived to demolish the trees holding up the nets and ropeways, Lawrence, whose family have lived in the area for over 100 years and who has been involved in protest against the road since the beginning, addressed the crowd through his megaphone: "Please be careful. There used to be a hospital across the way but its been knocked down to make way for the road."



Nick Cobbing

M66, Greater Manchester: Six cranes were stopped on Friday 6 October. Actions continue, every Friday at least... hop on a 232 / 235 Manchester bus and get there! Activists are needed to support the camp and squats. Halloween party at the Daisy Nook camp on October 31. **Info: 0161 628 4727 / 0161 627 4862**

A564, Derby: Fifteen people stopped a concrete pour on the Derby Southern Bypass site after Tarmac dared to meet their "Environment Advisory Panel" there. Activists had previously refused an invitation to attend this "greenwash" exercise. Sir John Banham, Chair of Tarmac, eventually met with two activists. Sir J was hurt that his offer of 'lunch' was turned down and the whole affair exposed for the farce it was. **Info: via Road Alert.**

M11 Link London: Work was stopped successfully on Tuesday October 3 with a few arrests (all released without charge). Meanwhile a Council report reveals that the M11 Link would be at, or beyond, design capacity - ie congested to gridlock - the day it opens! (If it ever does.) So, the 400 homes, the green spaces, parks and trees have been destroyed for what? **Info: 0181 527 4896**

A30, Honiton - Exeter: Tunnels keep growing, and the Fairmile camp is now surrounded by a moat! Exciting actions are planned. Ring NOW to join the emergency phone tree. **Info: 1404 815729**

A39, Wells, Somerset: The destruction accelerates, helped by a desperate lack of activists, nearly all of whom are bailed off of site. **Info: 0585 106615 / 01749 767208**

A320, Guilford: 20,000m² of woods and common land are threatened by Surrey County Council's Woking road-widening plans. It's only at the planning stage, support welcome. **Info: 01483 574941**

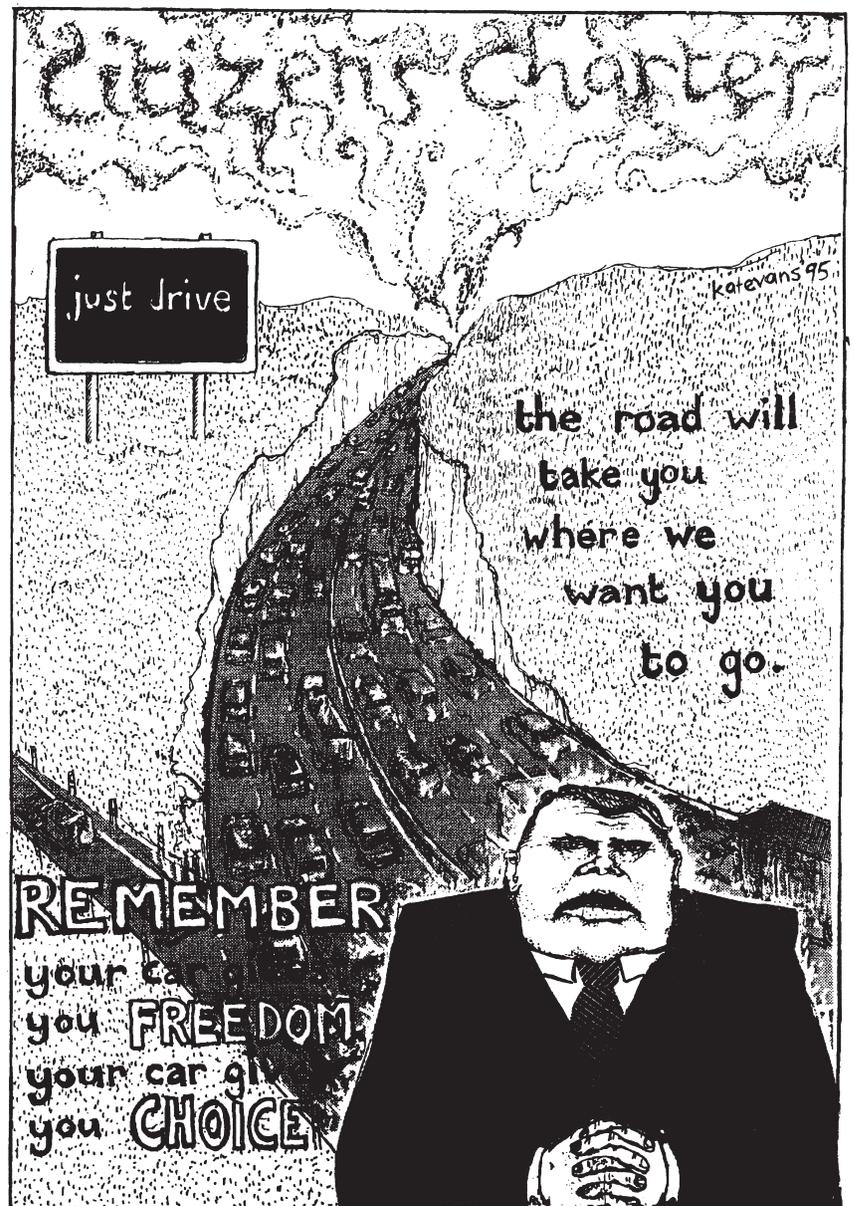
M74, Glasgow: This 4.8 mile, £200m, 6-10 lane motorway will devastate local communities on the south side of Glasgow. The campaign against it is really hotting up, with approval from the District Council in the pipe-line. Have they learnt nothing from Pollok? **Info: 0141 424 1797 / 423 0278 / 550 1745 / 226 5066**

Tory Party Conference: Sir George Young, the bicycling baronet, has given his whole-hearted approval for the Newbury Bypass. Ranting to the rabid flock at the Tory Party Conference he said: "Newbury is about two bypasses. The bypass local people desperately need to save their town. And the bypass protesters want. A bypass of democracy. Ignoring local support of local people, and a decision properly reached after public enquiry. I can reassure Richard Benyon (Tory MP for Newbury): Your bypass will be built." 'Nuff said! **Info: 3rd Battle of Newbury, 01635 45544 / 45545**

Road Show: Experienced road activists will be touring Britain this Autumn (and perhaps beyond) providing workshops in non-violent direct action (NVDA) as well as providing exhibitions, video and information. Dates so far arranged are: 30th Oct. - Nottingham; 25th Nov. - Reading; 28th Nov. - Southampton (benefit gig); 2nd Dec. - Oxford. **If you want information, or would like to book the show contact: 01508 531 636 or Road Alert for details.**

The Information above is taken from Road Alert Bulletin No. 55. If you would like to receive the bulletin send a donation along with an SAE to go on their mailing list.

**Road Alert: PO Box 5544, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5FB
Tel: 01635 521660
e-mail: roadalert@gn.apc.org**



European Romani

Nobody's Problem: Everybody's Scapegoat?

Throughout Europe, malignant racial hatred is being targetted against travelling communities. **Sam Beale** investigates.

As if to knock the last of the romance out of the fiddle-playing, painted-wagon-dwelling, wide-open-road version of the travellers' life story it is now becoming crystal-ball clear that many are travelling great distances to escape constant discrimination, oppressive legislation and increasing racist attacks and death threats.

For European Roma seeking asylum from racial hatred, as for British travellers leaving this country to escape harassment or prosecution under the CJA, there is a growing necessity to shift to pastures new. But for many travellers, particularly Eastern European Roma, there is simply nowhere to go. Many Gypsy asylum seekers are not even getting past the institutionalised racism in place at border control.

Earlier this year the editor of the Polish Romani newspaper *Rom po Drom* warned of "a new wave of violence against the Romani population in Poland". Right across Europe anti-Roma racist attacks are reported more and more frequently. "Gypsy people have not been in so much danger from racism and xenophobia since the war: the resurgence of hatred and discrimination is very strong", says Peter Mercer, President of the Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare and Civil Right and member of the Presidium of the International Romani Union. While stressing that all Gypsies suffer prejudice, he believes that "no matter how badly off we think we are in England, we're far better off than other gypsy people, especially in Eastern Europe".

For generations Central and Eastern European Roma have lived with the highest rates of poverty,

unemployment and illiteracy their countries have to offer. On these margins of society economic hardship takes its toll, crime rates soar and prejudices deepen. Often denied citizenships, Roma are perceived as a 'suspect community', considered outside the protection of the law. The European Race Audit, published by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), regularly reports cases of blatant discrimination against Roma by police and other authorities. "That's why we don't trust many people," says Mercer, "it's why we don't trust many authorities and the police because legislation never benefits Gypsies."

Since the collapse of communism a familiar pattern is emerging for Roma in Eastern Europe. Peter Mercer believes that: "Unlike the communist system which provided jobs for life there's now the free for all which usually takes place in a capitalist society and Gypsy people in these countries are suffering resentment."

Liz Fekete of the IRR agrees: "A lot of the old racism was sat upon by the communist system. They pretended that everything was

On these margins of society, economic hardship takes its toll, crime rates soar, and prejudices deepen.

liberated and wonderful and all those things belonged to the past." So, with the end of state control and increases in unemployment, economic hardship and crime come



insecurity, a rise in nationalism and now all those old prejudices are re-emerging.

One recent Polish National Front leaflet, entitled 'Poles Wake Up' describes Gypsy people in predictably rabid and offensive terms. The leaflet incites Polish people to make "this riff-raff realise that they are not at home and they have to respect the wishes of then-hosts." It describes Roma as "an ethnical group devoid of any culture, without any religious and moral ideals".

On the contrary, Roma have lived in Poland since at least the fifteenth century. They, like Gypsies throughout the world, have strong family ties, their own language, music and dances; moral, ethical and cleanliness laws; and a variety of religious beliefs. This is a rich culture which has been systematically crushed through forced assimilation and poverty so that parts of the Romani language or laws have been lost or abandoned. For many the desire to live a nomadic life has been entirely

suppressed over generations through the implementation of mandatory settlement programmes.

Facing prejudice and intolerance with little or no support from governments or local authorities, many Roma families are seeking asylum in Western European countries, mostly Germany and France and increasingly the UK.

Polish Romani children Taisa aged 11, and her brother Tobias aged 9, have been in London with their parents, uncle, aunt and cousins for over a year. At a homelessness project in Central London Taisa straightforwardly informed SQUALL: "People wanted to kill us back in Poland, that's why we came here." She misses her grandfather and fears for him and the rest of her family still in Poland. "I'm frightened," she whispered, "that the people who wanted to kill us in Poland will come here too." Regardless of her fears it is doubtful that Taisa and her family will be granted permanent asylum in this country.

At the beginning of the 1990s the IRR warned that Europe is being effectively closed to asylum seekers by an international programme of immigration control. The Director of the IRR, A Sivanandan believes that modern European racism is about protecting prosperity. He says: "The point is to keep (Gypsies) out.... the democratic way of doing that is to criminalise them first - through the due process of the law."

This is being achieved through the work of groups like Trevi (Terrorism, radicalism, extremism and violence), an international cabal of police chiefs and government ministers set up in 1976 to police free movement and exchange information to aid the 'removal' of 'undesirables'. Its post-Cold War concern has been the perceived internal security threat posed by non-citizens seeking asylum in European countries. Roma are often stateless non-citizens for whom national boundaries are meaningless. Peter Mercer does not believe in borders "not where Gypsy people are concerned. We're trans-continental".

This is, however, a highly vulnerable position as policies of all Western European countries are hostile to Gypsies. "In fact," says Liz Fekete, "in most countries they are being repatriated en masse."

Deportation agreements exist between European countries so, for example, Germany has a formal agreement with Romania (where there are around two million Roma) which means that asylum-seekers are forcibly sent back to Romania in exchange for monetary assistance to the Romanian government. France has a similar agreement with Romania.

Co-operation over immigration between European countries means that genuine victims of persecution are simply being sent 'home'. The 'safe country' policy in place throughout Europe ensures that refugees can be returned to countries pronounced 'safe' regardless of the persecution they fear. The IRR is clear that the intention of these initiatives is to declare most of the world 'safe' for asylum-seekers, whatever the reality.

Romania is therefore 'safe' for Roma despite increasing occurrences of lynchings, man-hunts and burnings of their homes.

In May this year Amnesty International published a damning report on the attitude of the Romanian Government to attacks on Roma. The report said that a "nationwide pattern of inadequate police protection" has "encouraged further acts of racist violence against Gypsies" and "the responsibility for these human rights violations ultimately lies with the Romanian Government and other national authorities". At about the same time as this report was published the Romanian Government announced

that Roma are now to be officially called 'Tigan' (which Roma find offensive) in order to "prevent any possible confusion between Romanians and the Gypsies".

The British Refugee Council has noted that public recognition of Roma as an ethnic minority, as happened in the Czech and Slovak Republic in 1992, is primarily for show and, in reality, there is no increase in support and no change in their treatment. Deemed 'safe' by Western Europe, governments are free to openly deny that they have a problem with anti-Roma racism. In Liz Fekete's experience "governments tend to be very hostile to any kind of monitoring" so little information comes out.

Earlier this year the MEP for Central London, Stan Newens, contacted the British Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and the Polish Prime Minister, Josef Olesky, about Polish Roma after he was approached by a delegation of asylum-seekers. The Polish Government, with one eye on their

and justify repatriation) that Gypsies from all over Europe seeking asylum in Germany, France and the UK are doing so to "improve their standard

Often denied citizenship, Roma are perceived as a 'suspect community', considered outside the protection of the law.

of living". He claimed to have seen no reports of attacks on or prejudice against Polska Roma: "Absolutely not."

Nonetheless in 1993 18,454 Roms and Pols (by far the majority Roms) were arrested during attempts to cross the Oder River into Germany. Currently there are 1,000 or so Polish Gypsies seeking asylum in Britain. 250 arrived in March last year. Some have been randomly held



application to enter the EU, replied: "The attacks on [Polish] Gypsies are scarce and usually less violent than in many other European countries."

The Press Attache at the Polish Embassy in London, Mr Kolczynski, told SQUALL: "There is no prejudice and there is no problem with Gypsies in Poland. I'm surprised that you are asking such a question." He was of the opinion (given widely to deny persecution

in detention centres, none have been given refugee status and it is extremely unlikely that they will be; Poland is 'safe'.

The British Home Office response to Mr Newens' inquiries included the less than water-tight opinion that: "Although it cannot be denied that there is prejudice against Gypsies in Eastern Europe, such prejudice and the consequences of it fall short of what would be

necessary to be regarded as persecution either by the state or by 'agents of persecution.'" There was no mention in the Home Office letter about how much (or how little) is being done by either the Polish government or local police and authorities to curb attacks.

Mr Newens told SQUALL that he found this response "extremely disappointing but not perhaps surprising since refugees from places like Turkey, where torture is used on a routine basis and executions are common, are not being accepted as refugees either."

For Gypsies remaining in or returned to 'safe' countries, official denials that attacks are racially motivated can only legitimise attacks and fuel twisted notions that they must have 'asked for it', and are indeed part of a suspect community. In Hungary, the Minister of the Interior did not identify racial hatred as the reason for a pogrom against Gypsies in Ketegyhaza in 1992 when villagers threw petrol bombs into the homes of Roma and "burnt their horses alive in the stables" (IRR). The same minister described "most skinheads" as "honest Hungarians" whilst a member of the Democratic Forum in Hungary called fascists petitioning parliament "well-intentioned children". In this way the mindless racism of the NF leaflet is reflected in high level mindful racism as such attitudes are institutionalised in European laws and regurgitated by politicians.

These views are in turn propagated through the media. The speed with which public opinion can be manufactured and prejudice turned into 'fact' is not news. In a very few years sometimes slack but more often grossly biased and poorly informed media coverage has led to all travellers in Britain being tarred with the same 'marauding locust' brush. Media stories about travellers and the prejudice these spawned were dragged up to justify measures to 'deal' with travellers contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1994.

Internationally, fascist violence has been used to justify the need for legislative controls on immigration. In 1991, on a visit to Luxembourg, John Major said: "If we fail in our control efforts (of refugees) we risk fuelling the far Right."

Let's just get this straight: We, as a nation, are to refuse requests for asylum from people who face daily prejudice and increasing threats from fascists, because it might encourage fascism? Gypsies are, according to this tired argument, the cause of racial hatred and the Gypsy-haters, the Gypsy-maimers and the Gypsy-murderers are not to be offended by the sight of those they hate or wish to maim and murder. The extension of this

argument is, as Sivanandan has observed: "No refugees equals no fascism." So, if there are no Gypsies then no-one hates Gypsies. Does it follow that, if there are no women then no women are raped and if there is no justice then no-one is unjust?

In fact the result of current European immigration policies is most likely to be increased racism in the countries Roma wish to leave. Dr Thomas Acton, Reader in Romani Studies at the University of Greenwich, told SQUALL: "There is always the danger that localised violence might fuel right-wing parties proposing expulsion or even genocide as a so-called solution, and if countries in the West insist on repatriating Romani refugees from Eastern Europe by force that will make that genocidal situation more likely."

When Roma flee a country, fascism obviously does not disappear but finds other targets. Liz Fekete believes that when Roma are repatriated "they will return with the stigma of being people who the West don't want and the fascism will intensify. The East is embarrassed by Gypsies fleeing to the West so they will hate them even more".

European Gypsies are between the rock of intolerance and lack of support in their own countries and the hard place of indifference from abroad. Governments within 'fortress Europe' ignore Eastern European Roma whilst legislating against their own travelling communities. The process of Gypsy marginalisation continues as illegal immigration becomes the only escape route. All travellers are haunted by their image as a suspect community which few seek to understand much less support: they are nobody's problem and everybody's scapegoat.

Positive initiatives to promote Roma culture, language and education do exist and funds are being made available for research and education via the European Union and independent sources such as the Soros Foundation. However, until anti-Roma persecution is internationally recognised as such and governments call a racist a racist and a refugee a refugee, there can be little optimism. Gypsy and traveller sites are being legislated out of existence and education systems acknowledging gypsy culture are barely on the agendas of European governments.

Travelling communities remain among the scapegoats for the current European economic and political malaise, it is left to the efforts of the international Gypsy community and anti-racist organisations to put pressure on governments and encourage travellers to "speak with one voice," as Peter Mercer says. Despite these new coalitions, the road to respect, tolerance and equality for Gypsy people is still likely to be long, hard and uphill. SQ



RACIAL ABUSE OF EUROPEAN ROMA IN 1995

- An internal inquiry into the Bologna state police has revealed frequent use of violence against Roma.
- In Poland earlier this year a Romany man and woman were shot while they were sleeping. Apparently their son had been involved in a car accident in which two people died. Revenge may be the motive.
- Earlier this year a hospital near Rome refused to treat a two-month old Roma baby suffering from bronchitis because the parents did not have the 6,000 lire (£2) it would cost. The baby died.
- In South West France local authorities regularly refuse travellers the right to use campsites, electricity, educational facilities or medical care. A systematic expulsion policy against travellers is also in operation in some municipalities.
- In January residents and police attacked Bulgarian Roma, including children and elderly people. After complaining to their mayor the Roma were attacked again by police who raided their homes and fired gunshots into the air. Four people received gunshot wounds. Fifteen were severely beaten. Several Roma were arrested.
- A Padua police officer has been sentenced to one year, five months and 10 days' imprisonment (with a conditional suspension of the sentence) for shooting dead an 11-year old Roma child who was being held illegally. Tarzan Sulic and his 13 year old cousin Mirja Djuric were detained with no food or drink for five hours. Despite protests there is to be no appeal and the case is closed.
- In Italy the White Brotherhood claimed responsibility for a grotesque attack on two Romany children from the former Yugoslavia. The two children aged 13 and 3 were begging on the Pisa-Florence motorway. A car stopped and they were handed a package which looked like a toy doll. When they opened it it exploded. Sengul Demirovska lost her right arm and three fingers from her left hand in the explosion. Her body was peppered with metal fragments and she needed plastic surgery. Her little brother lost the sight of one eye and needed plastic surgery to his face and hands. Three men have been arrested in connection with the attack. They have links with a 20 year-old Italian arrested for an attack in January on a five year old boy Matteo Salkanovic who was seriously injured when a book of fairy tales exploded.

The European Race Audit is published quarterly by the Institute of Race Relations, 2-6 Leeke Street, King's Cross Road, London WC1X 9HS.

BEGGING QUESTIONS

The current political novelty for viewing beggars as unacceptable social detritus is a phenomenon the UK shares with France. **Sam Beale** reports.

At a time of record unemployment in France the numbers of French homeless are rising as is the trend (evident in this country) for young itinerants to beg in resort towns. Also increasing is the tendency of European governments and local authorities to legislate against, rather than for, the worst off.

In July Michel Crepeau, the Mayor of La Rochelle, an Atlantic port and French tourist resort, announced a move to fine anyone found begging or "lying on the pavement" in his town. At least five other towns in France have made similar rulings.

The move has been seen as a reaction to the perceived threat to tourism posed by the poor and homeless on the streets. Crepeau also seems to believe, allegedly, that implementing fascist policies is the best way to pacify that grimly growing number of voters tempted to support the National Front in France.

Housing action groups including DaL (Droite au Logement) have been staging protests against the bans in France. Nonetheless the fear of scaring away the tourists and perhaps ending up in the worn-out shoes of beggars next year has led to considerable support for such rulings from local tradespeople.

In Avignon the Mayor banned begging and alcohol on the streets until the end of September. This was apparently a response to the influx of people with no travellers cheques from other parts of France and the rest of Europe who move south for the summer. This attitude somehow suggests that there is an issue of preference here; that the people Crepeau & Co want off 'their' streets have a choice in this. Are the mayors of French seaside towns surprised by the presence of poor people where there are large numbers of rich people? Even in free market terms it makes perfect sense for someone with no money to go where there is most loose change

jingling around pockets in a foreign currency that holidaymakers can't quite get their maths round.

Following a lead which suggested that British cities are planning to implement similar bans, SQUALL rang a number of Town Halls. Manchester Council failed to respond to requests for information but the receptionist who put the call through seemed very clear about pending policy. When asked who might be the best person to help she said: "Beggars? In what way? Do you mean cleaning them off the streets?"

This phrase is reminiscent of Prime Minister Major's stomach-churning comments about beggars last summer. The gist, if you've forgotten, was something like: 'get 'em out of our sights we don't like looking at poor people on our way to the club. They don't look nice'.

We beg to differ, John.

Where, we are forced to wonder, will the European homeless go if they're not allowed on the streets? When they find themselves casualties of capitalist competition, systematically failed by every level of government, by every official organisation who, if not people on the streets of Europe, should those with nothing ask for help? Perhaps Crepeau et al, French cafe owners and tourists in the south of France would be happier to think of Europe's poorest dying quietly somewhere out of view.

When you have very little and someone with less asks for some of it, anger and guilt merge. In most European towns and cities pleas for money now come at painfully regular intervals: tolerance and sympathy are running out. Beggar avoidance techniques are an art for some and it's easy to get caught up in internal debates about how in need of your change this beggar actually is. Ultimately though

Perhaps Crepeau et al, French cafe owners and tourists in the south of France would be happier to think of Europe's poorest dying quietly, somewhere out of view.

pseudo-ethical dilemmas like the old 'what-they-might-spend-it-on' chestnut leads to a total evasion of the realities of 1990s urban poverty. What would M. Crepeau or Mr Major spend it on?

Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw (echoing Major and New York's right wing Mayor Rudolph Guiliani) recently launched an attack on beggars to show just how tough Labour plans to be on "crime". Mr Straw is quite right about one thing: the presence of the homeless and desperately poor in doorways is a

sign of the "brutalisation" of the streets. But he is surely not trying to tell us that beggars, or as this leading socialist chooses to put it, "winos, addicts and squeegee merchants", are the cause of this brutalisation? Begging your pardon Jack, aren't they rather a seriously in yer face reminder that the people we are asked to choose as our leaders are mainly in the business of ramming home the fact that life is brutal and competitive and only the rich and powerful have a chance of making it?

Forget the politicians for a moment, they either know or are in serious denial about their level of responsibility for unemployment, unaffordable housing and rising poverty. But what about the people: the shop-keepers, tourists, travellers and commuters? How much longer is it possible to buy into a kamikaze political philosophy hell-bent on the creation of yet more clumsily targetted categories of trouble-makers, criminals and enemies of free enterprise when the truth is staring us in the face asking for some spare change?

It seems Mayor Crepeau is confident that we have no choice but to buy into it for a while longer. On his way to a Greek holiday a journalist asked him about the protests staged in La Rochelle in opposition to his begging ban. His icicle response was: "let them do what they want... for my part, I'll be on an aeroplane".

SO



Mumia Abu-Jamal

Voice of the Voiceless

A black journalist on death row and a series of unsubstantiated evidence. The temporary reprieve of Mumia Abu Jamal may not last long. As the US authorities wait for the right moment to silence Jamal for ever, **Eileen Kinsman** examines the evidence for the gross miscarriage of justice

In 1980 Mumia Abu-Jamal was voted President of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists. In 1981 Philadelphia Magazine profiled him as one of 81 people to watch in that year. But in December 1981 he was convicted of the murder of a police officer and in July 1982 was sentenced to death.

An Early Day Motion put in the House of Commons in June by Jeremy Corbyn “notes that there is widespread belief that Jamal was framed for the 1981 murder of a Philadelphia policeman and that he was sentenced to death for his political views and history as a member of the Black Panther Party”. For 13 years he remained incarcerated on death row in Pennsylvania, continuing to write and speak out on behalf of the oppressed from his prison cell. In January of this year the election of Republican Tom Ridge as Governor of Pennsylvania, on a pro-death penalty platform, led to the State of Pennsylvania carrying out its first execution in 33 years. On June 1 Mumia Abu-Jamal’s death warrant

was signed by Governor Ridge. He was due to be executed on August 17 but received an indefinite stay of execution. However, the death sentence remains and a new execution date could be set at any time.

So why does the State of Pennsylvania feel it so necessary to execute Mumia Abu-Jamal and silence him forever?

Mumia Abu-Jamal was born Wesley Cook and grew up in a poor black area of Philadelphia in the 1950’s. Whilst still a young teenager he was beaten up by police whilst protesting at a rally. It was a time when the Black Panther Party’s message of self-empowerment was becoming increasingly popular with the dispossessed black population of the United States. The Panthers believed in arming themselves with a knowledge of the law in order to defend the Black community. They saw revolution as the only solution to poverty, racism and state oppression. Although the Panthers are perhaps best known in this country for carrying guns, what is lesser known is their involvement in voter registration schemes, sickle cell anaemia screening, adult literacy programmes and delivering free breakfasts to the community.

In 1968, at the age of 14, Mumia joined the Black Panthers. He started writing for them and by the age of 16 was Communications Director for the Philadelphia Black Panther Chapter. By the early ‘70s the Black Panther Party had been



destroyed by state killings, drugs and internal factionalism. Documents released under the Freedom of Information Act have revealed that through COINTELPROs - the FBI’s domestic counter-intelligence programmes, whose stated purpose was “to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralise” politically dissident citizens of the United States - the FBI waged a covert war against the Panthers. Agents were planted and disinformation circulated, breeding infighting and mistrust.

COINTELPRO was allegedly

terminated in 1970 although it has been reported that nothing has changed apart from the abandonment of the acronym, and that certain recent incidents, such as the bombing of US EarthFirst!ers, Judy Bari and Daryl Cherny in 1990, bear the hallmark of COINTELPRO operations.

With the collapse of the Black Panther Party, Mumia Abu-Jamal turned to writing, broadcasting and hosting talk shows on several Philadelphia radio stations. He came to be known as the ‘voice of the

voiceless' because he verbalised the struggles of the poor, black and dispossessed and spoke in support of radical movements such as the environmental group MOVE who were shunned by the mainstream media.

MOVE were a communal-living, radical ecology movement founded in the late '60s by John Africa. They first came into conflict with the State in animal rights actions and opposition to racist police practices. Throughout the '70s they clashed with the authorities and the police response became increasingly violent. In 1978 Mumia Abu-Jamal covered the police attack on the Powelton Village MOVE commune. Nine MOVE members were imprisoned for the alleged killing of a policeman. Ultimately, on May 13 1985, the police bombed a MOVE house killing six adults and five children. As Alice Walker wrote in 'Living by the Word': "The question is: Did they deserve the harassment, abuse and finally, the vicious death other people's intolerance of their lifestyle brought upon them? Every bomb ever made falls on all of us. And the answer is: No."

Mayor of Philadelphia, Frank Rizzo, blamed "the new breed of journalism", of which Mumia was a leading voice, for the death of the police officer at the siege on the Powelton Village MOVE commune. "They believe what you write, what you say. And it's got to stop. And one day, and I hope it's in my career, that you're going to have to be held responsible and accountable for what you do."

Because he was unwilling to compromise his radical views Mumia found it difficult to make a living solely from his journalism and so he began to work nights as a cab driver. On December 9 1981, in the early hours of the morning, he was driving his taxi in a rundown area of Philadelphia when he spotted a police officer beating a blackman. Stopping his car he saw that it was his brother, William Cook. William, it transpired, had been stopped for driving the wrong way up a one way street. What happened next is not clear but when further police officers arrived on the scene they found Mumia shot in the stomach and, a few feet away, Police Officer Daniel Faulkner shot in the back and the face. Officer Faulkner died at Jefferson University Hospital an hour later and Mumia Abu-Jamal was charged with first degree murder.

The Judge presiding over Mumia's trial in 1982 was Albert

Szabo, the notorious "prosecutor in robes". He is a former under-sheriff, member of the Fraternal Order of Police and has been personally responsible for issuing 31 death sentences - more than any other judge in the US. In a city which is over 40 per cent black there were only 2 black people on the jury. Originally Mumia represented himself but Judge Szabo ruled that he was taking too long over

No evidence as produced and no forensic evidence was presented linking him to the crime. Several witnesses who identified a man of a different build and hairstyle running from the scene were not called to testify.

questioning the jury and had him removed from court and locked up. The court-appointed attorney then had to represent him despite declaring that he did not have the experience and had not received instructions from Mumia. At the trial the prosecution claimed that Mumia confessed to the killing in the hospital emergency room, yet the doctor who attended him did not hear this and police officer Gary Wakshul, who was with him the whole time, reported: "During this time the Negro male made no statements." Wakshul was unavailable to appear at the trial as he was on holiday. No weapon was produced and no forensic evidence was presented linking him to the crime. Several witnesses who identified a man of a different build and hairstyle running from the scene were not called to testify.

Finally, in the sentencing phase of the trial, where the jury had to choose between a life or death sentence, the prosecutor referred to Mumia Abu-Jamal's past membership of the Black Panther Party in a line of argument inferring that this predisposed Mumia to be a 'cop killer'. In 1992 the Supreme Court overturned the death sentence of a member of the racist Aryan Brotherhood, because his political associations had been used to convict him of first degree murder rather than manslaughter. Despite this ruling and other concerns about aspects of Mumia's trial he has been incarcerated on death row for 13 years and now faces imminent execution.

Mumia continued to write from death row. The National Public Radio wanted him to do a series of programmes but they withdrew their offer after protests from the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). There is a powerful lobby within the States

committed to seeing Mumia die.

After publication of his book "Live from Death Row" the FOP had an aeroplane fly over the publisher's offices with a banner reading "This publishing house pays cop killers". Mumia was charged with a disciplinary infraction for writing "Live from Death Row" and held in isolation. However, the

prison rules clearly state that "an inmate cannot pursue a profession and make money from his criminal activities or pursue writing as a livelihood unless that's what they were doing before they came to prison". The authorities refused to recognise Mumia Abu-Jamal as a journalist.

With the money from the publication of his book and from international support Mumia was at last able to afford a legal defence. When Governor Tom Ridge signed Mumia's death warrant on the June 1, 1995, he did so in the knowledge that Mumia's legal team, headed by prominent civil liberties attorney Leonard Weinglass, were about to file for a new trial. Judge Szabo, who sentenced Mumia to death in 1982, had the option to hear the Post Conviction Relief Appeal and came out of retirement to do so. On July 26, 1995, Mumia Abu-Jamal and his defence team were back in Judge Szabo's courtroom in the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas.

On August 7, 1995, Leonard Weinglass managed to attain an indefinite stay of execution in order to present the case for a retrial. The key to Mumia's defence is that at the original trial "the prosecuting attorney had suppressed eye-witness testimony in favour of his client while at the same time encouraging witnesses to testify against [Mumia] by means of inducements, and suppressing other evidence". At the appeal hearing, Judge Szabo continuously quashed subpoenas for the defence witnesses and refused the defence to admit evidence. The defence were not allowed to present 700 pages of FBI files on Mumia Abu-Jamal, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, and show that Mumia was under

constant surveillance. Dhoruba Bin Wahad, a fellow former Black Panther who was recently interviewed in The Guardian, served 19 years for the attempted murder of a policeman before the FBI files were opened to reveal how the District Attorney's office had manipulated the evidence to get a conviction.

The Appeal Hearing has been recessed until September 11 when both sides will give a summation and Judge Szabo will give his ruling. It is unlikely that he will grant Mumia a retrial but the decision can be appealed to the State Supreme Court and then the Federal Supreme Court. Mumia Abu-Jamal has tremendous support internationally, some of it from unexpected quarters. The German Foreign Minister, the Belgian Foreign Minister and the French President are amongst the members of international governments calling for the death penalty against Jamal to be lifted. In Rome more than 100,000 people signed a petition demanding his release.

Internationally, trade unions, religious organisations, human rights and environmental groups have been mobilising their members to demonstrate their support. The British NUJ recently took the unprecedented step of making Mumia Abu-Jamal an honorary member and, in common with journalist unions around the world, are campaigning to have Mumia's death sentence commuted. Celebrities who have added their names to the campaign to save Mumia include Noam Chomsky, Naomi Campbell, Norman Mailer, Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gloria Steinem, Sting and Oliver Stone.

As Jesse Jackson commented at Mumia's appeal hearing: "This is not the first time that people who are activists or who faced extreme punishment have had worldwide support, whether it was Mandela or whether it was Angela Davis. There have been a number of celebrity cases over the years where you had people who were political activists and there was the feeling that there may have been some political motive driving the state to quick conviction, for what could have been unjust. I'm glad that Mandela's life was spared when he was accused of treason. I'm glad that Angela Davis' life was spared. I hope that Mumia's life will be spared as well."

*** Mumia was refused a retrial in an appeal hearing and is back on death row. He has only two further chances to appeal against the death sentence.**



Tribal People Dammed

The occupants of the Narmada Valley in Northern India have been evicted to make way for a controversial mega-dam. Sam Beale reports on the Indian authorities' disinterest in what happens to them next.

People who are losing their homes and lands in the construction area of the much criticised Sardar Sarovar mega-dam in the Narmada River valley in northern India have staged demonstrations throughout the summer. Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) procedures for displaced peoples have been, as predicted by opponents of the dam, highly inadequate.

The Narmada is a sacred river, the River of Birth. Its banks are speckled with temples and the land in the valley is amongst the most fertile in India. Its people are a mix of Hindus and Muslims, farmers, labourers and tribal peoples who have lived in the valley for generations. If the dam is completed and the valley flooded these tribal peoples, who have no caste (making them lower in status in Indian society than the 'untouchables'), fear they will be forced into migrant work and end up with the millions of other people displaced by recent government projects and living in poverty in slums on the fringes of Indian cities.

Around 400 people from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh who had been resettled on

about 35 R&R sites staged a demonstration 'dharna' in Baroda at the end of June with the help of the major force behind the campaign to stop the dam, the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA - Save Narmada Movement). The NBA has noted that most of the people involved in this demonstration had not opposed the dam initially because they believed government promises of "ideal resettlement". The sites they are now living on are far from ideal.

Angry at the government's failure to respond to their complaints the protestors issued a statement: "living is becoming impossible for us... we are willing to give your new Government (with old officials) one chance... if the process to resolve our problems is not started... we will, like the people of Malu, abandon our sites and return to our original villages."

Their action followed the appalling treatment of 23 families who were relocated four years ago to Malu, which the NBA describes as a "desolate site", in Baroda district. The site, not the one they had agreed to move to, is on poor quality land, it is much smaller than promised, there is no grazing land and no water or firewood nearby. "We sacrificed everything", said one villager, "we gave up our birth place to come here

and they gave us tin shacks".

These families decided to return to the village they had been ousted from, despite knowing that it will be submerged in water within a year or so if work on the dam continues.

As they were loading their belongings onto trucks the police turned up to prevent them leaving. Eventually, following police refusal

displacement. The PUCL has concluded: "the Narmada resettlement process is a classic case of pauperisation and immiserisation of entire self-reliant communities in the name of development."

Such gross treatment of 'self-reliant' peoples becomes even more unacceptable when the truth about the likely benefits of the project are

"The Narmada resettlement is a classic case of pauperisation and immiserisation of entire self-reliant communities in the name of development."

to take a legal notice from a lawyer for illegal detention, the families decided to abandon their possessions. They made their way to see their resettlement officer and attempted to return the title deeds to the useless land but the deeds were not accepted. They have now returned to their original village, Gadher, where they have built makeshift homes. The police still have their possessions.

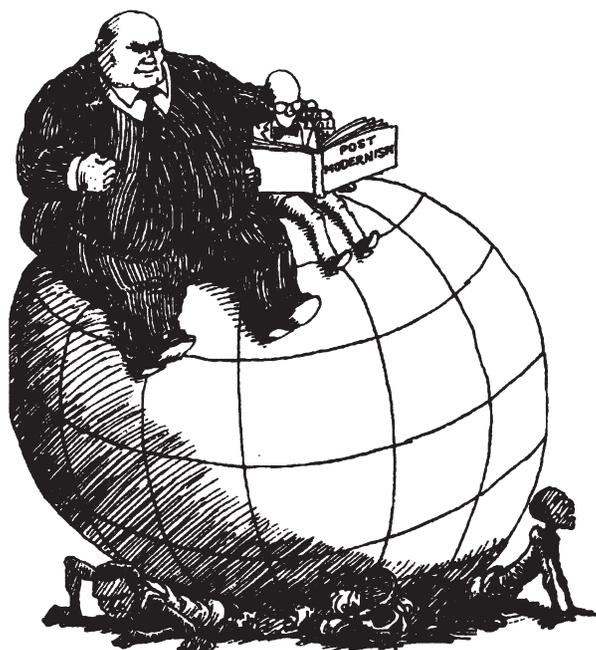
Conditions on most resettlement sites are reported as far below what was promised. In August, people who the government had claimed were happily resettled in Gujarat protested at the Ministry of Welfare in Delhi about the conditions on their site.

Committees of politicians from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have condemned the realities of resettlement. Following visits to 18 sites, a report by the Peoples' Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) found that 'human rights are violated at every stage of the resettlement process... nowhere in the sites visited have the oustees improved or at least regained the standard of living they were enjoying prior to resettlement... Supreme Court directives are routinely violated... women especially bear the brunt of the

revealed. The success rate of large scale dam-building is not high and the construction of dams much smaller than the Sardar Sarovar has long been considered unpredictable by scientific experts.

According to a Project Completion report by the World Bank (one of the original funders of the project, the Bank withdrew in 1993 after massive resistance coordinated by the NBA), it appears that consultants to the dam have "over-estimated the water availability and under-estimated crop water requirements". The project planners have also overestimated the likely efficiency of the canal systems designed to carry the water to Gujarat's factories and towns. Eighty per cent of Gujarat's water budget is tied up in the £7 billion, project so all alternative water projects in the region have been halted.

Following years of protest and demands for an Environmental Impact Assessment (which was never carried out due to pressure from the World Bank for construction to start) work on the dam has currently stopped pending the result of a Supreme Court case brought by the NBA who are asking for an independent review of all the costs and benefits and the likely success of the project.



Bender Culture

Security for the pastoralists of Kenya comes through co-operation and mutual assistance. Tim Malyon visited the African tribes to see how it all works.

The Samburu and Turkana tribes live a couple of hundred miles south of Lake Turkana, near northern Kenya's Rift Valley where some of the earliest hominid fossils have been found. They're nomadic pastoralists, herding goats, sheep, sometimes a few camels. Nomadic pastoralists came second in the evolving chain of human lifestyles - after hunter/gatherers but before settled agriculture, the industrial age, computer culture or DIY.

Enter Natiti village, beehive-shaped huts on a flat plain edged by distant hazy hills. The huts are made of saplings, both ends bent into the ground, covered in mud instead of tarpaulins. Akuwam Lochok is sitting in the bender's shade. She's a traditional vet. So's Lokorio Modo, the old man sitting next to her. Akuwam begins, through a translator from the tribe: "We're pure pastoralists. We only know about looking after animals. Nowadays most of us don't have big herds, we have very few animals. But we still stay with our old way of living. Only very recently we were raided and lost most of our animals."

The raids were carried out by neighbouring tribes and organised urban gangs enjoying political protection. They came on top of five years of drought, the longest in living memory, and drastic depletion of available land. Much of the less drought-prone, highland land, to which the Samburu and Turkana would migrate during the dry season is now fenced and used for growing grain, short-term profit in exchange for longer-term land erosion. Nomadic pastoralism has evolved as a uniquely sustainable lifestyle in this barren environment. But it depends on no land ownership and flexible land use so that different types of arid and semi-arid land can be used by different groups at suitable times of year.

The Samburu and Turkana's attitude towards payment for services within the tribe is similar to their attitude towards land ownership - they find it foolish. Vets receive no payment, just thanks. The knowledge is "a gift from God," according to Lokorio Modo: "Paying is not good. If I treat my friend or my brother's animals, I don't ask for anything, because I know that if I have a problem, if I lose my animals, then I can come to my brother and say, please, I need to use your animals." Herds can be swiftly rebuilt, provided somebody has access to that drought-free land. What might seem idealistic to us is also a practical, reasoned survival strategy.

The Samburu and Turkana's herbal veterinary system as well as

human health care depends on plants locally available or collected from the nearby hills - DIY medicine.

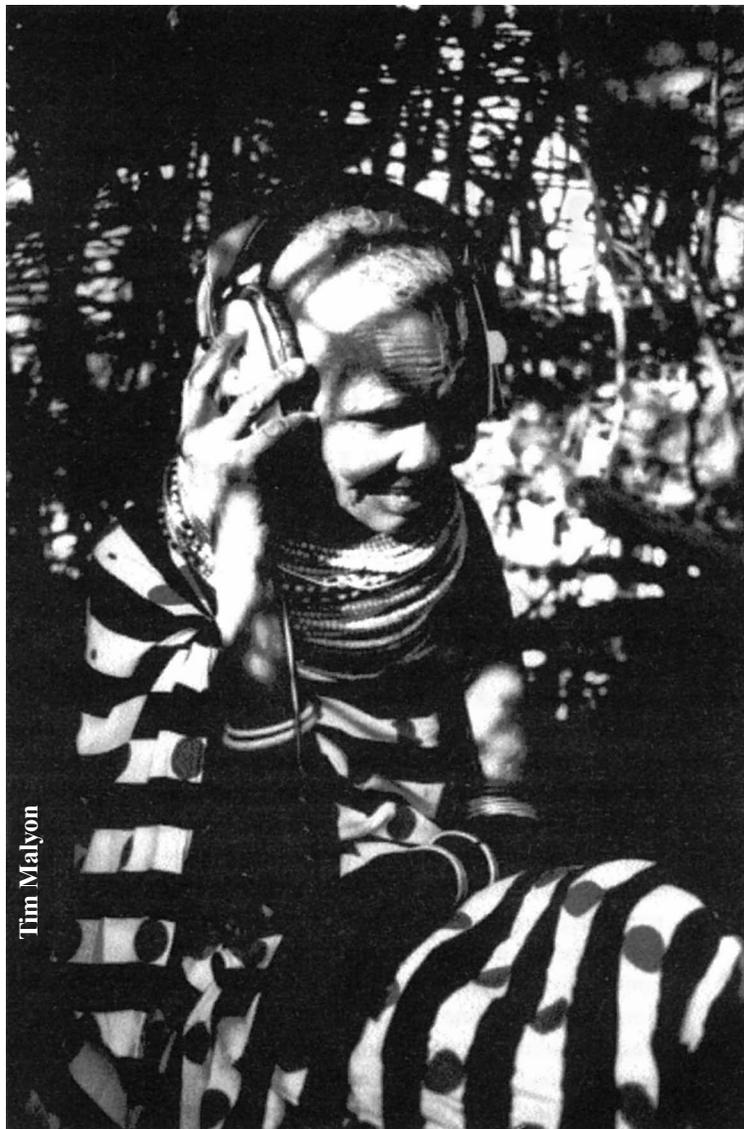
Again, the sharing of knowledge amongst Turkana and Samburu vets directly contradicts western ideas of ownership and patented drugs. Jacob Wanyama is the programme vet for the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) who is working with traditional vets and also local schools so the knowledge is not lost. "If one person experiments and knows certain herbs but keeps quiet about it and doesn't tell others, then he doesn't help the community, and in the end he'll be the only one to survive. But if the knowledge is shared, they all survive. When I first came here, I didn't know how much knowledge these people possessed. But after

working here for six years, I realised these people have more knowledge than a professional vet." Wanyama adds that many of the highland medicinal plants and trees have been destroyed by grain growing operations, while lowland herbs have been devastated by drought.

Returning to Nairobi, there's a Turkana woman selling her tribal beads on the street outside the airport. Shifting to the city sounds the death knell for many previously sustainable cultures. Since the rise of Babylon and settled agriculture, lifestyles have developed counterwise to the traditional ways of the Turkana and Samburu, away from cooperation and collective support, towards increasing competition. This leads to the pollution which is most likely responsible for abnormal droughts, and land-grab values which are depriving nomads throughout the world of the habitat they need to survive. These are ancient, specialist societies, whose wisdom is precious. It so happens that the return of the bender and the tipi to the west coincides with a radical reclaiming of the old values of cooperation and collective support - turning the tide or returning with the new wave? This time the crest feels sharper, the turn could be sweet.

ITDG and Oxfam are working with the Samburu and Turkana to re-establish a sustainable lifestyle in the face of drought and landloss. For further information write to ITDG Oxfam at:

**Myson House
Railway Terrace,
Rugby. CV21 3HT
or:
274 Banbury Road,
Oxford. OX2 7DZ**



Tim Malyon

ROUGH STREETS INITIATIVE

Much is talked about street homelessness; some flippant, some concerned. But, in real life, sleeping on the streets is a far more intense state of life than many realise (or would want to). This series of two articles takes a personal look at two street-level attempts to help out.

MacNaghten House

by **Jerry Ham** - manager of a hostel for the homeless in one of the rougher areas of London.

MacNaghten House operated for 18 months as a hostel for 150 single homeless people in the heart of King's Cross. Set up as part of the government's Rough Sleeper's Initiative it became the flagship of this initiative and also its strongest opponent. The project stirred deep emotions from all who were involved in it: from those who campaigned to prevent it opening to those who campaigned to prevent its closure, passions ran high and strong loyalties were created. For each and every person who was involved in the project there is an individual story to tell, a unique angle on an experience which affected over 900 people's lives; as manager of the hostel my story is only one piece in a diverse and complicated jigsaw, but one which hopefully imparts some of the meaning and intensity of what I can only describe as the MacNaghten House Experience:

My motivation to run a hostel such as MacNaghten House grew out of a desire to work with people who were experiencing the harshest effects of homelessness in one of the most troubled areas of the capital city, King's Cross. At the start of the 1990s the government had announced its plans for rough sleepers in an initiative which had the stated aim of 'making it unnecessary to sleep rough on the streets of London'. To this end housing associations were encouraged to utilise government funds to bring existing empty buildings in to use as direct access hostels (those that offer beds to people straight from the street). From the beginning of this initiative it was known that money would be available only for a limited time period (between two and three years) but, by those associations who co-operated with the initiative, it was considered that doing something for a short time

was better than doing nothing at all.

MacNaghten House was an impressive residential building purpose built to house 180 police officers in single rooms with full on-site facilities including a gymnasium, theatre stage and full-size snooker table. With a change in recruiting procedures it had become 'surplus to requirements' and was in danger of standing empty. Situated no more than 5 minutes walk from three main line stations, it was ideally placed to house those finding themselves homeless and destitute in London. That, at least, is how it was perceived by the powers that be in the DoE, the Metropolitan Police and the housing association for whom I was working at the time, managing another large hostel in the Victoria area.

In reality the issues surrounding the establishment of the hostel were far more complex: the building, large as it is, is nestled in the centre of privately rented flats owned by middle class and elderly tenants, all of whom felt comforted by the presence of 180 police officers and seriously threatened by the prospect of as many homeless people muling and puking in their backyards. Word of the project's existence escaped to this community more than a year before its opening and a campaign to prevent its existence was embarked upon with zeal. Exacerbated by an abysmal (ie non-existent) public relations exercise the housing association responsible for the project soon found itself in deep water; public meetings, letters to Camden Council, the local press, M.P.'s and the housing association itself proved the organisational ability of an antagonistic local community and centred a tense spotlight on the project's performance that was never to recede throughout its life.

A background of complex political manoeuvring and intense opposition was the legacy I adopted when I came in to the post as the project's manager only 2 months before it was due to open. In a whirlwind of activity I attempted to establish the practical management base of the project - recruiting staff, setting policies, creating links with local agencies at the same time as trying to deal firmly and diplomatically with the grievances of the local community.

When the project opened on October 5 1992, local opinion had been assuaged to the degree that The Camden Chronicle ran the headline 'New Hostel Wins Thumbs Up From Former Opponents'. The real work was now to begin with an intensity and momentum that was to keep over 50 members of staff at full stretch for the next year and a half. The ethos on which we ran the hostel was to house people from the street and give them the space and opportunity to stabilise their situation enough to make their own decisions about their future. To facilitate this the project offered support and guidance in a number of professional services such as alcohol and drug counselling, mental health, benefits and housing advice. Many of the 150 people housed had been leading extremely chaotic lifestyles and the in-house management of the project was essentially to prevent a seething cauldron of frustration, anger, confusion and despair from bubbling over into abandonment, violence or suicide.

In the early days of the hostel's life the atmosphere was fraught and intimidating: staff were new and learning to deal with every crisis as it occurred; the resident group was unsettled and without loyalty to the project or each other and the force of opposition from outside lay like a coiled snake waiting to pounce at the merest opportunity. Within two weeks The Camden Chronicle ran the headline, 'Junkie Dies On Town Hall Steps' referring to the death of somebody who had been asked to leave the hostel for heroin use on the premises and died two days later on the steps of Camden Town Hall. On November 23, 1992, a month and a half after opening, a resident was found dead in her room, again from a morphine overdose. The worst fears of the local community appeared to be materialising: the resident group, working on the principle of everyone for themselves, were stripping the hostel of all it contained, the air was tense with danger and staff were exhausted,

demoralised and frightened. On that day I went home emotionally drained and deeply worried. The pressure of the project's troubled origin was like the urgency of a self-fulfilling prophecy demanding my valediction and I feared greatly for the lives of the residents and my staff; I was ready to cut the loss and close the operation before everybody's worse nightmare came true.

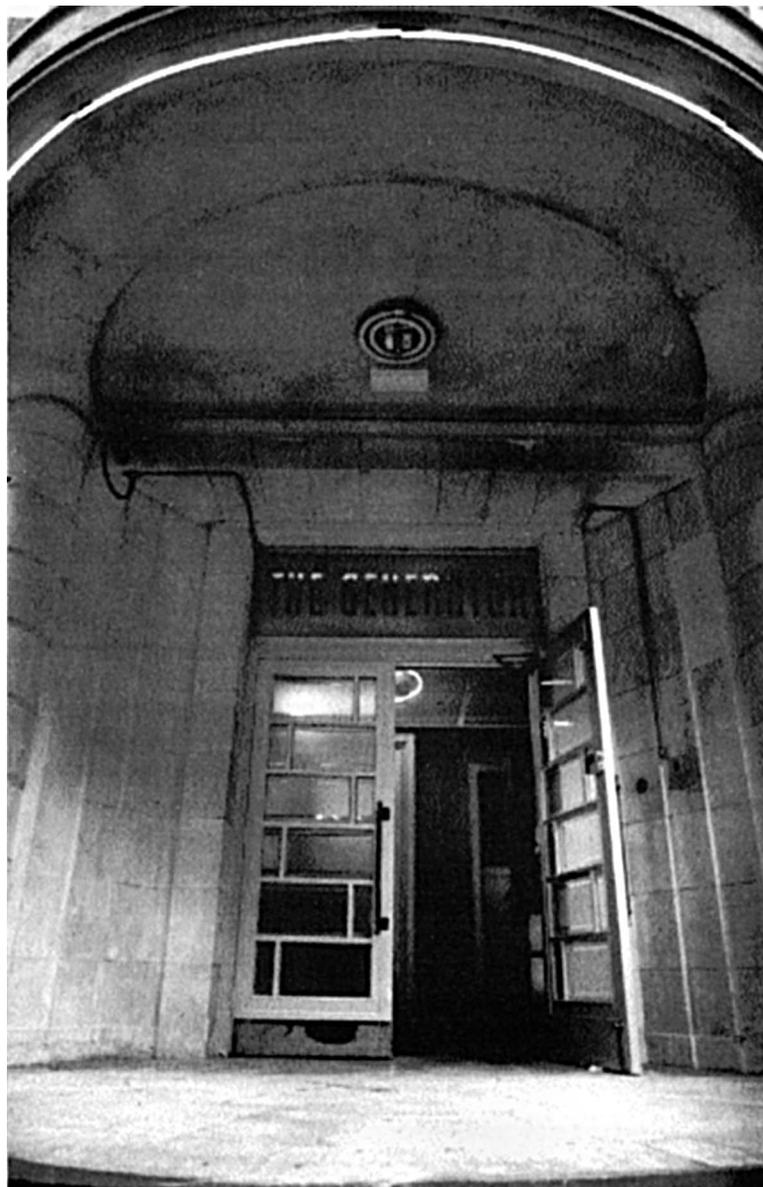
Perhaps it was something no more extraordinary than the stubborn determination not to give in, the beleaguered hero's fear of failure, or maybe it was something externally far more powerful than my own vain good intentions, but I became aware of a sense that this day would be a turning point and that if I could return to the project the next morning full of apparent confidence, energy and optimism for the future, that truly positive things could be gained from the chaos of our beginnings.

I have said that this is my story, and this is the way I like to tell it; from that day onwards events began to take a different course and slowly, slowly the hostel developed a community, an identity and a spirit which was to lead to some of the most courageous and truly remarkable expressions of life's positive forces that I have had the honour to be a part of.

What was achieved between this time and the end of the project would be better told by the staff and residents who worked and lived in the project throughout this time; there is no adequate summary of the struggle for survival of so many souls, nothing that I could say that would do justice to the triumph and the despair.

Where I can return to my personal involvement in the hostel's history is in the growth of a campaign that came to be known as the Resident's Action Group (RAG). Conceived by somebody resident in another of the Rough Sleepers' hostels, who later moved into MacNaghten House, the campaign focused the views and opinions of the resident group concerned by the fact that their current home was soon to be closing. Facilitated by CHAR (campaign for single homeless people) a core group of hostel residents organised a series of events which took their agenda to the public and to the government: regular meetings were held, voices were raised, parliament was lobbied and a march ending in Trafalgar Square coincided with the handing in of a petition to Downing Street. MacNaghten House became the campaign base for RAG although the efforts of the campaign members was to prevent any of the 1,200 bedspaces opened under the Rough Sleepers' Initiative from closing.

In some ways it all seems so straightforward to me now, the fact that RAG happened and spoke out for what it believed to be right. But the fact that it happened was not straightforward at all; here was a group of people used to being ignored by the system and without the usual expectations of their right to challenge the powers that govern us, and without easy access to the people behind these powers. At the time the campaign came into being no other



Vanessa Jones

MacNaghten House as it is now - 'The Generator', a hi-tech bar and hotel for backpacking tourists.

hostel funded under the initiative was prepared to host the campaign and be openly critical of the government; the reaction against the idea of a group of residents speaking out for themselves was severe.

To me the struggle to establish MacNaghten House as a safe and supportive home was worth more to the people who lived there than any temporarily funded, short-term housing policy; this experience had changed peoples' lives. Paradoxically, I was also aware, perhaps more than anyone, of the overstretched commitment that staff were making to keep the

“Slowly the hostel developed a community, an identity and a spirit, which was to lead to some of the most courageous and truly remarkable expressions of life's positive forces that I have had the honour to be a part of.”

project running and that its sustainability was questionable; although I wrestled with my conscience I for one knew that if the campaign was successful in achieving its ends and the hostel remained open, I would have to leave as my energy was all but spent.

The Residents Action Group didn't achieve its objectives. MacNaghten House and many other hostels closed down between 1993 and the present day (one of the last closed only

very recently), but the campaign was far from a failure. I argue this point regularly with the person who first dreamt RAG up, Harry Townsend. Harry (an ex-resident of MacNaghten House) and I are currently going round the country together conducting some research in to direct access hostels for CRISIS. We go in to existing hostels and daycentres and ask the client group their views and opinions of the environment in which they live. Harry is dismayed by the condition of peoples' lives and the hopelessness of their situation, he is angry and frustrated because he knows how hard it is to make the government listen; when we see what we see, he thinks that RAG was all a waste of time. I know where Harry is coming from, but for myself I know that RAG was not a waste of time because it gave people self-respect and dignity and it gave people who are normally without a voice a chance to make their feelings known. I have seen what it achieved at MacNaghten House in giving people the opportunity to focus on something wider than the hell of their own lives; it created a spirit and an identity that lives on to this day.

It is a bit like Frankenstein's monster; if you create it, don't expect to control it. Through hostels like MacNaghten House the government awakened something in the people that they housed, a chance to be recognised and the right to

self-expression. I saw MacNaghten House grow from chaos into a community and a community that mobilised itself to try and fight its creator. It is ironic that the community who fought to prevent the hostel opening, a middle-class ghetto with access to power, had nothing on the flair, the style and the sheer passion of the Residents Action Group. It is all a matter of time and perspective. The closure of the RSI hostels in central London has been a set back, over a year has gone by since MacNaghten House locked its doors and RAG was disbanded. The government is just about to announce the next phase of the RSI initiative and for the first time money will be spent outside the London area.

My argument with Harry is that the work of RAG should act as an inspiration to others, and in that way its benefits will not be lost. Time has moved on and for the people forced to live on the streets very little can be seen to have changed. But there is a pilot light burning on the back-burner somewhere and that pilot light is Harry's anger, and the anger of others like him, who have been forced to experience the shame and indignation of being at the mercy of a system that doesn't care; a government that opens hostels for short-term gain and then slams the door in the face of those it chose to house. That anger is the spirit of RAG and RAG is the spirit of a dispossessed people who have had enough of being pushed from pillar to post. I now value MacNaghten House as a symbol of that spirit and an example that Harry and I can use as we speak to people around the country of the positive seed that can be planted in somebody else's dumping ground - whosoever's backgarden it might happen to fall into.



Artillery Mansions

by Jim Carey, one of a team of squatters and rough-sleepers assembled by necessity.

As anyone who stayed from the start to the finish of the Artillery Mansions squat occupation will tell you, a lifetime's education was crammed furiously into six weeks.

I was introduced to the project only three days before the three thousand room mansion was squatted on February 18th 1994. My job was simply to run a temporary off-site office on the day of the occupation, fielding media enquiries and facilitating legal back-up. One and a half mad, inspired and dangerous months later, I stood in court for four and half hours arguing with the legal representatives of Great Bear N.V., the

multi-national company which had left most of Artillery Mansions empty for over 12 years.

To start with, the squat occupation of Artillery was a stunt designed to highlight the coming of the Criminal Justice Bill, the farce of high numbers of empty properties, high homelessness and criminal sanctions against squatting. The building was in a perfect location, surrounded as it was by the Houses of Parliament, the Home Office, the Department of Environment, New Scotland Yard and the bastion of Damn Shirley Porterism - Westminster City Hall.

Banners were hung from the balconies,

visible both to the hundreds of people walking up and down busy Victoria Street and to the dignitaries of one sort or another who were regularly chauffeured past its doors. Media coverage was extensive, with every major newspaper, television and radio station running features and documentaries on the place. A parliamentary question was asked about the occupation and Betty Boothroyd, speaker of the House of Commons, dropped by to give her verbal support. "I can't sign the petition," she said. "Because I have to stay neutral."

But a small number of project instigators were not happy that a three thousand room mansion was being occupied simply as a media stunt, when hundreds of homeless people slept in the doorways of the street it was situated on; and so an idea was born. The Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative was itself simply a media stunt and came no where near dealing with the escalating number of people forced to sleep on the streets. So, we decided to run our own Alternative version - The Artillery Mansions Alternative Rough Sleepers Initiative.

Flyers were made up and distributed to people dossing in doorways, inviting them to come and select a room. Word got round and the numbers of people coming into the building swelled to over a hundred.

Now imagine a three thousand room building with no electricity, open to the street and full of people, some of whom had not had a roof over their head for eighteen years. We had prostitutes running tricks from the building. We had every kind of drug addict in the book and not in the book. We had runaway children looking for sanctuary and we had mentally ill, homeless people largactiled up to their vacant eyeballs and then turfed out of hospital onto the street. One guy showed up with a hospital towel round his waist. He had run away from a local mental hospital and the police were after him. He slept one night and was gone. The police arrived the following day with a search warrant to look for him. The warrant, which I still have, had a specific room number on it; odd because no-one knew the room numbers and hardly any of the flats still had numbers on them. When we worked it out, the room number on the warrant was indeed the room he had stayed in for the night. So we had undercover cops in there too.

A petition collated on a table outside the front door gathered over 3,000 names, including local constables who both sympathised with what was going on and had the guts to stick their necks out and put their names down.

Also on the outside of the building, we put pasted up copies of the front page of Evening Standard from January 13th 1994. The lead story was of Shirley Porter and the Westminster Council gerrymandering scandal, involving "the export of homeless people out of the Borough". The headline ran "Unlawful, Disgraceful, Improper". We had a visit from the Council's billboard officer who told us to take the posters down. We refused and told him to go away and prepare the paperwork - we did not see him again.

Indeed I was told by one of the many legal people mixed up in the history of Artillery Mansions that at least one of the reasons it had remained empty was that Westminster Council were concerned about what kind of homeless people would be housed there. The Empty Homes Agency which have offices just up the road from the Mansions, had made strenuous efforts to



Vanessa Jones

Artillery Mansions as it looks now. Great Bear NV, the building's owners, swore to the judge that they required the premises for imminent development.

negotiate the use of the building for short stay accommodation for homeless people. A lawyer told me that these efforts had been stalled by Westminster Council's insistence that it only wanted "professional people" to occupy the Mansions.

In the first collective meeting of the new Artillery occupants, it was strongly suggested that we keep the building alcohol-free. Then one of the rough sleepers spoke up. "Ban alcohol," he said, "and you ban 95 per cent of the rough sleepers on this street". It was cracking inside information from someone who had never been to such a meeting in their life. The decision was changed to no alcohol in the communal places of the building, and we all proceeded to do our erratically successful best to make sure this 'policy' was adhered to.

But as the first novel fortnight drew to a close, more and more of the original 'media stunt' occupiers began drifting away, leaving the precarious balance of the project to lurch towards the wild side of the fence. By this stage, the publicity around the building and the occupation was attracting every coupster in the book. Scrap merchants came from miles around; you'd come across them loading up their van at one of the entrances with fireplaces stacked in the hallway. In their eyes they were just making a living but to those trying to hold the place together they were vultures. One day a scrapper stole a brass fitting, worth only about £3, but the result was a gushing water leak from the roof. It was only stopped when the fire brigade arrived to seal off the water supply to the building. For a while there was no water in the toilets or kitchen because of that disrespectful piece of opportunism.

But despite the mayhem, something powerful happened in Artillery Mansions. Something that will remain in the memories of all those who stuck with the project. From amidst all the muddled chaos came some unforgettable jewels. A tenuous but very real community of right-on rough necks and ragamuffins rose up to make sure the project never became the blazing nightmare it always threatened to be.

There was Pugh, who always claimed to be just a musician strumming his guitar but who took on more overnight guard shifts than anyone. And there was Stuart, on the street for ten months since arriving from Scotland looking for a job. He hauled up a sofa and a few chairs to a third floor flat and decorated the first room of his own he'd ever had. He became one of the most articulate spokespersons for the cause of homelessness that I've ever heard, astounding journalists and documentary makers with his observations. "It's the first time I've had the opportunity to tell them what it's really like," he said to me once. One time when a BBC camera crew walked into his room, he told them to get out and knock next time. They did so and he invited them back in and bade them make themselves at home. Then there was Stan, an ex-M11 security man who'd been sacked from his job for disinterest, and was now homeless. He ran round like an earnest blue-arsed fly helping to hold it all together.

Then, manning the door and taking on the role of 'head of security' was big and gentle Hawk. One day two young girls, who'd previously been told to go home (we tried to encourage young runaways not to stay unless absolutely necessary), arrived back at the Mansions. We managed to find out that they lived in Ealing, West London, so Hawk said he'd make

sure they got back home safely. On the way to Ealing, he bought them a hamburger each with the little money he had. Because one of them refused to give him her address, he dropped her off at Ealing Police Station and took the other one to her home. On the way back to the tube from dropping the second girl off, Hawk was accosted by police, who threw him against their car, searched him and placed him under arrest. After being left off at Ealing Police Station, the first

One guy showed up with a hospital towel wrapped around his waist. He had run away from a local mental hospital and the police were after him.

girl had told police that Hawk tried to rape her on the journey. Hawk was badly shaken, even by the idea that he should be accused of such a thing. He'd been living on the streets for eighteen years; he didn't have much but he had his dignity. We

got him a lawyer who explained the situation to the police and they agreed that the girl had told lies out of spite. There was no medical evidence and the girl's story was inconsistent. Hawk didn't recover from that incident, he grew withdrawn and disappeared a couple of days later.

Another saint in the crowd was a woman called Pat. She had two children living somewhere in Dorset but had been living on the streets of London for many years. She made it her task to look after the child runaways and still found time to clean the toilet floor nearly everyday.

Then there was Bill, a jolly alcoholic of about 65, who at one time in his life had been a ship's cook. He took great pride in cooking up two huge pans of soup each night for everybody in the building. Every evening he'd ask me to go and get a bulb of garlic "and a little can of the drink". Hence forth he was known as Garlic Bill, a name that brought a warm dignity to his face. Some of the resident rough sleepers used to take his soup before he'd finished cooking it and he'd go mad. I found him on a couple of occasions rolling round on the kitchen floor grappling with some drunk geezer who'd evidently shown no respect for Garlic Bill's pride in his cuisine. All this and he had medically diagnosed angina too! He never ate any of his own food - he said he couldn't stomach solids, he could only drink.

There were many other saints and necessary sinners that shone through during those six weeks, finding a dignity hard to keep in the forgotten doorways and park benches of London. Which is just as well because there is an argument that one and a half months with a room of your own is worse than none at all. It constantly nagged

my conscience that perhaps Artillery Mansions would be just a titillation for the rough sleepers which it housed; a reminder of what they didn't have the rest of the year round. The counterbalance to this feeling has come since the project finished. I know of four rough sleepers who now squat - prior to Artillery Mansions they did not know how to. And I have since met with others who only express fond memories of the Artillery and their chance to make a stand.

We won the first court case after one and half hours of arguing that the owners had not proved their rights of ownership of the whole block and that they had failed to look after four

pensioner sitting tenants who were scattered in the back block amid the dead pigeons. The pensioners had been waiting for eleven years to be rehoused by the multi-millionaire company that owned the building.

The judge adjourned the case and ordered that some of the documents we'd found, and built our case upon, should be handed over to the owner's legal representatives. I was due to meet their representatives at 10 am the following morning.

When I arrived at 8.30 am, the front foyer was full of people singing and slopping cider everywhere. I got a mop and asked them to move downstairs so that I could clean the floor. They took offence, took a couple of swings and then literally booted me up the arse and out the door. So there I stood outside the building with a sore arse, waiting for these representatives to show up. And out comes one of the drunk revellers in tears. "I shouldn't hurt my own, I shouldn't hurt my own," he cried and hugged me several cider swilling times. He'd been homeless before, he told me, but then got married and sorted himself out. He showed me a photograph of his three pigtailed daughters. The marriage had broken down, he'd taken it badly and been sectioned into a mental hospital. "Eleven fucking milligrams of chlorpromazine a day," he balled through his tears. "And now all I've got is this," he said nodding towards his plastic mug of cider. He hugged me several more times and apologised for hitting me - I could hardly speak but I managed to tell him that the last thing I was going to do was hold it against him.

During the final weeks of Artillery Mansions I visited and telephoned charity after homeless charity trying to find someone to help cope with the increasingly dramatic and hardened cases that were making a home amid the chaos. None of them could help. Some expressed sympathy, but those that were honest with me said that the situation at Artillery Mansions was far too raw to send people down to. It didn't help the workload but it was an explanation I could understand. In many ways 'raw' was an understated description of the Artillery Mansions Alternative Rough Sleepers Initiative.

We lost the second court case. To be honest, those that were still there right to the end were relieved. But we still fought for four and a half hours in court, answering the lies sworn into an affidavit by the owners of the building. They had claimed we had smashed up the building and

A tenuous but very real community of right-on rough-necked and ragamuffins rose up to make sure the project never became the blazing nightmare it always threatened to be.

were the cause of a local nuisance. But having left it empty for eighteen years and open to the street, we used photographs to show the judge that the state of the building was largely a result of the owner's neglect. We had statements from the pensioner sitting tenants

and ex-residents of Artillery Mansions about the years of neglect and legal run-around that the owners had put them through. One 70-year-old man lived in a one bedroom flat on the fourth floor of the back block. Despite having severe emphysema, he had to climb those stairs everyday, and go past pigeons carcasses and guano to his isolated flat. The lifts did not work.

We also had statements from local shopkeepers who used to give us boxes of sandwiches and we had the 3,000-plus name petition, sworn in as court evidence.

A number of the rough sleepers, shortly to be returning to the street after a one and a half month spell with a roof, addressed the judge. He

was as visibly moved as I have ever seen a poker-faced judge to be. Every lie and masking of the truth sworn by the owners was deconstructed. They knew there was a truth to hide because they'd got the judge to ban all journalists from coming into the court room.

At the end of four and a half hours, the judge said he had no choice under law but to grant possession to the owners. However, in his sum up speech he said he had every respect for the way the legal case had been fought on behalf of the occupants, every respect for the Alternative Rough Sleepers Initiative and every respect for the street sleepers who had stood up for themselves.

Outside the court, the eight legal representatives who had fought on behalf of the owners and were each earning an estimated £1,000 a day, came up to me.

"We'd just like to say we thought you conducted your legal defence very well. Surely it's possible you could get a job?"

I swallowed hard and said in the most composed way I could: "You have a well-paid job, fighting for the likes of Great Bear N.V. and their hard cash. I have a job which is rewarded only by the knowledge that I'm defending real people with hard needs. It is a matter of debate who is more gainfully employed."

"Ah, well, yes," they said. "Good luck."

In their affidavit, the shadowy owners of the building (neither we nor the national media were able to meet them or find out who they really were), had said that they required immediate possession of the building due to plans to redevelop it as soon as possible. One and a half years after the occupants of Artillery Mansions were evicted from what for most was the only home they'd ever had, the three thousand room mansion on Victoria Street is still empty. The dignitaries chauffeured past its boarded up doors, include Messrs Major and Straw.

So when I hear John Major and Jack Straw say that beggars and winos are "eyesores" from which our streets must be reclaimed, it's all I can do not to wander 800 yards down the road from Artillery Mansions, in order to go one step further than yer man Guido Fawkes. For were we to blow the whole out-of-touch bag of hot air into the sky, they that do spout inside might land on the streets around them and finally learn something relevant to social politics. I did big time.

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CoolTan Arts - Past, Present, Future.

Respect going out to the CoolTan Posse and four years of grass-roots culture. The well-tanned **Shane Collins** reviews the achievements and looks to a future land.

CoolTan moved out of the Old Dolehouse on 24th September. We had a 'Tenancy at Will' with the Voice newspaper, who bought the building about 18 months ago. They plan to move their offices and operations from next door into the old dolehouse.

In many ways we have run our course. The opportunities of new spaces and new directions lie in front of us. So after a final exhibition and a series of massive parties we moved out.

No-one is an island. In the same way, no group is insulated. Its shape is taken not only from the people involved but also the prevailing opinions and moods of the times, and most obviously its physical space.

For the last four years, and particularly in the last three at the old Dolehouse, CoolTan has been spoilt for space. Originally kicked off in June 1991 in the old CoolTan suntan lotion factory in Effra Road, the factory was squatted until sold in February '92, razed to the ground and left as an empty plot. We moved to offices above Brixton Cycles before moving to the old Dolehouse in September '92. Since then we have squatted the building, been outbid by the voice newspaper in trying to buy the building from the unEmployment disService, and for the last six months have been on a peppercorn rent.

We have been massively lucky in many ways to get the most precious of commodities for nothing. That commodity being land, a floor, a roof. Consequently CoolTan Arts and the many other groups that have existed in the same space, Lambeth Green Party, Reclaim the Streets, London Green Party, Earth First!, Freedom Network, London Friends and Families of Travellers, have all been able to thrive in an arid and oppressive political and economic landscape, and be part of the bubbling and vibrant scene that points to a different value system and the future.

It is fair to say that we have done for the last five years what no other collective or group has been doing at the same time. (Respect to Rainbow, Exodus and Justice? who operate in different areas and with different focuses.) We have trod a new path. We have exposed new art in new circumstances, we have been part of the social changes, the cultural rumblings of the last few years. We have provided music, pictures, parties, politics, poetry, food and shelter for many people who might not have otherwise come across it, or been able to afford it had it not been for us. Maybe,

and not just in our wildest dreams, we have offered a new perspective on life for some people and other ways of living it.

All of us at various times and to varying extents have worked our butts off, not for ourselves, but for the crack, for the benefit of all (and therefore us as well),

for a common and at times cloudy goal. While it is probably easier for us to remember the mistakes, we have also got to check that we have done good, done something worthwhile. To know this, to take comfort and confidence from this and be able to carry the lessons and experiences through into other things is our reward. We, a bunch of often quite different people on the dole, came together and did it. A totally independent squatted community arts centre. We proved to ourselves and others that it could be done. Nuff respect CoolTanners.

It's not all been plain sailing, there have been problems. Our enthusiasm to take things on has been greater than our ability to get things done. To maintain the

levels of commitment and positivity and do the boring dirty jobs when there is little tangible reward can indeed be a tough thing to do. At times CoolTan has been merry chaos, trying to do far too many things, with too few switched on people. There is a feeling that with a change of space there must be a change of structure and focus. Also, if we don't get at least the same sized space we can't do the same things.

CoolTan, as an arts, social, networking, community, DIY, whatever centre is going to change and move on.

CoolTan will continue as an arts group, moving into a railway arch in Brixton, Station Road, while looking for a large space for exhibitions and arts events. Much of the networking, DIY, green side that has existed within the CoolTan buildings will continue in a new centre, alongside artists' studios and a cafe, and trying to run as far as possible on a LETS scheme, called Greenland, currently looking for space in Brixton. Some of the cafe crew are forming a co-op called the Camberwell Carrot, soon to be opening in a cafe in Camberwell.

To all those who have been a part of CoolTan over the last four and a half years and those who have supported us by coming to events and allowing us to be independent, ta, we made ripples, we all did our part, it's been a laugh and we'll be seeing you around Brixton over the years to come. Lots of ripples make a tidal wave.

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View from the CoolTan Cafe.

Nick Cobbing

Gross Misconduct in Hackney

Hackney Council rarely fails to make it into the pages of SQUALL and this issue's story continues its long record of inexplicable, unacceptable and downright stupid behaviour. **Sam Beale** talks to a man barred from his local authority job as a swimming pool life-saver - because he's thought to be a squatter.

In 1992 Martin Fahey moved into a flat on the Pembury Estate in Hackney as a sub-tenant. The original tenant moved out early in 1993 and requested that Martin and the person he shared with be put on the tenancy. Martin visited Christine Foley at Hackney's Housing Office and asked how to gain the tenancy. She told him categorically that this was not possible.

Bemused by this response, Martin and the other tenant decided that "as we were going to be made homeless through no fault of our own, we should just stay there as long as we could".

Martin received a visit from Ms Foley and another Council officer later in 1993. Threatening him with eviction she demanded all his personal details saying she had the right to know because Martin was in Council property. "At that time knowing little of my rights I was simply waiting for possession proceedings" says Martin. Being unclear about his position he decided not to reveal his personal details.

In May 1994 he received a letter from Christine Foley telling him to attend a meeting with her: "She was really turned around. She was being nice. She said they should have signed the tenancy to me in the first place, that it was just a formality and to give her all my details and they'd sort it out." Martin saw his local councillor, who promised his support, and then filled out his details for the Housing Office.

In early November he received a visit from Christine Foley and two members of Hackney's infamous eviction squad the Tenancy Audit Team (TAT). He thought this was to be a friendly chat when he first arranged the meeting: "I was offering them tea and biscuits when they first came in but they were bludgeoningly horrible, calling me a liar and a criminal and totally unwilling to negotiate." They grilled Martin over his non-payment of the poll tax, strutting around his home looking through his and his brother's

belongings. At one point they asked him to leave his front room so they could discuss him in private.

On discovering that Martin was employed by Hackney Council as a swimming pool attendant and lifeguard Ms Foley instantly produced a copy of the Council's 'Code of Conduct for Employees' which states that it is gross misconduct for an employee to squat in a Council property. She seems to have been delighted to inform Martin that she was compelled to report him and his brother (also employed by the Council) for misconduct.

Having been led to believe that this meeting would sort out his tenancy Martin was further intimidated with questions from the TAT heavies like: "When can you move out?" He replied that if there was no chance of getting the tenancy it was down to when the council deemed. "I deem tomorrow," bellowed one of the bomber-jacketed bullies before they left. "I was in complete despair afterwards" says Martin, "I was absolutely petrified. I thought they were going to come round the next day and forcibly evict me."

They didn't and the next that Martin heard was a possession order: "I took it to the ASS (Advisory Service for Squatters) and we put together a brilliant defence." The case was kicked out of court because "I de facto became the tenant on Julia's surrender" as the flat was being let to single sharers under the Head Tenants Scheme. In such a case whenever the head tenant moves out (and with single sharers they invariably do) somebody else becomes the head tenant. This should have been Martin. For some reason Christine Foley decided to ignore this. For equally unfathomable reasons, Martin discovered that she had frozen his 10 year-old application to be

housed in Hackney.

Here the story begins to look dodgier than ever. At the time Martin worked for Hackney Leisure as and when he was required by various pools in the borough. In June of this year he went for a swim at Haggerston Pool where he had worked on this basis for over a year. On entering the building Martin recalls: "The receptionist said 'you're not allowed in here. You're a squatter'." Apparently a memo had been circulated to all Hackney swimming pools explaining that Martin was not to be employed because he was squatting in Council property.

The memo had been sent out on the instructions of Simon Steward in the Personnel Department. When confronted, Mr Steward avoided the subject of Martin's housing situation, flatly denying that it had anything to do with the termination of his employment, claiming the reason he was not being employed was the expiry of his temporary contract. He had not been asked to renew this contract and, Martin points out, casual staff regularly fill in 'sessional forms' to renew their contracts.

Playing the game he filled out a sessional application form and submitted it to Simon Steward who was then forced to admit that the

council's refusal to employ him was actually because he was a squatter. As Martin says: "I'd never been a squatter of this property. My original entry was gained as a sub-tenant so I can't be considered as a squatter."

Martin still lives in the flat on the Pembury Estate and his case has been adjourned to the county court. His housing application has been unfrozen, and there is a good chance he will gain the tenancy. His solicitor is also investigating the possibility of a judicial review over the termination of his employment.

Ultimately though he is disappointed: "I'm shocked that a Labour council will allow its officers to act in such a bullish way. There are officers who are completely bloody-minded bullies." Christine Foley appears to be such an officer.

Martin admits that if the Council had simply taken possession proceedings in 1992-93 "I would have just moved out". The current situation seems entirely due to the bizarre behaviour of Ms Foley (who refused to comment when contacted for her side of the story). "She's lied to me, made stuff up and taken punitive action against me for no good reason other than to be bloody minded," says Martin. Doesn't that sound rather like gross misconduct Ms Foley? What does your Code of Conduct say?

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'Action Squatter and Cindy Dread' - colour postcards of this image available from Steve Redshaw, 0181 802 3135, single or bulk orders - proceeds to SQUALL

Stealing Back the Parkway

The People of Camden were grossly disappointed on the day the Parkway Cinema was forced to close. When new life arrived, courtesy of UN Sound System and their bags of initiative, councillors and local people found themselves supporting their local squatters. **Andy Johnson** reports.

A squatted cinema in North London has become the focus of a local campaign to re-open the building and has even gained the support of local councillors.

UN Sounds entered the Parkway cinema in the centre of Camden Town for the second time in late August. They spent four weeks in the cinema in May before being evicted.

After putting on a number of highly successful parties they soon attracted the attention of the local

press and campaigners who have been trying to persuade the owners, property developers Sunley Turrif, to reopen the much loved art deco gem as a cinema.

The cinema was closed three years ago when Turrif, a subsidiary of Lohno, sacked the tenant-manager and applied for planning permission to turn the site into an office block.

Permission was refused by Camden Council and, on appeal, the planning inspector upheld the decision on the grounds that the

building was a public asset and should remain a cinema. This effectively blocked any hope of redeveloping the site.

Despite strong local campaigns, including the formation of the "Friends of Parkway", to reopen the cinema, the Parkway has remained closed. It is thought that the building is being allowed to deteriorate in the hope that eventually Sunley will be allowed to demolish it - a common developer's wheeze.

Exasperated by the owners stalling over the sale of the building to another operator, the council are currently considering a compulsory purchase order.

Before UN Sounds, a local Camden sound system, first squatted the building in May, Sunley said that the inside of the building had fallen into thousands of pounds worth of disrepair. This was exposed as inaccurate when a local newspaper, the Ham and High, carried a front page photo of UN Sounds sitting in a pristine cinema. All that was missing were two chandeliers from the main auditorium and about 100 seats from a smaller auditorium.

Initially evicted after four weeks, UN returned at the end of August to find their own locks still on the doors and the heating, lighting and electricity left switched on. A leak in the roof that was dripping water onto the main stage remained, despite UN Sounds writing to Sunley in May to inform them that part of the roof needed repairing. UN also say that when they moved in pigeons had colonised the projection room, leaving destructive droppings everywhere, although they hadn't spread to the main theatre. They also say that they cleared out used needles from corridors and window recesses and,

because of their local credibility, crack dealers who haunted the surrounding alleyways vanished.

They then put on a couple of parties, attracting over 1,500 people without trouble which pleased local food vendors and taxi firms on the High Street. One nearby supermarket was even considering hiring extra staff to cope with the Sunday morning deluge of breakfast and lunch-seeking party people. They were disappointed to discover that the next weekend had a more sedate programme; an all-night film show. UN also put on free kid's Saturday matinees, the programme for which was agreed after consulting local community centres. "This place should be the heart of the community," is how one of the "Occupiers and persons unknown" put it, "but it's like a wheel clamp on the area."

The parties initially attracted criticism, being described in the local press as "raves" and arousing all the stereotyped fears associated with such demonic practices.

One local councillor, Anne Swain, said: "We have enough undesirables in the area without attracting any more."

Anne Swain, a member of the Friends of Parkway, was invited, along with a number of other councillors, to meet UN Sounds in the cinema. After chatting to them she adjusted her opinion from negative to actively positive. She was among a number of councillors who allowed themselves to be photographed with UN for a local paper which ran the headline: "Carry on Squatting! Cllrs. Welcome Parkway Squat."

After the photo call, which saw councillors posing with brooms and vacuum cleaners, the discussion even saw one of the councillors, a barrister, advising UN on tactics for their impending eviction hearing in the High Court.

At their first hearing, on Thursday September 7, UN Sounds won a week's adjournment by successfully arguing the building was a residential property, because it has a flat formerly used by the manager.

Sunley had allowed only two working days between serving papers and the court hearing because they



had the building down as commercial. Having a residential element meant they should have allowed five days.

"We want it to be a public forum," said Lee, one of the squatters. "We do music but we don't want it to be limited to music. It could be used for film or media training and as a community centre. There could be workshops, a creche for kids and space for groups like Amnesty. But these things aren't exclusive, it is a cinema after all."

The parties UN put on are, not to put too fine a word on it, cracking. The main space in the auditorium is utilised for tuneful rave-type music, with hypnotic visuals projected onto the main screen. The stage is used as a dancing sweat shop but there are an abundance of comfy seats for chilling

...the building is being allowed to deteriorate in the hope that eventually Sunley will be allowed to demolish it - a common developer's wheeze.

out and gazing at the visuals. The enormous space in the theatre, including an incredibly high roof, aids and abets an open air feeling and avoids claustrophobia.

The small auditorium, probably originally used for specialist films, hosts a couple of live bands, and an all night film show of, well, specialist films, such as the CJB demo at Hyde Park and nomadic travels through Afghanistan. As well as a nod towards popular culture with The Whicker Man.

Gerry Harrison, a local councillor and erstwhile member of the Friends of Parkway, said: "I support the squatters because they have given use to a building that would otherwise be empty, sad, forlorn and more run down than it is already. So long as the place is looked after I support what they are doing. Squatters have got themselves a bad reputation which they don't deserve. This group are keeping the building ticking over."

Ernest James, who heads the licensing committee at Camden, did point out that UN Sounds don't have a music and dance licence. But he did say: "There seems to be sufficient room here to use it as a 1,000 seat cinema and put in other facilities such as a film school and skills training in the media and the arts. That is to be welcomed in this significant part of the borough, and a use that young people could benefit from." (There is currently an enormous debate in Camden about the lack of youth facilities).

"From what I see," Cllr James continued, "this group are ensuring that the building is protected. I have

seen the damage caused by pigeons that they have prevented from reaching the auditorium. The present occupiers are providing a service to the community that is not being identified by the owners who are allowing it to fall to rack and ruin by not looking after it."

UN won a further adjournment the following week because Sunley had not registered the lease. According to the Registration of Land Act 1925 a lease, when sold on, if it has more than forty years to run, should be registered within two months. The original Parkway lease was for 125 years and issued in 1964. Sunley brought it in 1989, with 99 years to go, but neglected to register it. So the Land Register, nor the lease, would provide proof of ownership.

Much to the consternation of Sunley Turrif, the judge, Master Trench, adjourned the case for a further week so that Sunley could find some written evidence that they actually owned the property.

The following week, in what was turning into a court room farce, Sunley verses the Occupier and Persons Unknown, returned to the High Court presided over by a different judge - one Master Tenant. Although Sunley had brought along their receipt of sale, they had not altered their affidavit. This sworn statement, setting out their argument, still said that the Land Register would be used as evidence of ownership. But their verbal argument centred around the receipt of sale.

"You're your own worst enemy," Master Tenant told them, adjourning the case for a further week. "You will be able to serve another affidavit setting out the case you actually want to argue before then," he continued. "The other party have been to the trouble to examine the Land Register and found there is nothing in it. That is up to you to deal with. I need the evidence."

The court then had the bizarre scene of a representative from the Advisory Service for Squatters advising Sunley's counsel on how to word a summons.

The squatters still disputed their original summons to court, as it had not been altered to state the building had residential accommodation. As they had already received the statutory amount of time between the serving of the summons and the court hearing, Master Tenant dismissed the argument saying that the summons could be amended there and then.

He gave it to Sunley's solicitor to alter, but he didn't know how to word it without accepting that the cinema had a residential component.

"It MAY have a dwelling house," whispered the ASS rep, "It MAY have residential accommodation."

The summons so amended, Master Tenant asked if it was acceptable. UN Sounds chorused

"yes". A smile broke through the severe gravitas on the face of Master Tenant.

"It's his summons," he said, "It's up to him to say if it's alright or not." The court room then erupted into laughter.

As UN Sounds jubilantly left the court to organise another film show, one said to a member of Sunley's firm of solicitors: "If you need any help next week you know where to find us!"

Unfortunately, the following week, September 29, Sunley didn't need any help. They had their house, or rather their papers, in order and were granted a possession order.

But UN Sounds are not the

sort to accept defeat. They immediately lodged an appeal, on the grounds of the disputed original court summons, which was pencilled in for hearing on October 31. They then returned to court the following week to argue that they should be allowed to stay until their appeal hearing. Master Tenant was having none of this, so as Squall hits the printers, UN Sounds have been legally evicted from the Parkway cinema.

This, however, is not the end of the story. The Plaza cinema sits right next door to the Parkway, is owned by Sunley Turrif, has been closed for over a year, and is the focus of a local campaign

..... to be continued.

sq

CALLING ALL PARTY CREW

Every weekend and occasionally weekday someone somewhere for no immediate financial gain puts on a free party.

Many of you reading this now will be attending such an event and, in case you had failed to notice, it takes time and effort to sort out. First you have to find a venue, somewhere away from residential areas, easy to get to and relatively safe. With luck it will have working toilets and clean water supply. Having found the venue it may be necessary to occupy it several days in advance.

Next the electric has to be sorted out or, failing that, a generator needs to be borrowed and a space for the party cleared. People with lights, backdrops and sound equipment at great personal risk supply their services for free (or the occasional drink) so that you, the party goer, can dance and socialise with like minded people away from the social control and corruption of licensed venues/clubs/discos etc.

On top of all this, more often than not, someone from the sound system will have to negotiate with the old bill, risking arrest and/or a large fine. You may ask yourself why they bother at all, and at the moment people who have carried the can and taken the shit for so long are probably asking that themselves.

You have two choices. You can either:

Let the underground party scene lose momentum from lack of funds and energy, and have to resort back to paying £10 a ticket to be intimidated by XR2i boys and moody bouncers (who kick you out at 6am if you're lucky). Or you can support your local underground sound system.

If by chance you find the second choice more appealing then here is how to do it. When asked at the door for a donation by someone who looks as if he or she is a part of the sound system, give as much as you feel you can afford (a chewed biro lid and 2p won't go very far, mind). If for any reason you don't feel happy with the vibe of the people taking the money and you manage to blag in for nought, go and ask someone from the rig and find out whether or not they are blaggers (the world's full of them). Having done that you will then be able to give your donation safe in the knowledge that it will go to the right people.

If you are still unsure about where the money ends up then find someone who is obviously part of the party crew (DJs etc) and sort them out a drink personally.

The sound systems have been doing it for free for a long time. Free party's mean that DJs and live acts can get the exposure they need. It also means that we can meet up away from the pressures of our society's self appointed overseers.

This is your future and unless something positive is done we will simply grow too tired.....

(F.O.I.L - Freedom of Information Limited)

PLEASE COPY AND DISTRIBUTE FREELY.

FROM UNKOWN SOURCE.....

Squatting is still Legal

necessary and free

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994, does not make it a crime to squat, 'though it includes three changes in the law which could make squatting more difficult or insecure, unless you plan carefully and are well organised. Myk, from the Advisory Service for Squatters, details these changes and offers some advice to existing and potential squatters.

Protected Intending Occupiers (PIOs) - New Definition

A PIO is someone who needs to move into a place to live there and who has some right to be there. Before, they had to be either the owner, a leaseholder with at least two years left to run, or a person who had been allocated by a council or a housing association. They had to have a certificate proving their status and you could and still can be nicked for not leaving when shown a certificate and asked to do so. (See Squatters' Handbook for more details). The law has been widely abused by councils who claim to have allocated new tenants to squats, only to leave them empty.

Now the new law also allows private tenants and leaseholders with more than two years left to run to be PIOs. Since such places are hardly ever squatted, this will have little effect. These new PIOs need a certificate signed by a magistrate.

Protected Intending Occupiers (PIOs) - Violent Evictions

Now comes the nasty bit. Before, anyone who used violence (which includes violence against property) to get into any place where there was a person on the premises opposed to their entry, committed an offence against Section 6, Criminal Law Act 1977, giving squatters some protection. The only exception to this - the only person allowed to break in and chuck out squatters - was the fictional 'Displaced Residential Occupier' (DRO). (See Squatters' Handbook for more details).

Now, a PIO or someone 'acting on their behalf' (like the council) is also able to do this (after they have shown the relevant certificate). Councils which have regularly issued false PIO certificates in the past may now be tempted to back them up with violent evictions. If this happens, it will be vital to make sure they're in major shit if the PIO turns out to be

false (see below) or if they use unreasonable force - assault is still a crime.

To be sure of avoiding this new law, potential squatters will either need to pick a flat which will not be let to a new tenant (eg where the whole block is being cleared) or go for a non-residential building which you can turn into a home. It will become more important than ever for squatters to know the area they want to squat, to do research and to choose squats carefully.

But remember, there is nothing to stop an owner from breaking in to a squat and taking it back if nobody is there. This has been the law since 1978!

Interim Possession Orders (IPOSs)

This is the new procedure for much quicker evictions through the courts. They are not as draconian as the government wanted, but will still be a problem.

Unless there is a PIO or DRO, or a squat is left empty, evictions cannot occur without a possession order being made by a court. This will not change, but the new rules will alter the way some possession orders are made.

Under normal proceedings a squatter must get at least five days notice of the hearing, which gives a reasonable chance of being able to go along and fight the case. Squatters have been effective at this recently, so much so that new government legislation will prevent them from arguing their case until after eviction.

Under the new proceedings squatters may only get 48 hours notice that the owner is taking them to court. It will still be possible to submit an affidavit in defence, and there will still be many defences. Squatters will also be able to answer questions in court, but only if an affidavit has been filed. The bad news is that if an IPO is granted by the court squatters will have just 24 hours to leave the property. Failure to leave the premises, or if the

evicted party returns to the property within a year, will mean that an arrestable offence has been committed. If the IPO is granted it will be impossible to appeal (to overturn the order) until after the eviction.

Interim Possession Orders should only be granted if the owner takes the squatter(s) to court within 28 days of discovering that their property is occupied - a tall order for big bureaucracies - so most evictions are still likely to be enforced through the old procedure.

Carry on Squatting

Although we still don't know how things will work in practice, whether the cops really want to get involved, how quickly the courts will be able to find time for hearings, how willing judges will be to grant IPOs.... we know enough. These new laws will need to be fought every inch of the way.

Essential for an effective fightback will be hard information about how the Act is being used (or abused). Full details of every use, or attempted use, of the new laws should be passed to SQUASH (details below), who are monitoring cases and building up a database.

Individual squatters and households will often be able to avoid the new laws or see off attempts to use them by being aware of the new procedures. What will do the trick more effectively is planning; being prepared and keeping records.

Some advice to existing and potential squatters:

- Don't just squat anywhere that's empty because it's there. Make sure you know your area and its housing politics, or research places carefully before squatting (see Squatters Handbook for ideas).
- Keep a file with all the papers about your squat, including all the mail which was there when you went in or which arrives later.

- Make detailed notes about everything that happens including visits from the owners or police and any information you can get from neighbours. Always include dates, times, names (ask for them!) and police and vehicle numbers. Do it as soon as you can, and always the same day.

- Get advice immediately about any attempt to evict you. Contact Advisory Service for Squatters (ASS - details below). A local law centre, or advice centre may also be able to help. If you qualify for legal aid (you need to be claiming or have very low wages) a solicitor can advise and act for you. But make sure it's someone who understands the subject.

- As the government have been forced to allow us to attend court, use this right - contact ASS who will have the arguments prepared

- If evicted on the basis of a PIO, keep an eye on the place for evidence of abuse - landlords can be done for lying!

- Read the Squatters' Handbook - published by ASS. A temporary edition is now available (70p or £1 including postage). Together with information in this article it gives the current position. A new edition will be out very soon.

SQUATTER'S ACTION FOR SECURE HOMES (SQUASH) campaign against the anti-squatting laws in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act and for decent homes for everyone. All donations and enthusiasm welcome! c/o 2 St Pauls Rd, London N1 2QN. Tel: 0171 226 8938

ADVISORY SERVICE FOR SQUATTERS (ASS) - legal and practical advice for squatters and homeless people. Publish Squatters' Handbook. 2 St Pauls Rd, London N1 2QN. Tel: 0171 359 8814. Office open Monday - Friday, 2-6pm.



Councils to Publish Squat Lists Shock

Jim Paton on the blessings to be woven from the CJA curse.

It looks like councils and housing associations might not be too keen on using the new Interim Possession Order (IPO) procedure for evicting squatters, brought in recently under the Criminal Justice Act.

There are several reasons for this, but amongst the most intriguing is that if they want to evict, using an IPO, from a block of flats, they may have to give you a handy list of nice safe squats for your next home first.

This isn't a humanitarian concession and not at all what Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, intended when he approved of the new rules.

Here's how it works:

Say, like most squatters, you are squatting a flat on a council or housing association estate. The landlords get an IPO against you. Maybe you couldn't find a defence, maybe you didn't get it together in what could be as little as 48 hours, maybe you decided to use the time to sort your next place out instead.

To get any type of possession order - but especially an IPO - the landlords will have had to prove that they have an immediate right to possession. That means the tenancy of the last tenant must have been officially ended. A tenancy can only be ended by some definite legal act done by the tenant, the landlord or a court. It can't simply lapse, even if the tenant has died or moved away. The landlords have to prove either that they rehoused the tenant, or the tenant was evicted by a court, or handed in the keys, or they served a Notice to Quit on the tenant. What's more, the landlords must have this immediate right to possession before you moved in. It will be too late for them to start serving a Notice to Quit on the tenant after they know you are in the flat.

When they serve the actual IPO on you (that's what gives you 24 hours to leave or you could be nicked) it must be accompanied by a copy of the landlord's affidavit. If the affidavit isn't there, the IPO hasn't been properly served and you can't be convicted for failing to leave - though you might get charged. This will be the first chance you've had to see the affidavit. Grab it. It's potential gold dust! If you have already left, go back and collect it before the 24 hour notice is up. If the information in it isn't useful to you, it might be to others.

Look at paragraph 7 of the affidavit. There, the landlords have to give a list of the names and addresses of all the other tenants in the same building. It could be over 100 in a big block. These will be the tenants shown in their records. In real life you'll often find quite a few flats listed as having tenants that are actually empty. The grottier the estate, the more likely this is. **THEY ARE THE FLATS FOR YOUR HANDY HIT LIST!** You know for sure the landlords haven't got an immediate right to possession because they say so themselves. You will be able to see off any attempted IPO and the landlords can't even use the old anti-squatting procedure without ending the tenancy first, which they usually forget to do and waste months getting it right.

Don't be put off if the flats listed as having tenants have also been caged up by the very same landlords. It just means the left hand of the bureaucracy doesn't know what the right hand is doing. Anyway, it's paper that counts in these games, not real life. The steel door might get sort of lost, but let's make sure the paper doesn't!



20th Anniversary Appeal

Two squatting milestones will be reached in October:

- ASS will be 20 years old! That's 20 years of providing a daily legal and practical advice service to squatters and homeless people all over England and Wales; helping them to fight court cases, campaigning, dealing with the media and publishing *SQUATTERS' HANDBOOK*. Watch out for anniversary events.
- The 10th edition of *SQUATTERS' HANDBOOK* will be launched, fully updated with details of the new laws and how to avoid them, as well as many other wheezes. The 9th edition was reprinted 9 times, selling an incredible 27,000 copies, and proving the need for this unique publication.

The new laws mean that ASS's work in explaining them, monitoring what's happening, and helping people to fight back is more vital than ever.

BUT WE ARE SKINT

ASS is run by a voluntary collective, but it still costs about £6,000 a year. That includes £1,500 for a rented office, which gives the whole squatting movement a guaranteed, stable contact point. We have to buy expensive law books to keep our advice up to date, and phone bills, postage, fares etc take most of the rest.

Thanks to an appeal last year, we have a decent computer which is being used to log all uses of the CJA against squatters and will be essential for the very quick affidavits needed to fight IPOs. Unfortunately, this has just suffered a £700 trashing from chip-thieves. It's going again and the insurance will pay - eventually - but we're left with a cash-flow crisis just when we need the money to front up the new handbook and get a fax so that squatters can get their IPO summonses to us quickly and we can get papers back to them.

All that's on top of a shortfall in our ordinary running expenses. We get about £2,000 in from regular donations and have to rely on benefits and casual donations for the rest. *SQUATTERS' HANDBOOK* is kept at a deliberately friendly price, so it does little more than break even.

CAN YOU HELP?

ASS urgently needs:

- One-off donations.
- Regular donations. Several housing co-ops already support us in this way, but we need more. £10-100 every month isn't a lot for a rent-collecting co-op, but very valuable to us. A "respectable" front name is available if needed.
- Offers to put on benefits or help from people willing to work on this. Ring us if you can help: 0171 359 8814, 2-6pm Monday - Friday



Andy Drysdale

LOFTY TONES

Tony Allen - Global Village
Idiot says: "Nuclear power is
clean, safe and good for jobs."

It was dusk at the Glastonbury Festival, all over Tent City festoons of lights were going on: everywhere wax torches, candles and camp fires were being lit, and in the venues stage lighting rigs switched on. Back stage at the cycle-powered Rainbow Dragon tent in the Green Futures field something approaching panic was building - alternative boffins scurried about with electrical screwdrivers, soldering irons and mumbling the occasional prayer to the Goddess while a packed audience sat out front in relative darkness expectantly awaiting a set by high-tech guru, Banco de Gaia.

In a corner of the auditorium nine willing volunteers were pedalling away optimistically - as many others had done before them - donating their leg power for the common good. Nearly an hour had slipped by. I walked on stage to make yet another apology - an MC lit by maglite from an obliging punter in the front row: "Sorry about the delay folks. Bear with us eh?" And then, with mock bravado, I added: "If this works we can definitely abolish nuclear power."

There are some things I instantly regret having said and that was one of them - tempting fate or what? Behind me roadies were fiddling with lengths of cable, synthesizer plugs and flickering computer screens. The stage resembled a technician's convention in a Rumbelows showroom. Why I wasn't introducing an acoustic diddly band was beyond me. Perhaps we should abolish nuclear power AND Banco de Gaia. I went out for a breath of fresh smoke, sat down and skinned up pondering the flames of an open fire.

Nuclear power and the whole process of producing it is an obscenity. The sheer magnitude of what is being forced to happen is simply not natural in our neck of the Solar System, and anyone who says otherwise should be shipped off to experience life on the surface of the Sun for a fortnight. And nuclear waste, which is literally endless bad vibes from lots of old heavy metal, is a ludicrous problem impossible to solve.

Nirex, the government's nuclear bin men are in business with just that brief: Dump the stuff somewhere and then publicly blag on about how everything they're doing is safe, clean and good for jobs. It's about time someone called their bluff. If it's so safe why can't we all look after it? At a price! There's at least five million of us: unemployed, unemployable, struggling artists, students, part-timers and the 57 varieties of space cadet - who could do with 200 quid a week. We're all capable of looking after a sturdy lead box in the back garden or the bottom of the wardrobe, or perhaps even in a community vault? Whatever? We can work out the details later. Just so long as we establish the principal and get a good rate for the job. Shout it from the rooftops! Print the T-shirts - Yes In My Back Yard! It's completely safe, the government says so.

A loud cheer burst from the Rainbow Dragon Tent, freshly illuminated behind me, and the ambient strains of Banco de Gaia throbbed into the night Air.

Last Friday of the month.

"Why are you shaking hands with all these taxi-drivers?" I was asked on a recent critical Mass demo. "Making new and interesting friends" was the snappiest reply that I could come up with, while keeping fairly close to the truth. I only go on demos to meet my friends and have a bit of a laugh, and on the previous month's action there were several examples of taxi-drivers and cyclists seriously losing their sense of humour. When they started smacking each other about, I'd got myself involved as a sort of UN blue berry peace keeper... and was about as much use. Very frustrating! This time I'd decided to get lateral. I approached every taxi stuck in the traffic jams and informed the cabbie that we were doing it for all of them. "When we've finished, the streets of Central London will be the exclusive domain of buses, cyclists and taxi-cabs. Imagine it man - clear streets and lots of fares!" Surprisingly, less than half of them conformed to stereotype and, if they bothered at all to lower their windows, bluntly snarled something predictable; but the majority (about 40) agreed with what I was saying and readily shook my hand. Some of them were ahead of the game and chatted away dropping phrases like 'integrated transport policy' into the conversation. One of them even promised to bring his bike on the next demo. I omitted to tell them they'd have to paint their cabs green, cut the fares by half and convert their diesel engines to run on chicken shit. But one thing at a time eh?

Tony Allen appears every Thursday night at the Performance Club, Smithy's Wine Bar, Leeke St, Kings Cross.



**C.J.A. BIRTHDAY BASH, FRI NOV 3RD,
ROCKET, HOLLOWAY RD, LONDON, N7.**

To mark the first anniversary of the
**CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC
ORDER ACT**

Friday November 3rd 1995

at the ROCKET, Holloway Road, London N7
8pm-6am

A benefit for WANGO RILEY TRAVELLING STAGE
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RANT AND RAVE - A REAL TRIBAL GATHERING

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A NIGHT OF FESTIVAL MAYHEM

**PAIN, MANUMAYA, TOFU LOVE FROGS,
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CHILL: **THE OTHER BROTHERS, DJ SEED AND
THE BRIDGE, GABY (KISS FM), SEXY RUBBER
SOUL (ZERO GRAVITY), JONNY ROCKET.**

DECOR: **MIZBEHAVIOUR, SHAMBALA, TASH,
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ADMISSION is £9 (£6 cones).
COME EARLY STARTS 8pm

This issue's Gem from the muddled media waters comes from Jay Griffiths and an article entitled "Life of strife in the fast lane" appearing in the Guardian second section August 23

It's the JEWEL IN THE MUD AWARD

Take the cow: it can be hard to understand the deification of the cow in Indian villages. But pause. In westernised Delhi or Bombay, amid the fizzing pandemonium of the fast lane, watch the awesome cow in awesome slowness chew. Then you know.

Speed is something of a holy cow to modern westernised cultures. On the international foreign exchange markets, up to £200 million can be turned over in a little more than a minute. News media can communicate events all but instantaneously. Computers can perform 307 gigaflops per second. Transport policies sacrifice any number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest to it, and Brands Hatch is a temple to it....

In a socially competitive.....world, speed is an index to status. The poor travel more slowly; their time is considered less valuable. They are overtaken by the rich and powerful, who are not to be kept waiting; for them the fastest cars, high speed trains and plane shuttles. Oh what transports of elites.

Besides competition, Mark Marchant (professional racing driver at Brands Hatch) articulates another attraction of speed: control. "Being on the ragged edge of the limit of control is exciting. You're not far away from the ultimate of not being in control.".....

The foreign exchange market is a speed-conscious place, and talking to one dealer at HSBC Midland in London is like meeting Lewis Carroll's White Rabbit. Hyperalert, fast of speech, eyes darting and breath jerky, he is high on speed, but he takes no drugs; the job is drug enough.... He says he is "addicted to adrenalin", works "in hypermode", and admits "if you don't enjoy the rushes, you can't do the job". He is a man in love with speed. He describes his faults as speed-related: being easily frustrated by people, short-tempered and intolerant. His personal calls last, on average, five seconds. Are his friends intimidated by the speed he's going at? "Maybe, yes, but half the time I don't notice. I'm going too fast."

Personal relationships need to develop over time, with time, and speed destroys them, even while it provides a substitute. Speed itself is the hallucinatory friend. Speed stimulates, speed stops you feeling bored or lonely. If you can do a ton up on the motorway while eating chocolate, who needs sex?....

Speed adversely affects language; at speed you can afford no margins of irony, no space for play. Fast language is a faddy fashion victim, buying buzz words, flavours of the month, over-used, worn out and discarded. Verbal speeding short-changes language.... For the sake of efficient, streamlined transmission, you lose

intuited, allusive nuances. Speed insists on the cliché, the verbal path well beaten, the motorway. Language wants to take the scenic route, but freedom to roam is made a trespassory offence and language is taken prisoner by speed, let out only occasionally on parole.

Skim-talking and skim-reading promote skim-thinking. Thoughts summoned at speed are likely to be not the best thoughts but simply the first, the habitual response, thoughts automatic as opposed to thoughts idiomatic, reflective or ruminative.....

Fast travel is a kind of visual consumerism, offering constant replacement of one view with ensuing, newly identical, views. Travel replicates the model of consumer desires; once first wishes are met, desires must be augmented. As John Whitelegg (director of Ecological Ltd, an environmental and transport consultancy) says: "People consume the benefit of speed by spending it on distance." Transport studies show that time saved in one journey is used to make additional journeys not previously considered, mainly in cars. But as Whitelegg points out: "The congestion costs which motorists impose on others are not borne by car drivers.".....

Car drivers get their benefits - speed and comfort - paid for by other road-users in the coin of fear, injury, pollution and congestion. Emotionally, fast drivers get the excitement of speed while their passengers feel the drawbacks; anxiety and powerlessness. There is an analogy with westernised economic structures, where those in the financial driving seat get the rewards of the system, while the dispossessed, without access to the controls, suffer the pain of job insecurity and poverty.

Signs are that many passengers are suffering speeding sickness, and these dizzy dissidents of speed are calling for the vehicle of society to slow down, most wisely and wittily in the road protest movement. Environmentalists see our pace far outstripping nature's speed - we pollute far

faster than nature can clean, and we plunder more than it can renew.....

Our children's survival..... depends on our judicious, and speedy, use of the brakes. The trouble is that the car is being driven by a 17-year-old, hooked on speed, seeing the world's resources as something to be used up before anyone else gets to them.....

(Modern, western society) is a culture ignorant of the past and viciously refusing to plan for the future, respecting not the old, cherishing not the young. Its exports are adolescent: fast cars, fast food, fast talk, fast bucks. Fast in everything, puerile and premature, modern westernised culture could never have produced the Karma Sutra, would never pause to consider the point of orgasm maintained for hours. In contrast to the duration of love, and the love of duration, the West's great love-affair is with obsolescence. Jeune in its desire for speed above subtlety, it crashes up through the gears, cornering too fast, flinging grit in the eyes of the ancient cow, in ancient slowness chewing. In rumination still.

SO



John Cunningham

NETROGRESSIVE

SQUALL can proudly proclaim the birth of the SQUALL World Wide Web site. Situated at pHreak, who have very generously provided us with free space, SQUALL can be reached at:

<http://www.phreak.co.uk/SQUALL/>

Although fairly small to begin with, SQUALL's web site will quickly build up to become a useful information resource for Internet Itinerants (I and I's) and Subculture "Surfers". Highlights of the Web Site are a selection of articles from SQUALL 10, key articles from SQUALL 11 and up and coming SQUALL events. Perhaps the most important aspect of the site is its ability to publish up to the minute news stories and coverage of events as they happen. This will enable SQUALL to provide a greater frequency of information bulletins and keep I and I's at the cutting edge of current issues. There is also a set of SQUALL "hotlinks", which provides access to many other websites of interest. For example, there is a link to the Free Abu Jamal homepage, the McLibel site and the Zion Train web pages. If you come across any sites that you feel are important of have any comments about the site, please e-mail us: SQUALL@pHreak.intermedia.co.uk, or me personally on the site below.

P.S. In the last issue, I made reference to a cryptographic program (SQUALL 10, p38 'Anonymous Remailer'). I stated that this program is illegal in the UK. Well, I was wrong!! You can obtain it at the following site: <ftp://sable.ox.ac.uk/pub/crypto/pgp/>

- Ben Schneider: B.P.Schneider@city.ac.uk

Masons, Cyberspace and Gifted Anarchists

Writing on the potentials of the Internet, the ever-candid Alan Clark, ex-Defence Minister and one of the richest politicians in Britain, has continued his legacy of up front revelations.

Clark, he of multiple sexual indiscretions, has recently undergone somewhat of a proverbial revelation on the road to Damascus. Previously from a well-right-wing (but honest about it) persuasion, he has recently found religion and is occasionally to be found standing with the anti-animal exports protesters, shouting at veal lorries. Logging onto the internet as a comparative rookie, he noted the large amount of child pornography:

"I must say it did occur to me that the resources of Special Branch and MI6 which, we are told

with not a little complacency, can now be switched from the Cold war to the surveillance and intimidation of all those innocent and sweet-natured young people who are concerned about the export of veal calves, might be better employed in the - apparently very simple - task of genning up on the paedophiles. But perhaps this can't happen because of the Freemasons. Blast! Now I come to think of it I should have explored the possibility of a masonic 'site.'" (Guardian 16/9/95)

Go on there with the revelations Alan. He concludes his observations on the possible saviours of cyberspace:

"There are malign political and industrial forces who will be seeking to assert control. And the only hope for the systems' viability is the gifted anarchist and the untraceable virus."

Here is an updated listing of organisations/individuals appropriate to SQUALL's interests. It is unlikely that it will cover everyone's interests. If you have any others, please e-mail me at SQUALL.

N.B. For new users of the Net, it is absolutely vital that the e-mail/web addresses are replicated identically; otherwise you will not get where you want to go! This means not leaving spaces and putting in upper or lower case letters exactly as you find it!!

McLibel Listserv: (maintains info regarding the McLibel Trial),
e-mail: majordomo@world.std.com
In the subject line: leave blank Body of message: subscribe mclibel. Enquiries: coniberr@cs.man.ac.uk

Criminal Justice Act Site (maintains lots of info regarding the CJA):
an205200@anon.penet.fi

Footballers Against the CJA: ffcja@urban75.demon.co.uk

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (Bath University info resource):
bs2ajs@midge.bath.ac.uk

Cambridge Anti-CJA: tgs1001@cam.ac.uk

Scottish Free Festival and Environmental Network: as27@cityscape.co.uk

Spunk Press (anarchist publisher): jack@cw.nl

Animal Rights Resource Site: dgraft@gate.net

Zion Train: zion@onelove.demon.co.uk

pHreak (dialup bulletin board service and Internet Provider):
spiderman@pHreak.intermedia.co.uk

Anti-Nuclear French Testing: stop_nuclear_testing@gcl.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp

SEED (site for anarchist information): L.Schuller@city.ac.uk

Statewatch (State and civil liberties in the UK and Europe):
STATEWATCH-OFF@geo2.poptel.org.uk

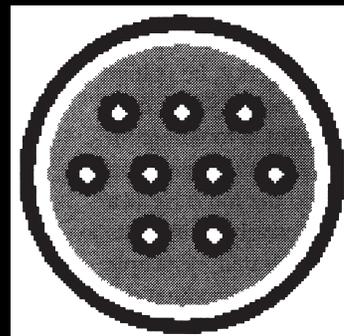
Censorship and the Internet: paul@dis.strathclyde.ac.uk

Green Action (Glasgow based environment group): greenaction@gn.apc.org

No M11 Link (Does as it says!): nom11link@gn.apc.org

schNews (Brighton based hard-copy and e-journal): justice@intermedia.co.uk

Full-On Access



pHreak Internet

The bulletin board for the rest of us now has a fully loaded connection to provide you with a pHreak Internet account - So if you want an Internet provider like no other, and be on the coolest bulletin board besides, then there is no alternative...
Log in - pHreak out - call us for details

bbs-direct
0171 434 3800

bbs-IP
192.129.172.23:3000

web
<http://www.pHreak.co.uk>

e-mail
internet@pHreak.co.uk

voice
0171 434 3315

Letter from New Zealand

Glyn Walters, South-Pacific Greenpeace Press Officer, sends us some reasons for the international radioactive heat over French nuclear testing.

“Moruroa and Fangataufa: it's only paradise if you don't live there.”

Moruroa, in the Maohi language of Polynesia, means the Place of the Great Secret. Today this is a cruelly appropriate name for this once incredibly beautiful palm-covered atoll in the Tuamotu Islands, French Polynesia. For here, and at nearby Fangataufa atoll, the French government have carried out 44 atmospheric and more than 130 underground nuclear test explosions since 1966. Now, after a 4 year moratorium, the new President of France, M. Chirac has outraged Pacific and world public opinion by announcing a resumption of nuclear testing.

The health impacts of nuclear weapons testing has long been the subject of major controversy. An independent health study of French Polynesian people has never been carried out and military health records of test site workers have not been released. However, radiation from the atmospheric tests has been detected as far away as New Zealand, and according to testimonies from Polynesians and workers at the sites, rates of cancer, birth abnormalities and other illnesses have all increased since testing began.

Similarly, no rigorous, independent studies of the environmental effects of testing have ever been permitted. Several scientific missions to Moruroa, all of which had severely limited access to the site, have raised serious questions about the atoll's ability to contain its radioactivity. It is, in effect, a huge, unregulated radioactive waste dump.

Caesium 134 and iodine 131 were found in the central lagoon during Jacques Cousteau's 1987 study, indicating leakage was occurring. In 1991, the International Atomic Energy Agency (of all people!) found elevated levels of plutonium 12 miles from the atoll. Other studies have questioned the geological stability of the atoll (a former volcano), and Cousteau himself filmed spectacular underwater cracks and submarine landslides caused by the testing. He said the atoll was suffering 'premature and accelerated ageing'. The threat of widespread radioactive contamination of the whole Pacific marine environment appears to be a very real possibility, and all it may need is one more nuclear test...

Since 1972 and the first Greenpeace actions at Moruroa, activists from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific have been physically protesting at the site by sailing small yachts into the test zone and taking on the full might of the

French military. This has given Greenpeace a special relationship with ordinary people in the region, a relationship that is older and very different to its European operations. The embarrassing world focus that these early actions brought forced the French government to finally move its nuclear tests underground in 1974.

New Zealand and Australia also took France to the World Court in 1973; the court decided France was acting illegally, so France promptly refused to recognise the World Court decision. The same countries have just re-opened that Court case, with the support (so far) of four Pacific states: Western Samoa, The Solomons, The Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia.

The death of Fernando Pereira, killed when French Secret Service agents blew up the Rainbow Warrior in Auckland harbour in 1985, was a major turning point for the anti-nuclear movement in New Zealand and the rest of the Pacific. It shocked the world and cemented New Zealand's now well-established anti-nuclear policy into place. Appropriately, the final campaign of the original Rainbow Warrior had been to relocate the residents of Rongelap atoll, contaminated by US nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands in the 1950's. The US had ignored their pleas for help.

Today, in 1995, 10 years since that outrage, the new Rainbow Warrior has been protesting at Moruroa. On July 10 the ship was boarded, rammed and the crew tear-gassed by the French military, pictures of which were shown all over the world. All those crew arrested gave their names as "Fernando Pereira" in respect to his memory. In a large scale repeat of earlier sailings, an international Peace Flotilla of two dozen small boats accompanied by a New Zealand Navy ship sailed the 3,000



Photos: Greenpeace/Morgan

miles through tough, wintry seas to the atoll, to support the Greenpeace boats' protest.

These peaceful protesters need all the support they can get to stop the French military and the other nuclear weapons states waiting in the wings from restarting the nuclear arms race and returning to the bad old days of the Cold War. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty must be signed next year, before France and China give the other nuclear weapons states (the UK, US and Russia) the excuse they need to avoid signing it and to begin nuclear testing again themselves. Incidentally, the UK government is the ONLY Commonwealth country not to have condemned France; all in all, 154 countries are opposed to renewed French testing. The latest polls in France itself show over 60 per cent opposition to the tests.

Squall readers can show their solidarity with the avowedly anti-nuclear peoples of the South Pacific by giving the French authorities in Europe as much grief as possible over the coming months. They fully deserve it.



French commandos board the Rainbow Warrior II



Photos: Greenpeace/Morgan



The Post Bag

Letters to SQUALL

If you have any comments on the content of the magazine or wish to add a few of your own write to:
SQUALL PO Box 8959, London. N19 5HW

Eating the City

Dear Squall,

I am writing to tell you about a project I am starting called Growing Food in Cities.

This has several aims: to research what urban food-growing activities are already going on (in city farms, community gardens, allotments, private gardens, window boxes, derelict and, schools etc) so that people can get in touch with each other, share ideas and so on.

Another aim is to look at the potential of food growing for greening the environment, putting people back in touch with the land, education, improving health, economic sustainability (linking with LETS, food co-ops etc) and community development.

I'm hoping to find out about a wide range of people - pensioners, ethnic groups, school projects, prisons, travellers, employed people, unemployed people and anyone else I come across. I'll also be dealing with the issue of land rights, planning law and city design.

By the end of the first

year, we should have a document which will actually help people who are interested to set up agricultural projects and something which we can wave in the face of policy makers saying "Look, this is what is already happening. These are the benefits which come out of these projects. Support more such activities."

There will also be a "how to" guide to dealing with matters such as getting funding, finding land, getting equipment and so on.

The project is managed by the SAFE Alliance and the National Food Alliance, both charities working in food, agriculture and health issues.

Yours sincerely

Tara Garnett
SAFE Alliance
National Food Alliance

Vox Populi on the Tip

Dear Squall,

Issue 10, page 38, the system in the photo is Vox Populi's at Hollow Ponds

Epping Forest '94 NOT Desert Storm! But total respect to those D-Storm types, they're 'avin it.

As for Vox Populi, well they're still going, 'though at reduced power - police confiscated/smashed the rig and assaulted four crew (one person left the police station bleeding from their ears and was still deaf three weeks later) during the May 14th activities.

Anyhow, after a brilliant gathering at Ditching Beacon after the Brighton Urban Free Festy (Aug 5) crew morale is back to 110 per cent. So offers of help, tat, wonga! VENUES gratefully received - messages 0181 694 6477.

Vox Populi is an attitude.

Alex

Clark Defender

Dear Squall,

In the last issue you had an article about Culture cash-ins on Raves and Festivals (Squall 10).

It is an appropriate story because this kind of thing happens often but in one

case I'm certain you picked the wrong target in Fraser Clark.

I can't say I know him as well as his co-workers at Megatripolis but since 1990 I've seen him as an important catalyst in building a politicised youth consciousness with little thought to his personal finances.

He was for years publisher of Encyclopaedia Psychedelia and put on numerous Zippy Picnics and organised a large LSD Bike Ride in Hyde Park.

At his Evolution Playshops he invited speakers such as Terence McKenna, Timothy Leary and Rupert Sheldrake. All such activities were forerunners to many FN events, (and non-profit) Your article didn't say if Fraser walked away with £5,000 or £50,000 when he flew west to carry on his 'work' but it's not as if he bought a flash car or something.

He would be the first to point a finger at people who are only in it for the money as evidenced by his being withdrawn from the Glastonbury Program in 1990 for asking awkward questions.

Barry New
The Ecology Co.
Sheffield

Doing the Demos

Dear Squall,

My wife Jose and myself are a bit long in the tooth for demos but we find it's a great day out. You get to make the news instead of seeing it through a right-wing haze. When they do bother to report and we've been on the demo its hardly recognisable.

The one that you reported "this land is ours" was excellent. Squall is a damned good read, my brother Eric recommended it to me - I'm the supplier of the grapes that make him so feisty (Fruit of the Earth, Squall 10).

We're waiting for the Reclaim the Streets at Islington which we went on. When we converged on Kings Cross tube Jose was a bit worried at the crush and the police trying to stop individuals getting through. She wanted to go home, I pointed out there was no choice but to follow the crowd. I'm glad we did, we had a great day.

Regards,

Peter Hickson
Cheam
Surrey

CONTACTS

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 from 2-6pm every day. Tel: 0171 359 8814.

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: fimone@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 518 8222.

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.

Institute of Race Relations (IRR) - Educational charity. Collects and disseminates information about racism throughout the world and publish the European Race Audit quarterly: 2-6 Leeke Street, Kings Cross Road, London WC1 9HS. Tel: 0171 837 0041.

Refugee Council - Helps refugees and asylum seekers : 3 Bondway, Bondway House, London SW8 1SJ. Tel: 0171 582 6922.

Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare and Civil Rights : 8, Hall Road, Averley, Essex. Tel: 01708 868986.

Justice? - Anti-CJA networking group and producers of 'Schnews', wikid weekly newsheet. c/o On The Fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton, E. Sussex. Tel: 01273 685913. e-mail: Justice@intermedia.co.uk

Reclaim The Streets - Highway hold-ups 90s-style. RTS, Battlebridge Centre, Battlebridge Road, Kings Cross, NW1. Tel: 0171 713 5874

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.

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.

CoolTan - In the process of moving...

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.

Freedom Network - Dishes out info on NVDA actions and events. Main tel: 0171 582 3474. Action line: 0171 793 7343

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.

75A Collective - Good, cheap vegan cafe open Wed-Sun 7pm onwards. Squat centre. Kids day, video nights, Spanish lessons, women's group, workshops. Ideas and cooks welcome: 75A, Mildmay Park, London N1.

The Land is Ours - Campaign for land rights and free access: Box E, 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RQ. Tel: 01865 722016.

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>

Campaign Against The Arms Trade (CAAT) - Publishes information and co-ordinates vigils and demonstrations against arms sales and the secrecy of who's

buying: 11, Goodwin Street, London N4 3HQ. Tel: 0171 281 0297.

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.

McLibel Support Campaign - Supports one of the stances of the century. Information dispersal to the wider jury, c/o London Greenpeace, 5, Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX. Tel: 0171 713 1269.

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.

Conscious Cinema - Monthly video round-up of protests and related social justice campaigns. PO Box 2679, Brighton BN2 1UJ. E-mail: Cinema@Phreak.Intermedia.Co.UK.

Camcorder Action Group - see Small World

Festival Eye - An excellent mag that keeps on running. The latest 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.

Mersey FIN - 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.

Oxford - 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.

equal standing.....

**“If we can’t sit at the table of democracy we’ll
knock the fucking legs off.”**

James Forman 1965