

Jr. Cops and Anti-Nukers

anon.

1979

The article which follows was originally produced as a leaflet and distributed at the Monroe anti-nuke demonstration on June 2nd, 1979. The Monroe demo was itself even more frustrating than the Midland gathering, and has solidified for many of us involved in it our determination to undertake our own anti-nuke activities in our communities, outside of the context of the increasingly paralytic mass organizations.

While, as the article below indicates, the Midland demo was marred throughout by the actions of junior cops and aspiring politicians, the Monroe non-event was innocuous almost beyond belief, and seemed to have been designed to sap as much energy from the nascent “movement” as possible. Recognizing the efficacy of the “soft” approach, the organizers saw to it that the provocative title “marshals” was replaced by the neutral “site staffers” (though there were easily twice as many of the latter on hand as there were of the former at Midland). Recognizing also the co-opting power of a tightly-run show, the organizers provided a long day’s “entertainment” (old folkies and hack lefties) which successfully rendered spontaneous activity all but impossible; most of those present simply sat listening, applauding at the appropriate times and not realizing until it was over the completely passive role to which they had been relegated. (Even the potential for shared activity represented by a march was avoided; instead we were treated to perhaps the most ludicrous anti-nuke spectacle thus far: a mass “die-in” which would have done Jim Jones proud—the organizers seemed blissfully oblivious of the parallels—and a funeral procession—in cars!!—into the town of Monroe.) In all, the net effect of the rally was to dissipate the genuine indignation and enthusiasm of those who had mistakenly attended.

On the other side of things, one member of the Huron Alliance who had been active in the organization of the Midland March, to our surprise, praised our leaflet for revealing the seamier side of events there but insisted that the Huron Alliance was as much appalled by it as we were. According to HA member Michael Moore, all of the collaboration with the Midland Police Department had been undertaken unilaterally by the Lone Tree Council, who had even given their blessing to the cops videotaping the march (one member reportedly had hopes of getting his own cassette copy). In addition, Moore reported that the LTC member in charge of organizing the marshals was herself the wife of a cop on the Midland force!

It’s difficult to believe that all this went on without HA members at least being aware of it, but Moore insisted that LTC’s actions have engendered an “absolute split” between the groups, to the point of possible legal action between them. We’ll let them fight it out; for ourselves, we have other ideas.

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Two of the major anti-nuke groups in Michigan have been acting as police informers and as a conduit for fin-gering activists to the cops. As part of a pre-arranged policy, the Huron Alliance, centered in Flint, and the Lone Tree Council from Midland, repeatedly reported on groups and individuals to the police during the April 21 March on the Midland Nukes and continued in the role of informants in preparation for the June 2 March on the Fermi II nuclear plant in Monroe.

Both the Huron and Lone Tree organizations are committed to “peaceful, legal, non-violent demonstrations” and apparently feel that only close cooperation with the authorities can assure this. It appeared at first glance that the march was self-policed, as an immense corps of parade marshals had been assembled for the demonstration in Midland. However, it became quickly evident that their only role other than directing people to keep off of lawns was to report directly to the police any behavior they deemed improper.

From The Beginning

The march had a bad flavor right from the start. Upon arrival at Emerson Park on the outskirts of Midland, participants were asked to “register” at a Huron Alliance table and given the subsequent actions of the group, perhaps our “paranoia” about refusing to sign wasn’t misplaced. The official rally in the park, which could be heard by only a small number of those assembled due to an inadequate sound system, began to fall apart when rain started and people started chanting, “Let’s go; let’s go!” When a sizeable group began to leave the rally site to start the march without the official leadership, the nuclear politicians panicked, quickly ended the rally, and hustled to position themselves in front carrying a large banner inscribed only with the words “Huron Alliance” lest anyone forget whose march it was supposed to be.

The procession inched along at a snail’s pace for reason’s unclear to those following behind the organizers while a driving rain soaked the marchers. Out of impatience, a number of marchers (including people from this newspaper) began to march out ahead of the official group. At one point a Fifth Estate staff member heard a Huron Alliance marshal, Bruce Timmons, leaning in a Midland police squad car telling the officers inside that the people carrying “black flags were potential troublemakers.” Several of us had flags as sightings for our affinity groups, but had committed absolutely no act other than refusing to march in line. Nothing was said to us previous to being reported other than to march behind the banner.

When others learned of this snitching, a group of us confronted Timmons and demanded an explanation. Timmons said he didn’t want to discuss the matter and ran off.

Later, as we neared the rally site, a crowd comprised of U.S. Labor Party members and about 100 other right wingers were waiting and appeared to be in a menacing mood. Three of them with pro-nuclear signs on large, thick sticks infiltrated our line of march and the situation looked like violence was inevitable. One of our group approached a counter-demonstrator who was carrying a stick without even a sign on it and quietly told him that he would be clouted with a rock if he tried to attack anyone with his club. The response of the marshals to this was not to take any action against the armed counter-demonstrator, but to again go straight to the police and finger the person carrying the stone.

When a shouting match ensued between several of us and the marshals, a man with a camera who was taking pictures of all of us kept screaming that he had photographed the whole incident and the police would be given the photos. We don’t know if he was directly associated with the march sponsors, but he seemed to be and we wonder now as to the final disposition of those shots.

Finally, fearful of being victimized by a coalition of the marshals, cops and right-wingers, we beat a tactical retreat until arriving at the rally site.

“We Are The Police”

As the second rally of the day commenced, the marshals were again out in strength to rigidly enforce where people could and could not go. Challenged by one of us who accused the marshals of protecting Dow Chemical's private property and thus acting in the role of the police, one marshal from the Arbor Alliance sustained the accusation for us by stating quite frankly, “Today we are functioning as the auxiliary police.”

This role as cops and informers extended up to preparation for the Monroe anti-nuke demonstration on June 2. The planning meetings in Monroe were attended by the Monroe Chief of Detectives Otra Lynch (his real name, folks) without challenge from the convening group. At a May 23 meeting in Monroe, Pat Race, Treasurer of the Lone Tree Council, described the “trouble” they had with “anarchists” in Midland while Lynch sat in the meeting listening. Then, a woman from the Arbor Alliance told the gathering that at a marshal's planning meeting they had received advance notice that “anarchists” planned to attend the Monroe rally and “throw rocks.”

When we spoke to Pat Race in Bay City, he angrily denounced what he called the Black Flag Anarchist Collective of Ann Arbor (no such group exists to our knowledge) as “not being in tune with the non-violent mode of the demonstration.” Race asserted the marshals had “warned” those with black flags repeatedly (untrue) and that he was in agreement with “troublemakers” being reported to the police. He and his group's relationship with the police was firmly enunciated by Race's assertion that whenever anyone is seen with a rock, “We tell the police to arrest them.”

Race denied setting-up people for the police in Monroe or turning photos over to them, but his distorted account of the Midland events did not evoke enthusiasm for his assurances.

In Jeopardy From Cops and Marshals

As it stands, attendance at demonstrations sponsored by the major anti-nuke groups in Michigan puts all of those not interested in following, in robot-like fashion, every rule and plan set down by these junior politicians, in jeopardy from the police and marshals. It makes little sense for us to attend such activities knowing that a march in the wrong direction, the wrong flag or the wrong chant could mean we are fingered as “troublemakers” to the police.

Also, it may be difficult to convince these political illiterates who put such faith in the cops that it would be more than easy to use the presence of real or imagined rock-throwing “anarchists” (the world-wide boogie-word) as a justification for a police attack on the entire march.

This problem is not a new one to the anti-nuke movement, but has its origins in the style of the East Coast Clamshell Alliance, after which most of the large coalitions model themselves. Clamshell began an active policy of similar police cooperation (See the Fifth Estate, Aug. 1977) and this tactic has been adopted by at least several Michigan groups. (It should perhaps be noted that the Detroit-based Safe Energy Coalition (SECO) had no role in the police informing and the individual members reached by us seemed horrified at its report.)

Although it seems almost ridiculous to have to lecture people on the role of the police, to find a group either so stupid or so vicious that they would rely on the police to control who they brand as “undesirable” is almost mind-boggling. First and foremost, the Huron Alliance and the others must learn that although they have issued a call for a march and thrust themselves into the first row with a self-aggrandizing sign, this does not mean that the march becomes their possession. No one is under any obligation to follow anything other than their own common sense and everyone has the right to march where they want regardless of what a bunch of toy cops or junior politicians may say.

Secondly, the act of cooperation with the police to rid the march of those not following the official line of the march organizers is the crassest of political censorship and speaks to the lengths these reformers will go to enforce their world-view on the rest of us.

Boycott Or Participate?

A boycott of the large actions will be in order if the anti-nuke politicians refuse to renounce their policy of cooperation with the police which places the entire gathering in jeopardy. Their pacifism and concern for “peaceful” demonstrations is used to mask their reliance on the major force of organized violence in society—the police. It may be argued that to leave the field completely clear of criticism of these wretched reformists would be just what they prefer, but it would be equally foolish not to begin activity that we ourselves define.



Lest this appear to be a total trashing of the Midland and Monroe events, we hasten to add that there were gratifying aspects and, in fact, for many of us, the Midland March was on the whole an “up” experience. In spite of the rain and hassle from the snoids, - the opportunity to mix with folks from all over the state and share ideas and experiences with them was the high point of the day.

Some of us gave out copies of the FE as well as a leaflet we had put together for the occasion; others, done up in festive disarray as the Motor City mutants (“Mutants for Nuclear Power—Why should We Be Alone?”) ran among the crowd extolling the benefits of mutant sex and mutant life in general. At one point in the march the front of the parade mounted an expressway bridge and those of us in the front ranks got our first glimpse of the enormous crowd stretching out behind us the entire length of Midland’s main street. The wave of exhilaration which passed through all of us at that moment was matched by a spontaneous chorus of triumphant whoops and hollers.

It was moments like that which drew us to Monroe six weeks later, only to find that the forces of “organized activity” had learned their lesson and had gotten their act much more together: by then the inadequate PA system (which had barely kept the attention of the restless marchers in Midland) and the makeshift stage had been replaced with a huge structure complete with banks of P.A. speakers which effectively guaranteed complete centralization (and thus complete control) of all “significant” activity. Once the show got under way it was talkers and listeners all over again.

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Fifth Estate #298, June 19, 1979

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