

INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF DEATH
THE C.M.F. INCIDENT

THE ACTUAL EVENT

(from the original press release: ignored by the mass media)

On Wednesday 2nd September 1970, a group of university students of various affiliations, from RSSA to ROC, occupied the Queensland University Regiment Building. Some 200 were involved in the occupation, fifty of whom barricaded themselves inside and proceeded to destroy what files and military maps were available. The other 150 were gathered in front of and behind the grounds, several of who resisted attempts of some military personnel to close the gates.

Inside, the decision was made by the meeting to destroy military property. No physical violence occurred or was suggested. Slogans were also written on walls, placards and maps inside the premises.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

(from a leaflet released on campus)

The incident in the University Regiment building occurred on Wednesday 2nd September. There was considerable speculation subsequently as to what would be the reaction of the Commonwealth Government. By Saturday 5th it had become very clear to selected Brisbane households. Commonwealth police were calling on the homes of certain radicals, apparently in possession of warrants for the arrest of four people under the Defence Act.

News of this spread fairly quickly among the people involved. It was also known that the four marked down for arrest were Dick Shearman, Dave Franken, Mark Georgiou and Mitch Thompson. These people were accordingly alerted and it was contrived that they be harboured in places where the Commonwealth police would not think to look.

Yesterday, Monday 7th, all four of these people were on campus all day. All four attended the forum in the refectory area. Both Dick Shearman and Mark Georgiou telephoned the Commonwealth police from the campus and made it clear that they were available for arrest on the campus. For reasons that that will easily occur to the attentive observer of the recent events, the police declined to avail themselves of this opportunity.

Last night (Monday 7th) they continued their quest. They failed to find the four people. However, in their pursuit of them they unexpectedly picked up somebody else. About 10 o'clock they arrived at 13 O'Connell Place. Police came to both the front and back doors. One of them arrested Jim Prentice. During the course of the arrest he said in a rather agitated manner to another student who was present that this was happening as a consequence of the original four evading arrest. Apparently there are now six people on their list. Perhaps the explanation for this is to be found in a remark of the same policeman: "*We've had Canberra on our backs.*" Other names have since become available: Michael McRobbie and Henry Prokuda.

(a) The hearing of Jim Prentice's case (taking place on Tuesday morning) involved charges of resisting arrest, trespass on Commonwealth property and destruction of files to the value of \$1-80. He was subsequently released on bail.

(b) On Wednesday 9th, Dick Shearman presented himself at 9.00 a.m. to the magistrate's court with a solicitor which prefaced a trial in which he was fined \$25 for trespassing. No other charges were laid at that time. The remainder of the 5 for whom federal warrants were issued (excluding Jim Prentice) decided not to comply with the legal procedure by making themselves available for prosecution at the Magistrate's court.

Forums continued every day during the week from Monday onwards at which these specific points were brought up: (I shall mention only those issues which have to do with the C.M.F. occupation).

1. A University Co-ordinating Committee to include all persons interested was proposed and established by Dan O'Neill and Bruce Dickson. (The aims of the Committee are explained in another article by Dan O'Neill in this

issue.) Just one of its functions became setting up its own investigating committee which was designed to assess the events which had occurred during the Friday 4th incident and make its finding known to the University Community. The Vice Chancellor had also set up an Investigatory Committee. Its committee would be the prelude to any disciplinary action taken against the people involved and after a mass march from a very large forum gathering, a unanimous vote of some 300 students rejected the legitimacy of his committee on various grounds amongst which were:

- those from whom information was to be gathered and considered regarding the incident did not include a representative grouping of those actually involved.
- the frame of enquiry into the actions was not wide enough to include other important issues.
- the meetings were not to be open.

2. The press was distortive and inaccurate in conveying press statements and actually reporting on the incident itself and subsequent forums and actions.

At a very large forum gathering on Wednesday 9th the possibility of a march on Thursday 10th (tomorrow) about the general issues of "end police and political repression" and "moral discussion rather than legal punishment" were discussed. Such a march, hoped to be supported by a large cross section of the university community was debated about and the alternative was presented of moving the forum discussion down to the Uni. property over the road where masses of police would be expected. A motion re the march against repressive legislature which was moved to obtain an indication of support resulted in a slight majority which voted against the march.

Tomorrow (Thursday 10th), at another forum – the final discussion and vote re the march will be taken.

Today (Thursday 10th) a forum decision was made not to hold the march against repression. (The original idea being to march from the uni to the supreme court.) Instead Dan O'Neill on behalf of the newly formed University Co-ordinating Committee moved that students instead distribute leaflets and newsletters from the Committee to all the staff throughout the University.

This effort did eventuate.

STOP PRESS 1.

At 11.00 p.m. last night (Thursday 10th) the Special Branch (Political Police) raided a suburban movie theatre in an attempt to arrest several of the St. Lucia Seven. After the conclusion of the film, "*Marat-Sade*" the audience (about 50 people) was moving out of the theatre, when several fellow students dashed back through the foyer and announced that two police cars and four Special Branch Police were outside. Several minutes of confusion followed during which the other students in the audience hung around in groups outside the theatre, the Special Branch positioned themselves just outside the foyer, and the "wanted" students headed for a no-exit sign (the only possible way out?). Several rooms and corridors were paranoically investigated while the police hesitated, and, as they entered the foyer, the fugitives (peace criminals) escaped through a machinery room. Jumping over a fence and running across the yard of the neighbouring house, they leaped into the cars of two sympathetic college friends, and the escape was made.

Once inside the theatre, the police detained and questioned a student as to his involvement in the escape of the wanted students. He was also questioned regarding his part in the C.M.F. incident.

(Friday 11th) Today at 1 p.m. the R.O.C. initiated "Celebration of Life" march was held from Uni to the city with about 50 students participating. A pre-recorded speech of David Franken's was later played at the Roma Street rallying point. The speech had been pre-recorded to overcome any chance of David being arrested if in fact a warrant was out for his arrest.

Coinciding with the R.O.C. march was a forum on campus which raised the question of deciding on the exact location for Monday's People's Park.

Disagreement arose over whether it should be erected in the Great Court or down by the lake. Those advocating the Great Court argued that this area was the centre of the university's activities and thus would involve more students. When the question was put to the vote the result substantially favoured the Great Court area.

REASONS / MOTIVES

Original Press Statement

The reason for today's action were that we feel military organizations which entail unquestioning obedience and submission, giving those inside the organization no choice to voice or act on their own moral convictions, should be resisted at any cost. We wonder under what perverted morality military organizations murder those whom our politicians define as enemies. We feel that people are more important than property and that if necessary property may be destroyed in order to save life.

R.O.C. CELL LEAFLETS

No man or government has the right to take the life of any man, on any pretext, according to the Sermon on the Mount. Thus the Christian cannot participate in personal violence. Therefore he cannot be the accomplice of the violence of governmental structures like the Military...he is under moral obligation to resist such structures.

Property violence? If the time arrives for you when you have to face the Death Machine, that if you love your fellow man you must oppose the structures that murder and oppress him, then will you hesitate to assault, with love for man, the property of death?

We can no longer tolerate the atrocities that the Military perpetuates upon our brothers in Australia, in Vietnam, and in other parts of the world. We can no longer confine our peace-making efforts to the ordinary channels of polite discourse. We can no longer allow that murderous system to function smoothly in our name.

So we struck.

RSSA LEAFLETS ISSUED

The aim of yesterday's action was to demonstrate quite clearly our opposition to Australia's involvement in Vietnam. We believe the involvement is part of a general Western strategy to maintain the present unequal and exploitive relationship between the developed and underdeveloped world.

The links between the University and the University Regiment seem informal and indirect. The University serves the military in a far more subtle way through the type of education we receive than the links it might have with the C.M.F.

AT THE MOMENT – THE FUGITIVES

The remainder of the St. Lucia Seven, namely Michael McRobbie, David Franken, Henry Prokuda, Mitch Thompson and Mark Georgiou have refused to comply with the federal warrant by making themselves available for arrest and prosecution. Their continuing resistance to oppressive legislature supported by many who have offered them aid and sanctuary should be seen as firm opposition to:

1. The present "legal" system of this state.
2. The discriminating nature of prosecution – namely only against the more prominent radicals.

3. The belief that it is not a criminal action to participate in the C.M.F. incident on the grounds that the existence of such an institution, and the property denies any humanitarian or Christian morality.

BLACK FRIDAY (THE QUANG INCIDENT)

The situation arose out of a refusal of the students to allow the First Secretary of the South Vietnamese Embassy to leave campus until he answered questions relating to his role in support of French imperialism in Vietnam after the Second World War. At no stage was the First Secretary ever physically touched, although scuffles broke out between students and Hunt Sharp and the Union cleaners. Arguments for and against this action revolves around:

1. That the action (as a Vietnam War protest) were only a minor inconvenience to the secretary, who in any case, is not a true representative of the Vietnam people and instead is in support of an illegal puppet government sustained by U.S. force and political manipulation.

and

2. Alternatively that every man has the right to freedom of decision and movement including the First Secretary (i.e. a question of human liberty and civil rights).

Both arguments can be validly raised and a decision as to the rights or wrongs of either in this context must be left to the individual.

SPECIAL BRANCH

The real confrontation occurred with the arrival of the Special Branch (political police) on campus soon after the First Secretary's departure. THIS RELATIVELY MILD CONFRONTATION WAS SENSATIONALIZED AND DISTORTED TO THE EXTREME BY THE MASS MEDIA AND GRASPED EAGERLY BY THOSE IN THE GOVERNMENT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE MUCH POLITICAL CAPITAL OUT OF THEIR DESIRED "LAW AND ORDER" ELECTION.

The events were thus: One of the police cars which had arrived on campus was surrounded and blocked by students who simultaneously were debating "why the police had arrived", what right had they to do so, and other questions with new arrivals, Professor Webb and Bruce Green (Acting Vice Chancellor and Assistant Registrar respectively).

The police soon began to remove those students who had seated themselves around the car and some rough scuffling did break out. The police car then managed to leave. However, the Special Branch then began to walk around Circular Drive towards the Administration Building.

Near the first-year Science Building a number of students formed a line in front of the police and some mild and severe forms of shoulder to shoulder jostling broke out, with injuries on both sides. Finally, near the Administration Building a huge crowd gathered around the police and University personnel including the Registrar Sam Rayner, and more mild fighting occurred within the fluid mass of bodies. One policeman whom the press later stated as having received cracked ribs which again was a distorted and unsubstantiated report, grimaced quite effectively for every camera in sight. (He was later reported to have really only suffered mild bruising but was used extensively by the Press to point at "violent anarchist action").

Police reinforcements including motor bike police and paddy wagons then continued to arrive only helping to provoke the situation by their refusal to depart. Finally 2½ hours after their arrival they did evacuate the area and the tension immediately disappeared.

David R. Franken
Bruce F. Dickson