

Sit-ins, marches

Group takes 'direct action' against nuclear weapons

By Stephen Redshaw
Of the Emerald

Some Eugene-area citizens have taken more than a passive stand against what they consider unnecessary proliferation of nuclear weapons. Direct, non-violent action is the group's strategy, says member David Oakes, — hence its name: Eugene Direct Action.

"There's a crisis right now in terms of nuclear weapons,"

and charged with trespassing. However, the charges were eventually dropped, an outcome which Oakes attributes to the protesters attitude of "openness and respect."

"In fact, the chief of police even wrote us a letter of appreciation for being non-violent," he says.

"A direct action doesn't necessarily have to be illegal. There's a real range as to what a

violent you are."

EDA regularly conducts non-violence training programs, designed to "get people thinking about non-violence," Oakes says. Laura Stockford, one of several EDA members who conduct the training sessions, says they "show people how a potentially violent situation can be diffused using the non-violent guidelines."

These guidelines include open, respectful dialogue, not running, and establishing eye contact.

"The guidelines are very helpful in averting a confrontation," Stockford says.

While EDA members have many different reasons for joining, most center around the group's emphasis on action.

"We really are hands-on people," Stockford says. "EDA gives me a hands-on way to deal with my anxiety concerning disarmament."

EDA's ability to sidestep the organizational problems common to many new groups is its real success, Oakes says.

"We want to move," Stockford says. "We can't wait for legislation."

'In fact, the chief of police even wrote us a letter of appreciation for being non-violent'
— David Oakes

Oakes says. "Even if the nuclear weapons aren't used, they've become a priority for money that could be used to help people who are starving. We see this as an emergency and feel that we need to take non-violent actions to do something about it."

Since its formation in January, EDA has been involved in a series of protest demonstrations and marches in California, Oregon and Washington, Oakes says. The group staged two demonstrations at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, where the MX missile is tested and stored, as well as a "Journey for Peace" march to the Wah Chang factory in Albany to protest the production of zirconium for use in nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons.

In September, eight members of EDA, including Oakes, participated in a sit-in at the U.S. Army recruiting center in downtown Eugene.

"We had talked to the recruiters and the police beforehand," Oakes says. "We just walked in, stated our goal of 'No business as usual,' then sat down and tried to establish a dialogue. It was a friendly and open thing."

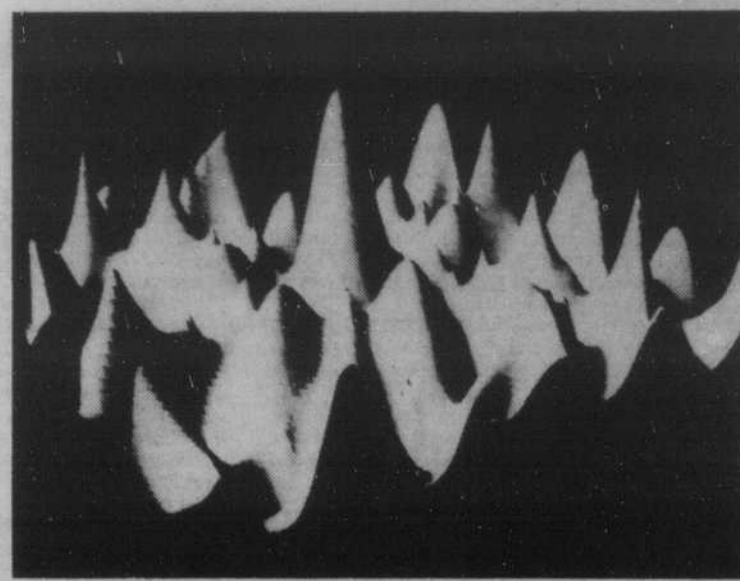
Silvia Siegel, an EDA member who also participated in the sit-in, remembers that when the recruiters were first informed of the intended sit-in their reaction was "hostile." But after several follow-up visits, "they realized it was going to happen and they accepted it."

All eight activists were arrested

non-violent creative action can be," Siegel says, pointing to the Wah Chang demonstration as a "good example of a direct action which didn't involve civil disobedience."

"Because we are often in arrest risk and confrontation situations, we have to emphasize our non-violence," she says. "If you're just writing letters you don't have to make a big deal about how non-

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