

GREENHAM COMMON PEACE SETTLEMENT

On Sunday July 4th (American Independence Day), the Peace Settlement that had been set up outside the works entrance at Greenham Common missile base issued a declaration of Independence as the 'People's Free State of Greenham'. A statement was issued saying that:

'The most serious threat to life on this planet is that of nuclear war. The most serious escalation in the nuclear arms race will be the installation of 96 American cruise missiles at Greenham Common in the autumn of 1983. Britain is the one European country that is keen to be the first with cruise. If it is stopped here, it will be stopped for the rest of Europe. This is therefore a European Peace Settlement'.

The site consists of tents, tipis, the Peace Convoy vehicles, and traders' stalls. There are tentative plans for a school, a garden, a radio station and a permanent anti cruise campaign HQ. There are plenty of drugs on site - the people there have an uncompromising lifestyle. Most describe themselves as 'travellers'; just as the women at the main gate have established a 'women's space', so these people want and need a place where travellers can stop without being harrassed.

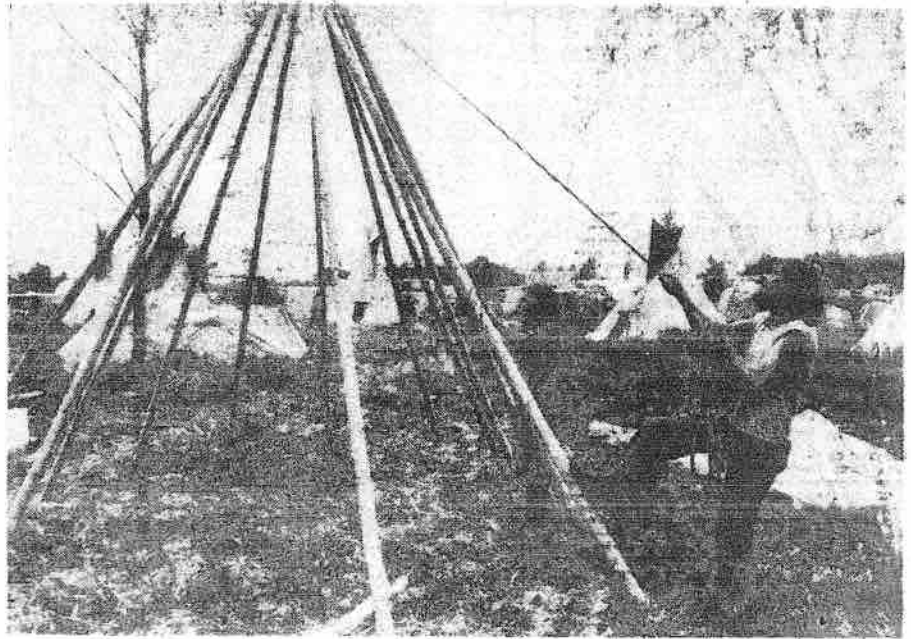
There is room around the base for half a dozen camps representing different life-styles. The important thing is for people to get there.

Representatives from the settlement addressed the CND national executive in London on July 3. CND gave their nominal support, but said funds were not available for such things as a stage and a generator.

If the settlement is to become permanent, however, the immediate need is for building materials - wood, nails, polythene, toilets - and material support is needed urgently.

Those who arrived with the convoy have had much experience at setting up camp sites regardless of officialdom, mostly to establish free festivals. They saw themselves as opening the way for others in the Peace Movement to take advantage of the space they had created. According to their daily news sheet, the 'Greenham Free Press':

'Some of us may stay only for a couple of weeks. For some of us our work was done in the taking of the site. We have come here not so much to protest at our lack of freedom,



'Tipi corner' at the settlement, Wednesday June 30th.

but to celebrate the freedom which is actually there for everyone who is prepared to reach out and grab it - to celebrate our freedom by living it.

'Others of us will be staying here. We will be staying here to maintain a camp which will be free and open to anyone who comes in peace, because we know that the might of the super-power military machine will not be stopped by a camp of 20 or 30, but only when we have a presence of 20 or 30 thousand determined people will we begin to make the impact that is necessary'.

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Green CND, who have donated £50 and set up a site office, are the only section of the movement to have responded to this call.

On Friday July 9th, two of the campers were arrested for cutting down trees for fire wood. Green wood does not make good firewood and the incident passed without much comment, until workmen on the other side of the fence brought a bull dozer to clear dozens of trees for the construction work.

This sparked off an attack on the fence which resulted in a long stretch of fencing being levelled flat - concrete posts and all - and

work on site disrupted for some time. Altogether 8 people were arrested, although many more took part in the action.

The affair led to discussion on site concerning direct action and non-violence. The consensus was that such actions should not be repeated, but that those who were arrested should not be disowned.

They were arrested by police who came on to the site after the incident and picked out the 'culprits', claiming to have photographic evidence. No one on site believed that those arrested were the people who actually broke down the fence, and yet none were allowed bail. One, however, was allowed to go free later, "because there were only 7 cells".

The US Embassy contacted national CND, claiming that the base had been attacked with petrol bombs and bows and arrows. This lie was clearly calculated to increase CND's worries about the nature of the camp, and to distance them from the campers immediately outside the fence.

In this they were successful. CND stated that the action was nothing to do with them. Joan Ruddock, who had previously accepted an invitation to visit the site the following Tuesday, now turned it down because "the position of CND is now not so

(continued ...)

clear because of the events occurring since our last meeting".

The Greenham Free Press commented simply, "We find it astonishing that some people get their priorities so wrong"; and from one of the campers: "I find it appalling that no one CND representative has come to this site to see and feel what is really going on here. Disappointment hardly seems the appropriate word to describe my feelings ... "

At the same time, the Peace Settlement has carried out no actions which would generate positive media publicity and raise CND's enthusiasm. The call for an encampment of 30,000 does, at least at present, seem a wild one.

"I can foresee a situation where.... the whole campaign be put behind a particular form of direct action. Pressure will grow when it becomes apparent that the siting of the first cruise missiles is going ahead."

Last autumn, CND conference voted to support 'considered, non-violent direct actions' and to 'organise and lead national direct action if the occasion arose'.

Joan Ruddock was quoted in 'The Observer' in June as saying "I can foresee a situation where people would ask that the whole campaign be put behind a particular form of direct action. This is not envisaged within the next 12 months, but pressure will grow from this time next year when it becomes apparent that the siting of the first cruise missiles is going ahead".

The People's Free State of Greenham, for all its ramshackle excesses, marks a new stage in the build-up of that pressure - which has already begun.

BRUCE GARRARD

Newbury Magistrates' Court

'NOT GUILTY' VERDICT AFTER SIT-DOWN PROTEST AT WORKS ENTRANCE

Shortly before the eviction of the Other Peace Camp, outside the works entrance at Greenham Common, Fran De'ath was arrested for sitting down in front of a digger which was digging trenches for telephone lines to serve the base.

She was first charged with obstructing the highway, but later a charge of behaviour likely to lead to a breach of the peace was added. She believes this is because the authorities wished to have her bound over 'to keep the peace', which would not have been possible with the lesser charge.

Fran conducted her own defence, and Newbury magistrates found her not guilty. The police and workers on site were called to give evidence, and all said that her behaviour was

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDANCE OF THE PEOPLES PEACE SETTLEMENT AT GREENHAM

We hold these truths to be self-evident - that all people are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that those are also the birthright of every other species on the planet. To secure these rights Governments are instituted, deriving their Just power from the Consent of the Governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it.

Since the second world war, the countries of Britain have been occupied by the armed forces of a foreign power, the United States of America. An occupation for which the consent of the British people has never been sought or given.

Throughout this time we have grown up, and are now forced to bring our children up under the threat of a nuclear holocaust over which we have no control and which, if it ever came to pass, would threaten the existence of all life on this planet. That threat has, in the past, seemed unreal and distant. Now, as the constantly escalating nuclear arms race reaches new heights with the threatened installation of Cruise missiles, it has become so close to reality that it is time for the people to act in defence of planet Earth and the security of future generations.

So bad has been the record of the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom in this suicidal arms race, that we are left with no alternative but to throw off the power of both these Governments and to declare here at Greenham Common THE PEOPLES FREE STATE OF GREENHAM.

We call upon all people who care for peace, freedom and the continuance of life upon this planet to rally here in peace to oppose the forces of death and destruction.

issued in the company of those assembled the fourth of July 1982

at all times peaceful.

At the opening of the hearing, she refused to plea; but this was taken as a plea of not guilty. She told the court: "If it had seemed people were getting upset, I would have got up and made tea, and waited until their tea-break to speak to the workmen. It was my intention by peaceful means to stop the work".

Work on the trench had been held up for an hour before she was arrested.

The charge of obstructing the highway was withdrawn after no evidence was offered by the prosecution. Brockenhurst Lane, where the incident took place, had been blocked off with 'Road closed' signs at the time.

LATE NEWS

The Peace Convoy moved on from Greenham Common on Sunday July 18, leaving behind about 150 people who intend to maintain the settlement.

We hear that Dorset Peace Council are organising a blockade of the works entrance at Greenham for July 27. News of this can be obtained from Louise Kelaher, 41 Shaftesbury Rd, Poole, Dorset (Poole 670829).

If any other groups would like to carry out similar actions, and need advice or encouragement, they can contact Louise, or Fran De'ath (Bristol 44167).