

Free the Five, protect the Earth

anon.

1983

A wave of anti-anarchist hysteria, stage-managed by the government, is sweeping Canada as a result of the arrest of five Vancouver political activists accused of a “wide-spread campaign of sabotage.”

On January 20th, the five—two women and three men—were ambushed on the Squamish highway north of Vancouver by the combined forces of every law enforcement agency in the province. SWAT squads in full camouflage with riot gear, gas masks, and bullet-proof vests, came storming out of the hills and ditches to smash and tear-gas their way into the vehicle the five were driving in. The police dragged them through the broken glass and then to the ground to be handcuffed.

Julie Belmas, Ann Hansen, Gerry Hannah, Doug Stewart and Brent Taylor were charged with 14 counts each of restricted weapons possession, sabotage of a B.C. substation with nuclear connections (see June 19, 1982 FE), firebombing of three video porn outlets and various conspiracy charges including plans to sabotage a Canadian Forces base where Cruise missiles are scheduled to be tested.

The morning after the arrests Canadian front-page headlines screamed “Roundup Nets Anarchist Cell,” and press reports, quoting no one in particular declared, “The group is one of a number of loosely-knit anarchist cells with connections across Canada.” One radio station told its listeners that “an eight-month campaign of bombing across Canada came to an end today with the arrest of five persons.” All of it smacked of the Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ) hysteria of 1970 when the Canadian government used the kidnapping of a minor official as the excuse to impose martial law and crackdown on labor unions and the Quebecois nationalist movement.

In the identical fashion, police have used the West Coast bombings as well as the bomb attack on the Toronto Litton cruise missile facility as the pretext to arrest and harass peace and radical activists across Canada. As justification, the authorities have turned to their lackeys in the media to create an image in the minds of the populace, using rumor, speculation and outright lies, that a menace of national proportions has been halted. So bad has their conduct been that the Law Union of British Columbia has said that official conduct in the pre-trial period has “seriously jeopardized a fair trial” for the five.

Meanwhile, the accused, who have pleaded innocent to all charges, face an extended stay in the dungeon-like Oakalla Prison in suburban Vancouver, to await the outcome of the interminable bail process. The trial itself could last six months once it gets started—possibly in late spring or next fall.

Still, the spirits of the five appear to be high as international support for them builds. A week after their arrest they were led into a courtroom packed with their supporters and when Ann Hansen shouted, “Be strong and resist,” the court gallery burst into applause. Within a few days the phrase began appearing on buttons and spray-painted on walls all over Vancouver.

One of the many groups supporting the five is the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade, the group which took responsibility for one of the bombings the arrested are accused of—that of three Red Hot Video outlets last year. In a communique received by the *Fifth Estate* they said that “there is NO association between any of those five individuals they have behind bars now, and the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade. We would obviously not be the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade if there were men involved. Everyone except the police seem to understand such basic logic!”

The strategy of the five and their support groups is to orient their political defense around the phrase "Protect The Earth." In their first message from jail, the five (in the words of one of them said: "This case isn't about anarchy, or civil rights, or methods of struggle. It's just part of the struggle, and the important thing is to maintain the primacy of the struggle to protect the earth and strive for liberation."

Support work is now underway to raise money, prepare a legal defense, and educate the public about the case. Those interested in assisting may send contributions to:

Free the Vancouver Five Defense Group

Account No. 91740-1

c/o CCEC Credit Union

205 E. 6th Ave. Vancouver BC

Or for more information write:

Free the Vancouver 5 Defense Group

P.O. Box 48296

Bentall Station

Vancouver BC V7X 1Aa

To contact any of the five captives directly, write to them individually at:

Lower Mainland Regional Correction Center,

Drawer O, Burnaby

BC, V5H 3N4 CANADA.

Much of the preceding article was taken from the Spring 1983 issue of *Open Road*, which features a special section on the Vancouver 5; available from Box 6135, Station G, Vancouver BC V6R 4G5 and from the Defense Committee Newsletter.

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