

Civil Rights Issue
LIBERTY LINKED TO LAND

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Evictions in peace camps in England like the evictions in civil rights disputes in the USA ~~in the 60s~~ prove once again that liberty is linked to land.

The story of Greenham Commons in England began in 1981 when ¹⁰4½ women and children set off from a nuclear weapons plant in Cardiff, Wales for the Greenham Common USAF base one of the proposed sites for the installation of 96 cruise ~~missile~~ ^{missiles} miles.

The media ignored the women but they decided to stay and set up a "peace camp" on the commons. For the women of Greenham Commons it was a new way to work for peace. Tents, teepees, constant cold, damp, dismal surroundings, greasy lukewarm washing water did not deter these women from raining in their protest vigil.

The goal of the women was an enormous one. One women said, "What we want to change is immense. It is not just getting rid of nuclear weapons, it's getting rid of the whole structure that created problems of nuclear weapons. If we get rid of nuclear weapons and yet retain the same political structure we're going to end up with something just as bad."

But the municipal government of Newburg did not agree. The Mayor found these 'invaders' a nuisance. "We have had a good relationship with the military until these women came." When questioned by a PBS reporter from America what the women



2) were doing wrong, the Mayor could only comment that these women were "dirty, lived under disagreeable conditions", and brought disfavor on the character of the community.

By May of 1981 the Council convinced the authorities to evict the camp. ~~One woman commented later, "When I arrived in the afternoon, the main pavilion had been destroyed by the bulldozers. 100 police and half a dozen bailiffs pulled down the camp. Five women were arrested and were required to pay a \$25 (30 dollars) or a week in jail. Four were to serve their week sentence and the fifth paid the fine and went to work to keep the peace camp open.~~ ^{was} ^{helped}

A new camp has now been established on land out of the jurisdiction of the eviction order but only a few years away from the old camp. The camp is under constant threat of eviction and on occasion the police have come to clear the area. But the women constantly return. Their liberty is linked to the land.

Civil Rights in USA

Robert Tideman, a San Francisco educator and economist whose daughter taught in a Mississippi Freedom School tells a story that illustrates the relevance of the land ^{question} ~~question~~ to the civil rights and peace movements.

Robert Tideman says: "Look what happened to one of our local girls, Gretchen Schwartz, "who was arrested twice in two days in Drew Mississippi ^{during the 1960s.} She was attending a rally outside the Holly Grove Baptist Church. Police arrived at the rally with a ^{deacon} ~~deacon~~ of the church who ordered them to leave.

They then moved to a nearby vacant lot whereupon the police brought the white woman who owned the property and she told them to leave. When the group moved into the street they were arrested.

"Of what value is the right to assemble peaceably if there

3) is nowhere a spot of land on which to stand and be heard

"The equal right to use ' public' facilities - for which all pay taxes is clear. Whatever challenge may be made on gov private property, this challenge cannot be made where the prop is publicly owned."

There are many people who disagree that ^{neither} the Negro in the South ^{or} the some 800 young ^{"freedom riders"} people who poured into Miss that fateful summer in the 60s in the U.S. should have been there. Or ^{argue that} that they were interfering in a distant and complex problem. There are ^{many} some in England who agree with the Mayor of Newbury ^{of Greenham who come from all over Europe} these women are a "nuisance" and should not be there.

"I do not share that view," says Tideman. The only way to gain and hold one's rights is to ^{exercise} ~~exercise~~ them. When the right to travel and speak is challenged the only true remedy is to accept the challenge, go there and be heard.

When a contemporary of Tom Paine said, "Where freedom is, there is my country, " Paine responded, "Where freedom is not, there is mine."

In the spirit of Paine, the young freedom riders of the American Civil Rights Movement and the women of Greenham have taken up the challenge.

Sharper Focus on Land Question

While Tideman supports these challenges to freedom, he believes that these issues call for a sharper focus on the land question.

"After the Negroes won their right for equal access to the streets and sidewalks they still remain locked out of most of their own state. The vacant lot next to the Holly Grove Baptist Church is only one of the 146,000 vacant ^{in the same city} lots from which they could have been evicted by the police on the call of the landlord. And beyond the vacant lots are vast underpopulated underused areas withheld from legitimate needs of both blacks and landless whites

The ~~Commons~~ from which the women of Greenham ~~Common~~ ^{were evicted} is but a fraction of the land in a country where unemployment is over 10 percent, and ^{where} ~~_____~~ of the country remains locked from the use of the people.

"The rights and peace movements must come to realize," says Tideman, someday that confiscating money from the poor by way of sales taxes, or from the industrious by way of income and other taxes is as much an invasion of liberty as to close a public park, street or commons to the people."

"For the value of land created by the whole community and attaching to the earth, our common inheritance rightly ~~belongs~~ ^{belongs} to all and should be used to relieve all of us from arbitrary burdens on our labor and trade." *Only then will we have liberty and land.*

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