

Bits of the World in Brief

Fifth Estate Collective

1987

Note about cover of print edition: This follows Vol. 21 No. 2

Wisconsin draft resister Gillam Kerley, 26, was sentenced May 29 to three years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. This is the harshest sentence received by any convicted nonregistrant since the draft was reinstated by President Carter in 1980. Kerley has been an active and vocal resister whose employment by the Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD) was cited during the sentencing by Judge Shabaz, a Republican Reagan appointee.

Kerley's court battle lasted five years, and Kerley, who, when indicted pleaded "not guilty by reason of sanity," initially fought prosecution on the grounds that the government was selectively prosecuting only vocal resisters. But in the David Wayte case the Supreme Court invalidated the arguments against selective prosecution, and based on that Supreme Court decision, the circuit court ruled against Kerley. He then challenged the government to prove that he had not registered and requested information on the Selective Service's error rate. The government refused, stating that disclosure of such information was a threat to the National Security, and Judge Shabaz predictably ruled in favor of the government's position.

Prosecution of non-registrants has dropped substantially—from 13 in 1983 to one each year in 1986 and 1987. Realizing the financial impossibility of prosecuting a significant number of non-registrants, and realizing as well that it is ineffective as a tactic in pressuring others to register, the government is instead focusing on "low profile techniques" such as sending "warning letters" and relying on legislation that prohibits non-registrants from taking advantage of certain federal programs.

Kerley stated in a speech given in Madison over a year ago (and reprinted in Resistance News, Box 42488, San Francisco CA 94142, Spring 1987) that continued opposition to registration "has prevented Congress from seriously considering a draft to this day."

Letters protesting Gillam Kerley's sentence should be sent to: Judge Shabaz, 120 N. Henry St., Madison, WI 53703. Donations to assist in Kerley's appeal may be sent to: CARD Midwest Office, 731 State St., Madison, WI 53703.

Call to Action: Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant—For the last 35 years, Rocky Flats, located between Denver and Boulder, Colorado, has been poisoning the environment with the most toxic substance on earth—weapons-grade plutonium. And now the U.S. Department of Energy is pushing for a "test burn" that will lead to greatly increased on-site incineration of radioactive waste, casting the entire metro-Denver/Boulder population in the role of human guinea pigs. Rocky Flats is the only facility in the country that manufactures the plutonium trigger needed by every nuclear weapon.

Although the event will have passed by the time most readers see this article, at this writing protesters have designated August 3 through 9 as a week of action to stop this burn and to shut down Rocky Flats. A Peace Camp will be set up as an operations base and will include among other things, workshops, music, festivities, and on August 5, a commemoration of Hiroshima Day. The week will end with a peace walk, rally and a human blockade of the Rocky Flats facility on August 9.

Although sponsored by mainline peace groups, anarchists have been active at past Rocky Flats protests and urge other anti-authoritarians to participate.

For further information, write: Shut Down c/o Penny Lane, 1738 Pearl St., Boulder, CO 80302, or call: (303) 443-2822.

While the city of Philadelphia officially celebrates the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1987, area anti-authoritarians will be having their own celebration. They will be demonstrating against authority and all governmental writs of law, and they hope to make their demonstration as creative and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions or want information on the demonstration, write: Wooden Shoe Books, 112 S. 20th St., Philadelphia PA 19103, call: 215-569-2477.

From April 29 to May 3, 1987, anarchists, squatters and others participated in a combination teach-in/occupation of Tompkins Square Park in NYC. The purpose of the action was to publicize the plight of the squatters at the hands of uniformed thugs as well as to attract the homeless into considering squatting as an alternative to "shelters" or the park bench.

Due to rain and other factors, events didn't start rolling until Thursday night. We gathered and built bonfires and also cooked and ate a communal meal. We also planned events for Friday and Saturday. Unfortunately, meanwhile the cops in the ninth precinct were working out their own plans for their event.

The NYC police reserved the park band-shell for Friday where they held a pseudo-event, a "Rock Against Drugs," where apparently school children were forced to tag along with their teachers after classes, chanting moving slogans such as "Crack dealers go to jail!". We find it interesting that the NYPD should choose May Day and Tompkins Square Park (traditional center of anarchist activity) to hold their anti-drug spectacle. We were routed from the park by the cops and prevented from distributing our literature dealing with the problems of homelessness as well as proposed solutions.

By Friday evening we were able to return to the park. A teepee and shack were erected as symbols of refuge from the landlord and bureaucrat. The group was joined by many people such as radical clowns from the Barnum and Bailey Circus who showed up with food they had collected from circus workers. We sang songs and spewed propaganda until early morning. Then everyone retired to his/ her own teepee, shack, bandshell or what have you and got a pretty decent night's sleep. Then in the morning while the anarchists and squatters abandoned the park in search of coffee, the cops came and tore down both shack and teepee.

The day of May 2 was quiet as other demos were happening in different sections of the city. That night a group of around 30 had reassembled in the park and the teepee was once again erected which infuriated the police. Within 20 minutes we were facing a phalanx of some thirty police officers.

The solidarity of the group was perfect; the cops' demand for a leader was answered with "we're all leaders" and "we don't have any leaders," which seemed to confuse them. In desperation they leveled the teepee once again. By now the community had been alerted and our ranks had swollen to around a hundred.

Then in a moment of crystalline spontaneity, a decision was made to march down the busiest street of the now trendy Lower East Side. In an instant, militants became marchers, leaving the cops staring at an empty bandshell, billyclubs dangling impotently. The shout of "No Housing, No Peace" was raised by a hundred angry and harassed denizens of discontent while onlookers either stood dumbfounded or raised clenched fists as a sign of support.

After about ten minutes, the police had recovered from their initial shock and set about to cut us off at the busiest intersection of the area. Then, just as a confrontation would have happened, it just ended. The marchers disappeared into the droves of weekend debauchees and got back to the park to find that no cops had the foresight to stay behind.

The rest of the evening was spent dancing around a maypole or just amok and lauding ourselves and the community on such an outlandish success. The people had once more proven that you don't need to know what solidarity or spontaneity mean in order to live them as principles. Besides that, we had won!

—Anarchist Switchboard, 324 E. 9th Street, Lower East Side, NY

Sometime during this past winter, the National Audubon Society began packaging its slick environmental magazine in polyethylene (plastic) bags. And this, not long after printing articles on the horrors of plastics. Audubon itself has told us that plastics do not break down in the soil, are killing ocean wildlife on a huge scale due to plastic ingestion and entanglement in forgotten fishing nets and lines, and usually create harmful dioxins when burned.

Some of the magazine's readership reacted with outrage at the hypocrisy of such an action, but Audubon attempted to defend itself saying that polyethylene (in contrast to other plastics) supposedly does not create dioxin when burned and that the bag will protect the magazine from damage in the mail and bad weather.

They then suggest that subscribers put the bags to good recycled uses. But these are clearly the clever rationalizations not of truly conscious and caring environmentalists, but of big business which will find any way possible to defend its interests and its product.

One letter-writer asked why all the fuss about plastic bags when the Audubon magazine kills trees in order to publish. The editors responded frankly that they would need nine hundred southern pines, each fourteen inches in diameter which would produce the 320,000 pounds of paper used in a typical issue of Audubon.

A recent issue of *Audubon* featured a series of artistically beautiful photographs of deer. The editor's notes for this issue tell us that the photographer who had taken these shots has (what the editor considered) a particularly appealing "obsession" for "shooting" deer and had, over the past five years, taken 30,000 photographs of deer. When we think of the amount of chemicals used in the developing process and the amount of waste created, we see in the photographer's obsession a strikingly apt metaphor for environmentalism as product.

In spite of the laudable content of many of the articles in magazines like Audubon, they continue (like the uncritical editor mentioned above) to encourage a mania for production and consumerism which often blatantly contradicts the ideas their writers espouse. The financial success of the product, its growing subscription list, the mass appeal of its technically sharp and artistically clear photographs, the high quality of the paper used—these become the obsessions of the editors divorced from their supposed environmental concerns. It then becomes very easy for them to value their product to the point of packaging it in plastic (encased like a museum piece for mass distribution). And it becomes easier still for them to rationalize and defend such an action.

Speaking specifically of Audubon, perhaps we should expect no more from an environmental society which takes its name from a man who killed thousands of birds in order to draw and paint the most realistically detailed facsimiles possible. This earth and its wildlife can no longer tolerate such dangerous and wasteful obsessions.

Among the laughable and tawdry shenanigans that are electoral politics, one particularly humorous study recently came to our attention.

"Voyeurism and electoral sadomasochism," as one member of the Italian parliament put it, were responsible for the election of self-styled porn queen Ilona Staller, age 37, to parliament in May. The Radical Party ran Staller as a candidate in mockery of the electoral process. Staller played the farce above and beyond the expectations of her backers. Her campaign promise was (if elected) to invite her supporters to publicly kiss and fondle her breasts in Rome's Piazza Navona.

She was consequently elected and true to her word, Staller laid her charms bare to the crowd. Unfortunately, the repressed multitudes went into a frenzy and injured Staller and damaged a nearby fountain. Riot police used force to disperse the crowd and end the ruckus. Lucky for Staller (now in parliament and refusing to step down at the Radical Party's request), as an elected official she is immune to the several charges of obscene behavior.

Ridicule is a powerful weapon, and whatever the motives of Staller and the Radical Party, the events surrounding her election demonstrate the sadomasochistic ritual of voting and the macabre charade which is the electoral process.

Now that Michigan has "won" the competition among several mid-western states for a low-level radiation dump, other possible nuclear delights are aimed our way. A Pentagon plan to use ten American military bases to house mobile MX missiles is considering Wurtsmith Air Force Base in northern Michigan as a possible site. The 71-foot missiles, each with ten nuclear warheads, according to the Detroit Free Press, "would be kept in railroad cars that could be moved anywhere in the country during times of extreme international tension"—perhaps in the event of a full-scale invasion of Nicaragua and the internment of domestic opponents, we can't help but add.

The announcement came as a surprise to Michigan politicians, and many are already champing at the bit to get those nukes rolling up and down the rails and through their communities. Others wonder if it is "cost-effective" or about Amtrak-style accidents (there goes Bay City). Perhaps Detroit's Mayor Young will suggest they house them around the trash incinerator to hold off "environmental terrorists."

The FE has no information at this time about opposition to the MX development and would appreciate any information that our readers may have.



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