

## FROM PETITIONS TO BOMBS

## Nuclear Cleanup triggers mass opposition

Without much help or even notice from the organized left, a popular movement of resistance involving thousands of "ordinary" people is gathering momentum across Europe and North America in opposition to the wholesale development of nuclear power plants.

In just two years, this resistance movement — carried forward by hundreds of local, largely uncoordinated groups — has escalated from legal and electoral opposition to large-scale, non-violent civil disobedience and, more recently, to militant street actions and even to bombings.

The movement has a diverse base, including farmers who stand to lose their livelihoods, eco-freaks and many previously non-political individuals who have become alarmed by the dangers posed by nuclear proliferation. Their goals are similarly diverse: some are working for more "safeguards" on the development of nuclear plants, while others seek the complete abolition of nuclear power. In the use of safer, decentralized, more eco-conscious alternatives, such as wind and solar energy.

Events are moving at their most rapid pace in Europe, where, because domestic supplies of oil and coal are relatively scarce, the push is on for nuclear power. (In France, for instance, government officials and industrialists are hoping to meet 55 per cent of their needs next year with nuclear power within eight years.)

## Rhine Break-Through

Although serious anti-nuclear organizing has been going on in Europe since the early '70s, the first real breakthrough occurred in late 1974 in the French town of Morsbolsheim on the Rhine River, where a nuclear oriented chemical factory was to be built. A coalition of local farmers, ecology freaks, and anarchist types mobilized a combination of legal challenges and demonstrations and succeeded in preventing the construction of the facility.

A significant aspect of the Morsbolsheim victory was the strength together, not only a politically disparate group of French people, but also Germans from the other side of the Rhine as well. This international solidarity was expanded a few months later in the German Rhine town of Wyhl, where the site proposed for a nuclear power facility. In February, 1975, a coalition of some 30 associations put out a joint call for an occupation of the site. The response was phenomenal from all over France, Germany and the rest of Europe.

Initially, the police hoped to evict the occupiers peacefully, but that plan had to be abandoned when the tactical squads brought to the scene were forced back off the land by the determined resisters. Following the initial conflicts, as the news spread of the police attacks, the number of resisters swelled to 20,000.

An atmosphere reminis-

cent of Paris in May-June, 1968 flourished, where a combination of ecology, non-violent activism, regionalism and anti-technocratic rebellion pervaded the political process. In an open, anti-authoritarian process evolving, with continual discussions, meetings, films, singing, and local organizing.

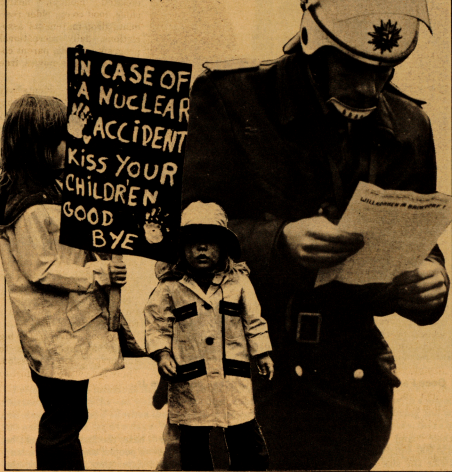
## Impressive Logistics

The lack of a hierarchical authority in the occupation did not at all prevent the development of an impressive logistical system. For example, a perimeter guard with a network of walkie-talkies was organized to give immediate warnings in the event of a police attack. Thirty different towns in the area were mobilized to share the responsibility for occupying the site within a given night, two towns would be present. But with the communications system established, a call from the walkie-talkies could immediately begin ringing bells throughout the countryside, bringing hundreds of cars full of people to the site within minutes of an alert. After a month of occupation, the government caved in and killed the Wyhl project.

The example of Wyhl has served as a catalyst for anti-nuclear organizing, particularly along the Rhine and Rhone Rivers. Coalitions have formed in many towns where reactor sites had been proposed or approved and many of these are using direct action tactics to stall and even stop projects.

Although non-violence has been the predominant tactic used in nuclear resistance work in Europe (despite terrorist baiting in the German

Anti-nuclear projects span the globe: Participants in first Clamshell Alliance rally against proposed power plant in Seabrook, N.H. (L.); German cop reading leaflet at demonstration (R).



press to the effect that if Wyhl occupiers were no different than the Baader-Meinhof gang, it is clear that new tactics are rapidly coming into play.

Probably the most dramatic example of these tactical escalations took place in Brodbeck in October and November. When final approval

for the plant construction was given, a demonstration was called immediately for October 28th. At 1:00 A.M. on October 26th, some 800 workers and workers' wives of the site with barbed wire and concrete, in an attempt to fortify the site against the anticipated occupation.

Nevertheless, the Satur-

day demonstration drew 800 people, equipped with heavy cutting tools and goggles. Several hundred managed to get past police barricades initially, with several thousand eventually coming on the 100 acre site. This was to be a non-violent action, which it was from the standpoint of the occupiers. But that night

hundreds of German police marched against the occupiers, burning tents and macing those sitting in. The occupiers were evicted.

Two weeks later, a second attempt was made to occupy the site. This time, between 30,000 and 50,000 people came, many of them prepared with riot protection gear. The police, too, were prepared, in addition to more fortifications, barbed wire, masts, etc. there were about 3,000 police, armed with tear gas dispensers and water cannons mounted on tanks and in helicopters. The outcome was obvious: a four hour battle for the site erupted, described by some commentators as the most militant street action in West Germany since the end of the Vietnam war. Eventually the anti-nuclear forces were again evicted from the site, but not without doing major damage to the fortifications and equipment inside.

## Cross-Country March

More recently at Brodbeck about 10,000 people defied a court order Feb. 19th and marched 18 miles cross-country to the site after police had blocked off the roads. They were forced back by the 3,000 police armed with automatic weapons and mobile water cannons, who were ringing the area, with some scattering reported and about 50 arrests on weapons charges.

The anti-nuclear forces in Brodbeck are planning further attempts to occupy the site. Meanwhile, the movement is increasing rapidly: a Hamburg factory which produces chemical waste was burned to

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## SORWUC organizes bank actions

By Jack Cavanaugh

Everybody gripes about their general working conditions, but usually there's one or two specific grievances in each work place that anger people enough for them to consider taking action. At least, that's what the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC) finds as it tackles the job of helping British Columbia's female bank workers get organized.

A SORWUC member who played a role in organizing the first bank branch in downtown Vancouver last summer recalls that in her branch there was "lots of dissension and people walking out" over having to work too much overtime because of a staff shortage.

"SORWUC had a leaflet on overtime — you know, how bad it is that it cuts into leisure time, and unorganized workers always get shorted on overtime pay, and the only solution is to join a union," she says.

"I called the union office and suggested they leaflet outside the bank, which they did. Well, things happened exactly the way I'd hoped — one of the women I work with took one of the leaflets and

pinned it up on the staffroom mirror."

Up to this time, the SORWUC member, who was still in her six-month probation period hadn't talked union in the bank. But now she talked to one of her co-workers about the fact that she was a member of SORWUC.

A week later, and another crisis. Four of the five tellers wanted to quit on the spot over the overtime issue. Things cooled down slightly, and instead, they decided to have a meeting about working conditions. Seven of the 20 staff members attended.

"We decided it was crazy to walk off the job because they would just hire new people," says the SORWUC member.

"Writing letters of grievance was no good either. They just ignore them, and besides, they take note of your name and hold it against you. Some said we should join a union, but most felt it was impossible. The banks were too powerful, they would never allow it."

The meeting broke up with nothing definite decided, but the SORWUC member continued to talk discreetly to the four or five workers who

had seemed the most interested in unionization.

"We got madder and madder at the bank, and then decided, well, a union may be possible, but the hell with it, we should join anyway. At least that way, we'll shake them up a bit, and they might listen to us."

"We talked and talked and finally we decided to have another meeting. This time there were nine, and we signed cards to apply for certification."

## Canadian Union

Applying for certification is hardly the end of the story, because SORWUC, a small, independent and democratically-run Canadian union, has a long and uncertain fight ahead to get the Canada Labour Relations Board to recognize it as a legal bargaining agent for the workers.

SORWUC is hopeful that the CLRB will be forced to accept branch-by-branch certification, or at least to group a relatively small number of branches together into a bargaining unit. In B.C., there are about 800 branches belonging to the five major national chartered banks.

Once they do get certified, the bank workers will have

quite a lot to bargain over. For one thing, there's the blatant discrimination against women: the vast majority of bank employees are women, yet few ever make management; men with only a few years' experience are routinely promoted over women who have been there for 20 years.

Pay for women bank workers is way below that in comparable jobs in other industries, considering the skills required. Average salary is \$7,500 per year.

SORWUC, with 17 branches already organized, has many more on the way, has been more successful in the banks than any of the larger, more bureaucratic unions. Partly it's the principle of letting each branch decide its own key issue, but also it's because SORWUC has been oriented toward women's issues since it started three years ago, and it has wide experience in organizing small offices where women are in the majority.

Control of SORWUC, and of its finances and bargaining practices, is lodged securely with the membership of each bargaining unit. The "national" executive (SORWUC operates only in B.C., but has national jurisdiction) has no

financial or policy-making power over the locals, and all elected officials are rotated frequently and are easily recallable.

The banks have had a low-key response thus far. They've avoided some people around and given promotions to non-unionists, but they've shied away from heavy-handed intimidation.

## Unfair Labour Practices

"Now that the organizing drive is under way, the banks would be hit with an unfair labour practices ruling if they tried to discipline anybody," says a SORWUC member. "That means, as long as you do your work, you can't do anything about your interest in the union."

"Our advice for other unorganized workers is to contact the appropriate union office first. Be careful; if you must talk union to anyone at work, make sure she's a really good friend, then to go to the union and approach other employees."

For more information, contact Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC), United Bank Workers Local No. 2, Room 1114, 207 West Hastings, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.