

Molesworth

WINTER BLOCKADE SUCCEEDS

TWO years ago the old airfield at Molesworth, near the American nuclear bomber base at Alconbury, was an open space, looking much as it had done since the end of the Second World War. During the 1984 August Bank Holiday the Rainbow Village held a Green Gathering there, and afterwards some two hundred people stayed on, squatting the Ministry of Defence land in protest against the decision to make Molesworth the second Cruise missile base in Britain, after Greenham Common. The original People's Peace Camp had been established there in December 1981, soon after the Greenham Common Peace Camp, so there has been resistance in the area for more than four years.

We first went for the Green Gathering, and have been staying there on and off ever since the military occupation which displaced the Rainbow Village on 6th February 1985. Before that a school and community kitchen had been built, a peace chapel dedicated, wheat planted and gathered for famine relief. On that day the whole atmosphere changed. We returned that night to face barbed wire where there had been open access. The refugees went to the Old School House, being joined by supporters from all over the country. Sympathisers brought or sent help of all kinds — food, blankets, firewood, money. A new system of resistance was developed.

We kept shifts at Peace Corner guarding the guards. The weather was terribly cold, but we kept our fires going and our spirits up. At Easter CND organised a 'Meet the Base' demonstration, but unlike Burghfield two years earlier, there was no camp site and no real blockade. The weather was still cold and the ground was muddy, but thousands of people came all the same. During the rest of the year people kept walking round the perimeter, and many cut or climbed the wire and invaded the base. Despite the media bias, there was actually plenty of support from local inhabitants.

On 6th February 1986, CND organised a mass blockade at Molesworth to mark the anniversary of the military occupation. We began the day sleeping in a van on the lane leading to the original peace camp. It was just as cold as a year before, with snow and ice everywhere. We got up at 5:00am and made coffee, then joined the

50 or 60 already at the gate and waited for dawn. When the blockade began at 6:00am there were several hundred people at every gate, and about 5,000 came some time during the day.

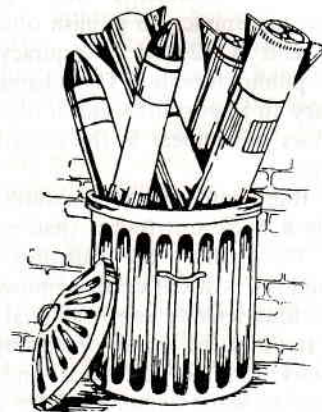
See the famous bicycle from Devon with its enormous banner carrying a doomsday clock! See the Fallout Marching Band! See the street-theatre groups! See the amazing windmill on the Green Road-show ambulance! See the reggae-dancing-nonviolent-activists!

The landscape looked like a Breughel painting. Only really determined individuals would dream of being at such a place on such a day. Of course more drastic action would have been more effective, but simply being there created problems for the army and the police. Preparations had been made for non-violent direct action with training and briefing sessions in local CND and peace groups all over the country, but in the event the authorities took the easy way out and closed the base for the day (as at Burghfield at Easter 1983).

Now there are all kinds of post-mortem discussions around the movement, and also plans for what comes next. CND doesn't seem to be considering anything at Easter this year, but is involved in discussions about a major action in the autumn, whether a mass blockade of Burghfield or Aldermaston or a 'People's Parliament' in Parliament Square in central London.

Meanwhile the pressure should be maintained at Molesworth and at its parent base, Alconbury. Visitors or help are always welcome at the People's Peace Camp, Old School House, via Kettering, Northamptonshire (where the *Molesworth Bulletin* is obtainable, £5 for one year). There are also Quaker and other religious groups at Peace Corner, outside USAF Molesworth, Old Weston Road, Brington, near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. *Rainbow Village on the Road* and *The Last Night of Rainbow Fields Village at Molesworth* are two pamphlets by Bruce Garrard, £1 each from Unique Publications, PO Box 23, Glastonbury, Somerset.

ADN



IN BRIEF

Saudi Arabia has issued a new religious decree making the throwing of Arabic language newspapers into dustbins an offence. They often include quotations from the Koran.

An Italian woman has become pregnant for the 14th time to avoid going to prison. She was sentenced to 10 months in 1975 for stealing a chicken and has had a child every year since then.

The entire prison population of San Marino has escaped. Fabio De Angelis had been arrested on charges of car theft.

The man who dug up a corpse for guidance in the weekly lottery in Malaysia has been sentenced to three months jail. He did not win.

A man in New York has been shot and critically injured after he stood on the foot of another subway passenger.

The Politics of Protest. An Indian farmer strangled his wife and four children and then killed himself by drinking insecticide to protest at government farm policies. A South Korean worker has died after setting himself on fire with petrol during a sit-in protest to demand more pay and better conditions.

Police in Bangalore, south India, were attacked and stripped naked when they tried to stop a procession of nudists.

West Germany has finally completed its legislation to introduce computer-readable identity cards and passports. Even the police are critical. The largest police union has said that the move will create 'an abyss between the citizen and the police', blur the distinction between the police and intelligence services, introducing 'a secret police through the data door' and give 'virtually nil' gains for security.

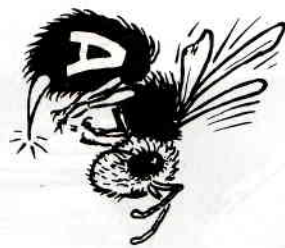
A gun shop in Los Angeles has been held legally liable for the irresponsible sale of a weapon, in this case to a woman known to be suicidal who later killed herself.

The government has agreed to a 'significant concession' in its new Public Order Bill. The police are to have power to give directions to mobs only if they contain not less than 10 people. The original plan was for three.

Rajendra Sethia, the world's largest bankrupt, has been charged with criminal conspiracy and defrauding a government-run Indian bank of £5 million. He owes £170 million in London.

Unions

BOTTOM UP IS BEST



TRADE Union ballots are not something we should worry about. Anything which forces the union bosses to obey their members is okay by us. Unlike the political parties we don't believe in rule by the few. Having the masses summoned to strike by a company of union hacks is as revolting as any other form of conscription. I only mention this because, in their anxiety to oppose Government legislation on union ballots, some direct actionists and anarchists may be tempted to abandon their bottom-up beliefs. While we can be against accepting Government money for ballots, we cannot oppose union ballots in principle when the members so clearly want them. Obviously there are other democratic methods which the workers may apply depending on the circumstances, such as the mass meeting. But in official strikes no action should be based on the sole command of a union executive for that way lies the union dictatorship.

The chilling statement of a miner who, during the last year's strike, said that 'We elected the executive and they tell us what to do' is part of a slave mentality. Elective slavery produces an elective dictatorship. It boils down to the blind power worship which Bakunin detected in the International, when he said: some workers say 'We have elected the Committee; the Committee will decide.'

Pit Strike

This problem of union ballots was a factor in the pit strike. To understand why there was no ballot let us go back to an incident which occurred at the 1983 TUC Congress, months before the strike. At that time Scargill was asked to back united action against redundancies by a leader of the Baker's Union. He refused, saying privately that he couldn't get his members to resist pit closures. Thus, well before the strike, Scargill was sceptical of the strength of solidarity of the miners on the redundancy issue.

We so easily forget that when the strike began the miner's executive held back from declaring the strike official. Then pressure built up both from the strikers and the media for the union executive to make it an official national strike. In this way the NUM executive became the victim of events as much as the perpetrator.

Clearly the executive doubted the spirit of solidarity among their own members, and this was the reason why there was no ballot on the strike. Since the strike this pessimistic view has been confirmed by Scargill, who has said a ballot of miners would not have backed a strike in 1984. The failure to call a ballot on the pit strike tells us a lot about the selfish sectionalism and lack of solidarity which is recognised as a feature of British working class life.

Disagreeable Agreements

There was a time in the 1960s when most big union leaders were pro-establishment and moderate. Those were the days; when Sir William Carron ruled the roost in the engineering union, Lord Cooper was the appointed Pope of the General & Municipal Workers Union, and Sir Sidney Greene was general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen. It was also a period of wildcat and unofficial strikes, which often took place in defiance of the union bosses themselves.

The mood of the time was summed up by Sir Sidney Greene of the NUR who told the Royal Commission of 1965-68: '... it is not much use my signing an agreement if I am doubtful of my members accepting it.' The press then used to call on unions to control their members. Editorials thundered about the 'authority' of the TUC. Press pundits urged unions to discipline their shopfloor members.

Today these same editorial columns go on about the '... hollowness of the TUC's authority.' Last December, *The Times* in an editorial declared: 'The idea of trade union governance is part of the notion that the TUC is an estate of the realm, a partner in national government, an arbiter of social contracts and the like — an outmoded notion.' No anarchist could have put it better — top-down trade unionism is doomed.

Yet it never really worked. Under both the Labour and Conservative Governments of the 1960s and 1970s the trade unions were poor instruments of State policy. Poor, because the rank and file could rubbish any deal their union bosses may make. No hard union promises could be

made as the members could pull the plug on them by taking unofficial action. It stands to sense then that in the same way the unions couldn't deliver their members and freely embrace Governments in the '60s and '70s to form a Corporate State, so they have not been able to order their members to bring down the Government in the 1980s. The British workers seem reluctant to take part in any political action, whether for or against the State.

Unpolitical Politics

In 1871, Thomas Wright said: 'In a general way the British workman's political thoughts and aspirations, though they scarcely recognise them as being strictly political, turn exclusively upon improving the position of labour in relation to capital. And this they seek to accomplish by direct action — as, for instance, by strikes and the strengthening of trade unions — and not by the establishment of entirely new social systems.'

This is still true today. But what does it mean in today's climate? While it is true that the selfishness of British workers makes them poor political pawns for any demagogue, it also undermines social solidarity. Despite mass unemployment, pay rates are rising fast. How is this possible? According to *The Times* Economics Editor, Sarah Hogg: '... management has continued to fire workers in order to pay its remaining workforce more, rather than hold down pay levels where it was worthwhile to take on extra staff.'

Sadly this sacking of workers so as to pay more wages and dividends has been a feature of our industrial life since 1981, if a report by John Hughes for the Trade Union Research Unit is to be believed.

This finding does fit with my own experience in engineering where, faced with the choice between a pay standstill and redundancies, workers often call on management to make redundancies. How can men market their mates like this? Easy! We live in a Welfare State. No-one starves on supplementary benefit, so why should workers feel responsible? Welfarism like this has smashed some syndicalist assumptions, such as 'An injury to one is an injury to all.'

Upopular Bosses

Yet if the shopfloor is responsible what about management? It has been argued that when workers do have control over management they tend to spend the profits rather than invest them. This year John Hughes of Ruskin College, Oxford, reports that companies are not investing their increased profits, and reckons that manufacturing investment between 1981 and 1984 fell short of renewing productive assets by £5.5 billion.

This corresponds with my own observations on the shopfloor. When during pay

negotiations in 1981 the shop stewards at Holcroft Castings, Rochdale, (part of the Renold Group) tried to ask management about the high company dividends they refused to answer. Apparently the worker's pay had to be restrained but shareholder's dividends could roar ahead. This open handed policy to shareholders helped create almost 4,000 redundancies at Renold. The net losses of £13.1 million in 1982 were recently described by William Kay in *The Times*, as being '... thanks in no small measure to continued ordinary dividend payments during that period of £4.8 million.' A case of the shareholders strangling the company with the management's blessing.

It is this two faced style of management in which the company freely forks out to shareholders, while demanding restraint on the shopfloor that is disillusioning workers. A current Mori poll shows that 'shopfloor workers believe that there is a big need to improve the quality of management.' Few on the shopfloor have a good word to say for management, because English workers have to cope with the boss's blunders at first hand.

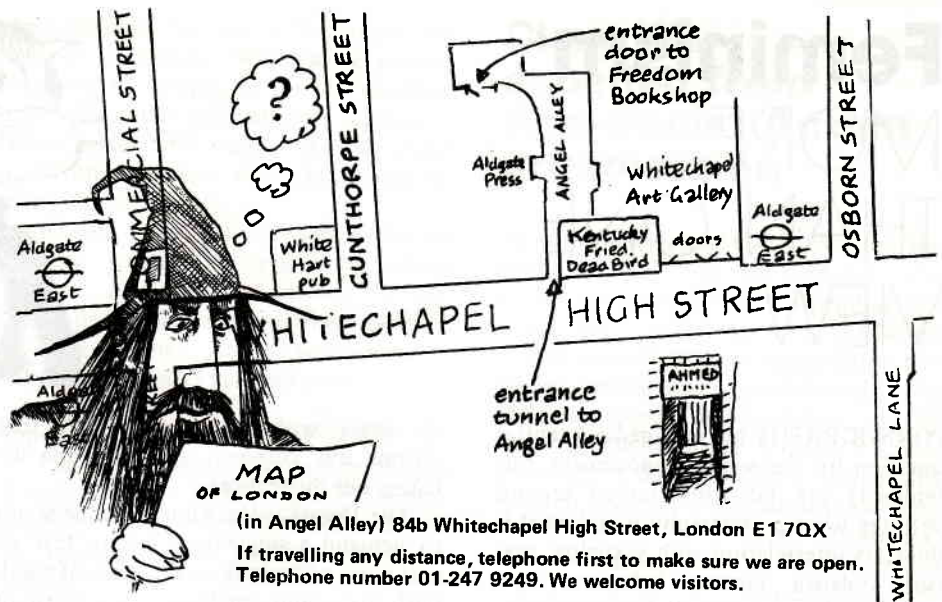
Of course modern 'Macho Management' is not designed to get shopfloor approval. Small wonder the Mori poll shows 'far fewer workers believe what their company tells them.'

In the end management control from the top can only work with a mixture of force and fraud. Today, while workers are held in check by unemployment, there is stalemate on the shopfloor. What must be worrying the Government is that if unemployment falls industrial militancy will break out.

In practice there are two main methods by which bosses and Governments handle labour: one is the fashionable macho-management of McGregor and Edwards, already mentioned, which is described by Robin Smith of Durham University as '... the obvious desire to increase management's control over labour' – management by brute force. The other, less obvious, ploy is for the union bosses to become the manager's accomplices. For as Norman Willis, TUC general secretary, put it: 'There is no alternative to union/management cooperation to keep Britain from plunging over the industrial abyss.' This is management by con trick.

Neither method is sound because they are both based on top-down management manipulation of labour. Democratic control of the firm from the bottom-up is never really considered. It took us hundreds of years to learn that slave labour was bad labour. How long will it take us to discover that boss management is bad management?

Brian Bamford



FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

THE Freedom Bookshop has been at its present location since 1968, along with *Freedom*, the Freedom Press, the Aldgate Press, A Distribution and all the various organisations and periodicals which have been using this address. But it is still easy to make the journey to East London, get out of the train or bus at Aldgate or Aldgate East, manage to find Angel Alley in the middle of Whitechapel High Street, and still not venture down the dark and dingy entrance, overlooked by shabby shops and now the recently rebuilt Whitechapel Art Gallery.

However, we have done what we can to make the final stage just a bit easier, with a sandwich-board out in the street, a sculpture opposite the Gallery cafe, signs in the alley, and soon a banner outside our door. Meanwhile the bookshop has been reorganised so that it is staffed by voluntary workers for nearly the whole of seven days a week (but do telephone before coming to make sure we are open), and we have acquired some new stock, especially cheap paperbacks. (By the way, it is now possible to get almost any paperback in print within a few days, so don't be discouraged if you can't find something – get in touch with us and see what we can do.)

We have copies of some of the basic texts of anarchism, such as William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (£4.95) and Peter Marchall's new compilation *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin* (£3.50); a new edition of Peter Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* (£3.60) and the old one of *Mutual Aid* (£4.95). It would be good to have more of these, and the forthcoming Freedom Press publications should have some pleasant surprises.

Tony Hall's *Nuclear Politics: The*

History of Nuclear Power (£3.95) is an important new Pelican Book, documenting the relations between the various official organisations. Michel Foucault's *Discipline or Punish: The Birth of Prison* (£4.95) is a brilliant analysis of our 'universities of crime'.

We have several literary classics – such as Tolstoy's *Anna Karenin* (£2.95) and *War and Peace* (£4.95) and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (£1.75) and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (£1.95).

Mildred Loomin's *American Alternatives* (£3.00) is an early account of ecology and liberation. Murray Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom* (£6.95) is hard but necessary reading; rather easier is *Toward an Ecological Society* (£4.95). Denis Pym's *The Employment Question* (£2.00) is a new argument for 'self-employment' rather than 'full employment', a positive consideration of our position in a post-industrial society.

We still have George Woodcock's *Anarchism* (£3.95), probably the most widely read book on the subject since it appeared in 1962, and Burnett Bolloten's huge masterpiece on *The Spanish Revolution* (£7.50).

Do come and visit the bookshop if you can. You will get a warm welcome, and even a free cup of hot coffee if you want, and you can enjoy a browse and a chat. If you can't make the journey, make use of our mail order service for all your book needs. Just send a list of what you want with the cash. If ordering from Great Britain add 10% for postage and packing, and if ordering from abroad add 20% (minimum 20p). Make cheques in sterling payable to Freedom Press. And a full list of current titles may be obtained if you send an A4 stamped addressed envelope.

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