

# State Declares War Legal

...peace illegal

Fifth Estate Collective

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What had been planned as a week-long series of demonstrations and civil disobedience at a suburban Detroit cruise missile engine plant has become the focus of the government's attempt to crush the growing anti-nuclear movement. In 1983 over 5000 persons were jailed for protests against nuclear facilities and the week of November 27-December 3 saw 51 persons arrested at the Walled Lake, Michigan Williams International Corporation for blockading the entrance to the plant. Instead of expected contempt of court charges and misdemeanor trespassing prosecutions, those arrested are facing felony counts of "conspiring to commit a misdemeanor"—ludicrous sounding on the face of it, but potent enough to send violators to prison for two years.

The anti-cruise organizers had done everything possible to provide an orderly and peaceful week, informing the police openly of their plans; and the police appeared to respond in kind.

## Cops As Safety Patrol

Those guarding the driveway entrance to the plant were cordial in their relations with the pacifists; Covenant for Peace marshals cooperated with them by reminding people to stay off company land unless they were ready to join the planned civil disobedience. When people began to leave the site each day, the cops would turn safety patrollers and direct traffic so protesters could legally cross on their way back to their own cars parked down the road. One day there was a moment of tension when detectives hustled over to a backpack left by the fence and began checking it for bombs; it turned out to be filled with apples.

By Thursday, the *Detroit Free Press* reported, "Anti-nuclear protesters and Oakland County sheriff's deputies had their moves down to a routine. After cutting five people free who had chained themselves to a mock cruise missile in front of the plant gates, Captain James Curtis asked Ken Berger of the Covenant for Peace, "Is that it for today? Can we take the prisoners' bus to jail now?"

"That shows we have some type of mutual respect for each other," Berger told reporters. "I think the deputies are seeing some kind of humor in it."

## Politeness of the Police

Indeed, everyone seemed all smiles. One cop remarked, "We're all following the script, both sides." At the end of the week, according to the *Detroit Free Press*, the protesters gave "high marks" to the police, and "the police and company praised the protesters' organization and non-violence."

All of this seemed a bit strange to those of us in attendance less concerned with the politeness of the police at the gate than with the astounding array of surveillance equipment—the omnipresent zoom tense video cameras with

Mike attachments, the suspicious looking photographers roaming the crowds and snapping demonstrators' faces for later identification—and the phalanx of mounted police with three-foot riot batons ready to ride unflinchingly into the assembled gentle protesters if given the command. And despite the fact that only a handful of people committed acts of civil disobedience each day, there were buses on hand to haul all of us away if the occasion were to arise.

As it turned out, the pleasant interaction was just a facade. The cops had been waiting to make their move all along: toward the end of the week, detectives from the Wayne County Sheriff's Department raided the Catholic church being used as the demonstrators' headquarters to seize files, leaflets and mailing lists. On the last day, just as the crowd was leaving, cops rushed out and arrested several members of the Covenant for Peace, one of the religious groups which had called the demonstrations. Jean Hutchinson, a visitor from the women's peace camp at Greenham Common, England, where cruise missiles are presently being deployed, was also arrested. All were charged with "probable cause to incite protesters to trespass, damage property and resist arrest." Later it came out that although the police spying has been prohibited in Michigan after years of civil liberties litigation, undercover State Police agents had attended open planning meetings of the pacifists to gather evidence of pre-planned civil disobedience.

## **Right to Civil Disobedience**

It is unclear whether Oakland County Prosecutor Brooks Patterson, one of this area's most detested pigs, can make the charges stick. But they represent a dangerous precedent if he is successful, effectively outlawing the right to engage in or advocate civil disobedience.

We have devoted space in this issue (see page 4) to this demonstration not because we think it ranks in importance above the hundreds that occur regularly in this country and around the world, but just simply because we were present at it and it was there that we saw the strengths and weaknesses of a process we hope will eventually engulf the war machine. We invite readers to give their opinions as well.

### **Arrest That Clown! (page 1 picture caption)**

Although a variety of tactics were employed in the attempt to blockade the driveway of the Williams International Corporation cruise missile engine plant, it was the above demonstrator that perhaps threw the cops into the biggest tizzy. The clown pranced onto the road showered with streamers, confetti and frisbies and left the police seemingly dumbfounded. They looked ludicrous in the extreme pushing and pulling this symbol of joy into the waiting paddy wagon as the crowd roared, "Arrest that clown!"



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