

BATTLE FOR BOWEN HILLS

On Monday 3rd June, twenty police and two Main Roads Department employees carrying a sledgehammer, descended on quiet Markwell Street, Bowen Hills. The target of this raiding party was a house which the anti-freeway movement had occupied the previous day. None of the police wanted to discuss with the occupants the reasons for their presence in this house. Had they been prepared to listen they would have heard this story.

CAMM'S EMPTY PROMISE

No.13 was bought by the Main Roads Department 3 months ago. After being challenged by the freeway protest movement, who were concerned by the critical accommodation shortage, Mr. Camm made a public statement that the house would be given to the Housing Commission for rental for a period of six months. What he did not say, was that the Housing Commission would not be able to accept his offer for one very simple reason — the house was completely uninhabitable. The Main Roads Department had ensured that the previous owner internally wrecked the house before he left. All fittings, plumbing, wiring and bathroom facilities were ripped out.

2 months later - the house still empty - Mr. Camm stated in Parliament that it would cost \$1000 to repair the house. The department which is willing to spend millions of dollars on freeways was not willing to spend this paltry amount on repairing a house which they had needlessly wrecked. The operative word here is "needlessly". **THIS PROPERTY IS NOT YET REQUIRED FOR FREEWAY CONSTRUCTION.** It is highly unlikely that it will be needed in a years time. The Main Roads Department's determination to see this house remain empty or demolished has no rational foundation. It is simply yet another attempt to intimidate the Bowen Hill's residents, and to break their will to resist Main Roads Department destruction of their community.

OUR RESPONSE

Knowing these facts, the people of the area decided to call Camm's bluff. It was decided that they themselves would do the repair work on the house, providing their labour, furnishings and time free of charge. Once the house was inhabitable again, it was to be turned over to a family in need of accommodation. These responsible citizens were simply attempting a mopping-up operation after the Main Roads Department's destructiveness.

THE RAID

This is the scene which was disturbed by the entry of the police. Three members of the organization at work on repairing the house were issued with an eviction order. On being told to leave the premises, they replied that they had a moral right to be there. They refused to leave. At this, the police acting on Mr. Camm's orders, grabbed the three and forcibly threw them out the door. A 24 hour police guard is now being maintained on No.13.

NOT THE END

The next morning, the Freeway protest movement delivered an ultimatum to Mr. Camm. It demanded that the Main Roads Department finish the repairs which the group had begun on the house by Saturday 8th June. Failing this the movement would take further action to achieve their objective of seeing this house rented to a homeless family.

On their past record, it is unlikely that the Main Roads Department will accept this rational request. The more likely response will be a destructive one - that they will attempt to demolish this house, protected by their private army, the Queensland Police Force.

THIS MUST BE PREVENTED.

(1) Small numbers of people cannot prevent the needless destruction of this potentially-useable house. Large numbers can! We need to be able to contact people at short notice should demolition begin. If you are prepared to help should you be needed, come around SOON to 15 Markwell Street and leave your name, address and telephone number. THIS IS AN URGENT REQUEST. PLEASE DON'T LET OUR ACTION FAIL BECAUSE OF YOUR APATHY.

(2) A meeting of the Freeway Protest movement will be held this Sunday, 9th June at 10am at our centre, 15 Markwell Street. Decisions will be taken as to our next actions.

COME TO THE MEETING THIS SUNDAY AND GIVE YOUR SUPPORT!

THE RECURRING PATTERN

The police visit on Monday is not the first raid nor will it be the last. For Bowen Hills is merely the present centre of a fight which affects directly the security, livelihood and well being of 10,000 households who will be victims of freeway construction in Brisbane in the next decade. The present eviction can only be seen in this light--as an attack on all those who are resisting community destruction.

Divide and rule, that old principle of colonialism, has been used in the preparation of the Northern Freeway. The owners of houses along the route were played off against each other in compensation offers. Residents were told that the amount of money offered was not to be disclosed to others. In other words the cheapest prices could best be obtained for these houses if people dealt solely with Main Roads, rather than from a collective basis. Together, as the residents now are, they are formidable. Higher prices must be offered and full resettlement -- i.e. comparable houses in comparable areas -- is now being demanded. Deeper pockets of resistance are developing, and some old people may have to be dragged out of their homes. More and more people are prepared to fight the injustice to which they are subjected.

The Main Roads attack has not always been subtle. One family in Markwell Street is adamant they will not be moved. Next to them was a house that was wrecked in a dangerous fashion, frightening them considerably. But more was to come. The next morning, a raid by the political police on this family was the cause of deep distress -- the excuse; they were looking for non-existent guns.

Twenty homes have been destroyed in Markwell Street; rubble is left in long grass; the local children are endangered by such conditions which it would take so little to clean up. But the desire to destroy the community prevails.

People are merely seen as statistics, sometimes unpredictable ones; but always unworthy of consideration ---unless they resist. And then the psychological war begins!

THESE PEOPLE ARE NOT HINDERING PROGRESS. THEY HAVE LEGITIMATE REASONS TO PROTEST!

The construction in Brisbane of 96 miles of freeways will cost \$600 million.

This means the destruction of 10,000 homes and the forced relocation of 10% of Brisbane's population, the equivalent of moving Townsville.

The freeway system planned for Brisbane is a RADIAL design (i.e. they will take cars through inner city suburbs into the Central Business District.). It is NOT a ring road system, as MRD propaganda states.

While millions of dollars are poured into freeways, public transport is being allowed to deteriorate. Yet the cost of one mile of freeway could alternatively buy 640 buses or 23 trains.

Freeways serve the interests of large companies and business interests (oil, car, cement, rubber, construction works, etc). They are of no use to the YOPHS--the young, old, poor, housewives and sick-- the majority of the population.

BE PART OF THE RESISTANCE!! COME TO THE MEETING ON SUNDAY, 9TH JUNE AT 10AM, 15 MARKWELL STREET, BOWEN HILLS.