

FEMA & THE TERRORISTS

by Katrin Bridget Snow

On October 10 and 11, Portland-area residents gathered at the Red Lion Inn at Jantzen Beach to picket the U.S. Civil Defense Conference and draw attention to President Reagan's new four to ten billion dollar program for "surviving" a nuclear war. The citizens stressed their wholehearted support of emergency management planning for natural and technological disasters. However, they explained that funds for these legitimate emergency programs are tied on an all-or-nothing basis to funds for Reagan's civil defense plan for nuclear war. The Center for Defense Information in Washington, D.C. stated, "The Reagan administration appears convinced that nuclear wars can be fought and 'won' and is making detailed preparations. . . . These plans are being recognized for what they are, an effort to manipulate and mobilize the American public by diverting attention from the real problem, the dangerous and dynamic nature of the arms race."

According to a Presidential National Directive released last spring, civil defense now "complements" U.S. strategic nuclear forces. As one spokesman for the picketers explained, the plan seems humanitarian, but actually uses civilians as an integral part of U.S. military strategy and pushes us closer to nuclear war.

The Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), which is responsible for the design and implementation of the Reagan plan, was given a chance to present and discuss its program at three local forums: a Town Hall taping, a debate with Physicians for Social Responsibility, and a plenary session platform at the conference. FEMA turned down all three invitations and backed out of the conference entirely. The Civil Defense Through Disarmament Coalition, the ad hoc group that planned the picketing, said that FEMA was ignoring its responsibility as a public agency to open public debate on the issue. There are serious criticisms about a nuclear war civil defense plan, raised by professionals in a number of fields; they are criticisms which deserve a response from the President and from FEMA.

FEMA's absence left local emergency planners in the difficult position of defending a program which, first, had not yet been specifically outlined, and second, the national government was either unwilling or unable to defend. The reason FEMA gave for pulling out was that the conference had become a "media event." The excuse satisfied neither local emergency planners nor peace activists, who felt that FEMA had a responsibility to explain and defend its own programs. Said Joe Andrus, director of the Office of Emergency Planning for Portland, "FEMA is supposed to be trained to deal with terrorists, and they're afraid to walk through that group of housewives picketing out there? These people are threatened by three



physicians? I don't believe it. If they can't defend their programs they shouldn't be in the business.

The "housewives" were actually about two hundred people of all ages. Sunday, the opening day of the conference, some conferees approached various picketers to ask why they were there and to hear their views. On Monday, however, few people came near the group, possibly because of an "Information Bulletin" which circulated the conference, signed by Myra Lee, a Multnomah County planner. The bulletin warned conferees that "if you have not already been accosted by, or encountered anti-civil defense demonstrators or pickets, you may at some time during this conference." These demonstrators, it seems, would "do whatever they need in order to get the attention they want," including picketing and handing out defense information literature, but especially talking, and particularly "emotional arguments or confrontations." "They may," the bulletin read, "resort to unlawfulness to gain the attention they want. . . . Our hospitality to them is being abused and manipulated." A particularly patronizing section read, "As annoying and disruptive as all this may be, we ask that you maintain a professional demeanor and your composure at all times. Please do not engage in arguments or confrontations. These groups have been orientated and/or trained specifically to generate such a response. The County Division of Public Safety, and the security forces of the Red Lion Motor Inn have been alerted and are prepared to deal with the situation."

So it happened that the twelve men, women, children, and elderly who came on Monday, were eyed warily by four of the hotel security forces, and understandingly, if a bit resignedly, by six county policemen.

The hotel did not actually extend hospitality to the coalition and did want publicity any more than did FEMA. One week before the conference,

the catering department insisted that there was no group by any name resembling "U.S. Civil Defense Conference" on the schedule. Their secrecy is no surprise, since the hotel has never been an ardent supporter of citizen rights. The Thunderbird/Red Lion at Jantzen Beach has a history of anti-union activities. When the company purchased the former Sheraton/Lloyd Center, a union hotel at the time, the management fired all employees. In the uproar which followed, the Thunderbird/Red Lion negotiated with the union to hire back a few employees at lower wages. Shortly afterward they closed the hotel and later reopened it as a non-union operation. It was this hotel that a national government organization chose to support with taxpayers money.

In response to requests from the picketers that they be allowed to make a presentation and explanation of their views on civil defense, the hotel management responded that individuals who so desired could pay their ninety-five dollars and attend the conference. What the management failed to recognize was that it was tax money that paid for the government officials who attended, and tax money which would be used for a civil defense program. All of the people who gathered on the lawn and sidewalks around the hotel had already paid, and would be paying even more, yet had little, if any, voice in the use of their funds.

Contrary to the "Information Bulletin" the criticism of Reagan's civil defense plan is not, in fact, emotional. It is telling that in the bulletin, not a single attempt was made to discredit the picketers on any intellectual ground. The only kind of criticism the county planner's office could muster was name-calling and backbiting. There are serious criticisms of a civil defense plan for nuclear war, and they are based on the plan's logistics, medical and scientific data, nuclear technology and weapons development, and the use of tax money.

HAIR PRUNING BY TREE
a sason cutter
cannon beach

436-1665

DAVID R. MIDDLETON
CONSTRUCTION
MARINE HOME DESIGN
REMODELING • CONTRACTING • REPAIRS
BOX 736 CANNON BEACH OREGON 97110
436-2568

locally grown produce • coffee • grains • nuts
local dairy • honey • oils • pasta
herbs • spices • teas • juices

The Community Store
A NATURAL FOODS GROCERY
1120 marine Astoria
10-6 M-F
10-5 S

For seven years the staff and shoppers have been working together to establish and develop a Natural Foods Alternative for the north coast community.
The store provides quality, wholesome foods at fair prices, in a way that respects both your food needs and the needs of the environment.

freshly ground peanutbutter • sprouting seeds

Lazy Susan Cafe
A Specialty Breakfast & Lunch Restaurant
Coaster Square Cannon Beach

AUTUMN HOURS
WEDNESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY
7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
SUNDAY 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.
CLOSED MONDAY AND TUESDAY

LAGERQUIST & SONS
BRICK & STONE
CANNON BEACH
436-2824

BILL'S TAVERN
Cannon Beach, Oregon