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**'Fill the Jails': Identity, Structure and Method in  
the Committee of 100, 1960 – 1968.**

**Thesis submitted by Samantha Jane Carroll**

**D. Phil. in Life History Research**

**University of Sussex**

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

**Signature:**.....

## **Contents.**

Summary.

Acknowledgements.

Introduction. 1

Chapter One:  
Methodology. 29

Chapter Two:  
Middle-Class Radicals? Make-up and Motivations. 67

Chapter Three:  
Non-Violent Direct Action. A Contentious Issue. 98

Chapter Four:  
'Fill the Jails'. Committee of 100 in Action. 122

Chapter Five:  
Imprisonment. Gender, Class and Entitlement. 158

Chapter Six:  
A Libertarian Spirit? Organisation and Values. 182

Conclusion. 213

Bibliography. 222

Appendices. 232

**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**  
**D.PHIL. IN LIFE HISTORY RESEARCH**

**'FILL THE JAILS': IDENTITY, STRUCTURE AND METHOD IN  
THE COMMITTEE OF 100, 1960 – 1968.**

**SUMMARY**

The Committee of 100 (C100) (1960 – 68) were a British anti-nuclear protest group who campaigned for mass non-violent direct action (NVDA) in an effort to force the government to revise its defence policy. The formation of C100 created tensions with the already-established Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), whose leaders objected to C100's commitment to civil disobedience. The two anti-nuclear campaigns had some membership overlap but always remained separate. Until now, any investigation of C100 has been incorporated within wider studies of CND or has been quantitative in method. This thesis therefore addresses a historical gap by employing a life history approach to examine C100 as a distinct group. Drawing upon oral history interviews with twenty-four C100 members the resulting analysis reveals new aspects of C100's innovative structure and method, and identifies the particular nature of those who joined the campaign.

A new image of first wave anti-nuclear activists emerges when focusing on C100 protestors. The respondents reveal motivations for campaign engagement that contrast with those of earlier representations of CND supporters. They were inspired by a common interest in global civil rights concerning human health and survival and a need to actively challenge rather than merely petition the authorities. Significantly, many C100 members came from left-wing, progressive or anarchist backgrounds. They were an erudite group with regard for knowledge, despite many putting conventional

education on hold to fully engage in the campaign.

This thesis examines C100's libertarian nature, and the extent to which its membership managed to be anti-hierarchical in structure, ethos and policy. It explores tensions within C100 concerning limits and definitions of NVDA that changed over time and came to radicalise the campaign. A biographical approach also reveals significant factors around C100 prison experience concerning issues of class and gender. This thesis serves to situate C100 for the first time in its own right on the socio-political map, both historically and globally.

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## **Introduction.**

The Committee of 100 (C100) was a British anti-nuclear protest group designed to promote mass non-violent direct action (NVDA) in order to push for nuclear disarmament. They campaigned for eight years (1960-1968), during which, due to their creative ideas and illegal approach, they attracted considerable media attention. Until now, however, there has been minimal historical interest in C100 as a distinct campaign. Examinations of this protest group are mostly subsumed within research concerned with the wider peace movement, particularly the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). A thorough analysis of the distinctive nature of C100, especially in terms of protestor identity and motivation, has been neglected. To attend to this omission, I have collected a total of twenty-four C100 oral history interviews, and my analysis makes use of them alongside already established resources to reveal valuable new insights into this innovative protest group. My thesis delivers an interpretative evaluation of identity within C100, and how this was affected by tensions within and beyond the campaign, and its evolving structure and method. Drawing on common themes that have emerged from the collected narratives, a new image of the C100 protestor surfaces. This qualitative analysis of C100 is significant, not only because it is structured within the group's parameters, but also because, in taking a life history research approach, it draws upon the memories and experiences of those that directly participated in the campaign. An assessment of these factors demonstrates why C100 should be regarded in its own right and positioned as such on the historical political map.

I will begin this introduction with a summary of C100 and explain its influences, purpose and method in order to acquaint the reader with their campaign. To demonstrate the context from which C100 emerged, a brief analysis of the postwar British political and cultural climate follows. From here, I will assess the secondary literature that, until now, has informed us about C100's method of protest and structure and how this developed. A discussion of this clarifies the need for a new biographical approach that elicits the particular characteristics and perspectives of those involved while they are



still around to interview. Finally, in order to maintain a reflexive position of inquiry, I will explain my own interests in C100's campaign and my reasons for undertaking this research.

## **The Committee of 100: An overview.**

### **Influences and Inspiration.**

The end of the Second World War was negotiated following the first ever use of atomic weapons over two Japanese cities in early August 1945. It was initially a cause for mass victory celebrations, and yet, as the news of the devastation faced by the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki filtered through, questions began to surface about the international moral implications of the atom bomb, and whether there could ever be any justification for inflicting such destruction anywhere.<sup>1</sup> The Peace Pledge Union (PPU), a pacifist organisation founded in the 1930s, had narrowly survived the war as the Nazi threat had taken its toll on pacifist ideology. The new horrors faced by atomic weaponry gave the peace movement fresh impetus, however, and by 1949 a small group had re-banded and organised a conference in London entitled 'Steps to Peace'. It was during this meeting that the idea of adopting the Gandhian principals of *Satyagraha* and the method of NVDA was first introduced, and over the next couple of years the small PPU group deliberated over this philosophy and the significance of such a direction.<sup>2</sup> Then, at a meeting on 12 December 1951, *Peace News* editor Hugh Brock proposed to launch Operation Gandhi, a campaign with four main aims. These were:

The withdrawal of American forces at present in this country.  
The stopping of the manufacture of atomic weapons in Britain.  
The withdrawal of Britain from NATO.  
The disbanding of the British Armed Forces.<sup>3</sup>

Those involved in Operation Gandhi were expected to 'face imprisonment, loss of income and other hardships'.<sup>4</sup> This event marked the onset of postwar anti-nuclear NVDA in Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> Green, J. (1999) *All Dressed Up. The Sixties and the Counterculture*. Pimlico, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Satyagraha* means passive resistance as a policy, from the Sanskrit *satya* truth and *agraha* obstinacy.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Against the Bomb. The British Peace Movement 1958-1965*, Clarendon. p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Over the following three years, Operation Gandhi organised numerous small scale demonstrations, initially outside the War Office and then at military bases throughout the country. The group had around forty to fifty members, often with pacifist and Quaker influences, who, despite their efforts, managed to attract only limited media attention. By 1954 the campaign was becoming fatigued, and a last ditch attempt at revival was a change of name to the Non-violence Resistance Group which, it was thought, might be more appealing to the British public. Unfortunately for them this had little effect, and their NVDA protest approach took a back seat for a while. This was until May, 1957, when PPU member Harold Steele set out to sail to Christmas Island hoping to prevent planned US atomic tests. His protest was arranged by what was now called the Emergency Committee for Direct Action Against Nuclear War, many members of which had been part of Operation Gandhi.<sup>5</sup> He only made it as far as Japan before the tests were carried out. It was, nevertheless, a successful propaganda exercise and reported widely. Another name change followed and the resulting Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War (DAC) was soon inspired to organise the first Aldermaston march in 1958.

The Aldermaston march was an annual demonstration that took place over the Easter bank holiday weekend (1958-1965).<sup>6</sup> On the first of these three-day events, protestors marched from London to Aldermaston to protest at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) that was housed at a decommissioned air base, RAF Aldermaston. The following year, the march was taken over by CND, who turned it around to end in London from then on.<sup>7</sup> CND was established in 1958 as a law-abiding anti-nuclear campaign and already had an extensive following. They were intent on attaining nuclear disarmament through demanding support from the the Labour Party. CND's leadership disapproved of DAC's NVDA approach. Writer Christopher Driver explains that 'The DAC was the heart and soul, or the thorn in the flesh, according to

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> There was no march in 1964.

<sup>7</sup> CND had no official membership until 1966, but would consider the Aldermaston crowds to be their supporters.

taste, of CND'.<sup>8</sup> Although still small in numbers, DAC maintained some media attention for their persistent base invasions and especially their tactic of going limp on arrest to create maximum disruption without conflict. The Aldermaston marches, however, attracted substantially more support than they could muster elsewhere. This suggested that the public were certainly concerned about nuclear policy, but not quite ready to break the law to get their opinions across. It seemed that, for this to happen, some careful planning was required.

Early in 1960, a young American Youth CND executive and LSE postgraduate student called Ralph Schoenman, began to formulate ideas on how to combine the NVDA tactics of the DAC with the mass demonstrations of CND. He introduced his ideas to Hugh Brock and April Carter from the DAC and some New Left acquaintances (including Alan Lovell, Ralph Miliband and Stuart Hall) who were meeting at the left-wing Partisan Coffee House in Carlisle Street, London. It was here that the name Committee of 100 was first thought up. Driver states that at this particular meeting:

There was also a painter called Gustav Metzger. Both Schoenman and Metzger were reading in the Italian Renaissance period and they decided afterwards that the title 'Committee of 100' had been a subconscious reminiscence of the Guelphs and their 'Council of 100'.<sup>9</sup>

Schoenman realised that in order to establish what he envisaged in C100, he would need support from at least one substantially well-known figure. Pacifist philosopher Lord Bertrand Russell was an obvious first choice, as he was at the time the President of CND. Schoenman contacted Russell through April Carter, and arranged to visit him at his home in Wales. On meeting Schoenman for the first time, Russell was quickly impressed by the younger man's 'astonishingly complete, untouchable self-confidence', and the fact that he was 'bursting with energy and teeming with ideas'.<sup>10</sup> Russell regarded these aspects of Schoenman's personality as balanced by his being

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<sup>8</sup> Driver, C. (1964) *The Disarmers. A Study in Protest*, Hodder and Stoughton Limited. p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 112. The Guelphs were a faction supporting the Pope in Italy in the later middle ages in opposition to the Holy Roman Emperor.

<sup>10</sup> Russell, B. (1969) *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, George Allen and Unwin. p.109.

'inexperienced and a little doctrinaire'.<sup>11</sup> Even so, Russell recognised enormous promise in Schoenman's proposals, upon which he felt he could be sure to exert some wisdom and discipline.

Together they set about devising and launching C100. Their plan was to call for mass civil disobedience to challenge the authorities to 'fill the jails'. They anticipated this would result in prison overload and large-scale disorder. In a Gandhian style, they intended to be explicit about their intentions and also to be non-cooperative at every stage of protest and arrest. Public support of this, they hoped, would force a government U-turn on its defence policies that would result in a complete rejection of nuclear weaponry. They invited one hundred individuals to form the committee. They chose people who they considered would be sympathetic both to the proposed protest method and anti-nuclear cause. Many of these were known actors, writers and artists with effective media appeal. Russell was made nominal president, some office posts were allocated and a working group was formed to carry out ground work. Despite these contrasting levels of involvement, they hoped to maintain an egalitarian ethos which required consensus when making campaign decisions. The aim was that, by having an anti-hierarchical committee with 100 affiliated names, all members would be equally liable for calling on mass support for NVDA. This, they thought, would prevent individuals from being singled out by the authorities for prosecution.

This provocative, new approach inspired many to join up immediately. An early problem, however, was that it also provoked tensions within CND that culminated in a public altercation between Russell and CND Chair Canon Collins. What led to this was Collins' objection to the seemingly clandestine manner in which C100 members were approached. The new campaign was only outed when a letter addressed to a John Connell was wrongly addressed to a different man of the same name. He passed the story on to the *Evening Standard*, which promptly published it on 28 September 1960.<sup>12</sup> This led to a spate of media interest over the CND in-fighting, especially when Russell

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Duff, P. (1971) *Left, Left, Left*, Alison and Busby. p.171.

eventually resigned as President.<sup>13</sup> It was a tense media spectacle when the inaugural C100 meeting took place at the Friends' Meeting House in Euston Road, London on 22 October 1960.

### **Purpose and Method.**

The first C100 demonstration was planned for 18 February 1961, as a sit-down demonstration outside the War Ministry in Whitehall. Bertrand Russell, in his 89th year, amidst a crowd of smartly dressed demonstrators, gave gravity and impetus to the call for nuclear disarmament using mass NVDA. The public responded as the organisers had intended and the authorities were met with the first ever large-scale public sit-down demonstration in Britain, with an estimated 5,000 newly committed non-violent direct activists on board. Russell presented C100's declaration which read:

The nuclear powers of East and West are holding the people of the world to ransom. It is time for the people to act. Today we are taking positive action against the insane nuclear policies of our Government. We demand the immediate scrapping of the agreement to base Polaris carrying submarines in Britain. We demand the complete rejection by our country of nuclear weapons and all policies and alliances that depend upon them. Hitler tried to wipe out a whole people. Today the nuclear tyrants of East and West threaten the entire human race with extinction. We call upon the scientists to refuse to work on nuclear weapons. We call upon workers to black all work connected with them and to use their industrial strength in the struggle for life. We call upon people from all walks of life to take direct action to bring the production of nuclear weapons to a halt. Our action today is the first step in a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience. We hereby serve notice on our Government that we can no longer stand aside while they prepare to destroy mankind.<sup>14</sup>

Over the following eight years of action, C100 organized rallies, military base invasions and sit-down demonstrations of various sizes and levels of success. Details of the most significant of these will be presented in following chapters. For now, I will present a very brief overview of the campaign's highlights.

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<sup>13</sup> Russell, B (1969) *Op. cit.* p. 111.

<sup>14</sup> Bradshaw, R. Gould, D. and Jones, C. (Eds) (1981) *From Protest to Resistance: the Direct Action Movement against Nuclear Weapons*, Peace News Pamphlet 2, Mushroom, Nottingham. p. 45.

C100's largest demonstration was on 17 September 1961 in Trafalgar Square which the authorities, clearly threatened by C100's growing popularity, made every effort to prevent. In effect, this enhanced the campaign's popularity by attracting major press coverage both before and after the event. People sat all day, defying the powers of control, with an estimated 12,000 people attending.<sup>15</sup> However, the original idea, that an absence of leaders would prevent individuals from being singled out soon proved to be misguided, as did the notion that filling the jails would cause political chaos. The police decided who they would arrest and when. In early December 1961, six members who happened to be in the C100 office when it was raided by the police (the Wethersfield Six), were charged on two counts of conspiracy under Section One of the Official Secrets Act for planning a military base invasion. This more punitive approach by the authorities was set to continue and intended to deter further support for NVDA. It was successful to a degree, often removing the most active and courageous participants from the working groups.

Organizational change followed, with the introduction, in 1962, of smaller regional C100 groups across the country. This happened in response to a call from within the campaign for actions to be more widely accessible, with greater agency beyond the capital. The idea was that local actions could be organized and managed by these provincial groups in addition to London demonstrations and base invasions. A National Committee was set up to bring local convenors together on a monthly basis. The effect of this was not only to decentralise the campaign; it also began to overload C100 supporters with too many actions and demonstrations, with little time for recuperation in between. Even if the campaigners avoided prison, they soon became exhausted.

The Cuban missile crisis in 1962 aroused some disillusionment within the anti-nuclear movement on the grounds that, at crisis point, their demonstrations had had little influence on actual government decisions. The placating effects of the Partial Test Ban Treaty in the same year also contributed to a campaign decline. Russell resigned in

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<sup>15</sup> Taylor, R, and Pritchard, C (1980) *The Protest Makers*, Pergamon Press. p. 11.

September 1962, taking with him many of the big names. Internal tensions soon began to develop over campaign direction. At the national C100 'Way Ahead' conference in London (9-10 February 1963), a group of eight individuals presented a paper called *Beyond Counting Arses* that called for a new approach that was determined to be less open with the authorities when organizing actions. With a somewhat revolutionary overtone, they addressed the need to confront the 'nuclear state' for its illegitimate, dangerous and undemocratic policies.<sup>16</sup> There were some strong crossovers between this group and a small, leftist revolutionary group known as Solidarity that had begun to feature strongly within C100.<sup>17</sup> This anarchist fringe suggested that a more subversive NVDA approach was required to challenge the government effectively. Their ideas were not agreed to or adopted by C100 through consensus, but for some this did not matter.

In April 1963, a group calling themselves the Spies for Peace published a document called *Danger! Official Secret*, that revealed the whereabouts of secret government bunkers across Britain. These were underground Regional Seats of Government (RSGs) from which the country would be run in the event of nuclear war. They also disclosed information about the contents of one particular bunker in Berkshire known as RSG6, which they had clearly gained access. The revelations coincided with the Aldermaston March of that year and, to the dismay of CND leaders, a large section of the march broke off to protest at RSG6. The Spies for Peace episode created a media storm, not only because the public learned that there was no provision for them in event of a nuclear war, but also because of the massive man-hunt for the perpetrators, who were widely regarded as having C100 connections. Despite the authorities having some clues to their identities, they were never caught.<sup>18</sup> Over the years, C100 progressed from being an open, pacifist, Gandhian style protest group, to a more subversively inclined, tactically pacifist group with libertarian socialist influences. In addition to the larger-scale demonstrations, a tendency for stunt-like, often maverick actions emerged. In

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<sup>16</sup> *Beyond Counting Arses*, (1963) Hannan Committee of 100 Papers, Box 1, L/100/63/23, Commonwealth Archives, J. B. Priestley Library, University of Bradford.

<sup>17</sup> I will clarify the relationship between Solidarity, *Beyond Counting Arses* and the Spies for Peace later in this thesis.

<sup>18</sup> The homes of *Beyond Counting Arses* signatories were raided.

C100's later years the nuclear issue became increasingly subsumed within a diversity of other protest aims including homelessness and the Vietnam War. By 1968 most C100 members had either moved on to concentrate on these campaigns, were exhausted or had lost interest, and C100 came to an end.

### **The Wider Political Context: An Overview.**

In order to historically situate C100, an overview of the cultural and political context that gave rise to the campaign is required. The initial postwar years are often regarded as a time of consensus in British politics.<sup>19</sup> Whether this is actually the case, or more latent elements of discontent prevailed, it is important to trace how an eventual environment of political mistrust and rising dissent came about. The reasons behind this increasing disregard for authority in a seemingly content nation are complex and multifarious. It is important, however, to critically examine the common assumption that the consenting 1950s gave way to the rebellious 1960s overnight.<sup>20</sup>

There are many factors that prompted the development of a counterculture in postwar Britain. Limited as I am in scope here, I will focus solely on the influences which I consider to have immediately impacted upon the formation of C100.<sup>21</sup> A major factor requiring attention is that of postwar economic changes giving rise to a sense of affluence, especially in the young. This in turn contributed to an upsurge in popular youth culture that encouraged young adults to identify themselves as a distinct group, with their own beliefs and desires. Another factor that I will briefly examine is a new international reciprocity of information exchange that came about following a boom in television purchases and international travel. This created broader public interest in affairs overseas. One impact of this was to highlight political struggles around the globe and prompt fresh demands for civil rights. The late 1950s witnessed a rapid decline of

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<sup>19</sup> Lent, A. (2001) *British Social Movements Since 1945*, Palgrave. p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas, N. (2008) 'Will the real 1950s Please Stand Up?', *Cultural and Social History*, Volume 5, Issue 2. pp. 227-236.

<sup>21</sup> Marwick, A. (1998) *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974*. Oxford University Press. Marwick gives an elaborate account of what he saw to be a comprehensive analysis of these factors.



confidence in British international policy, especially over the 1956 Suez crisis. The combination of this and the Soviet reaction to the Hungarian uprising in the same year gave birth to the New Left. These developments have particular relevance to the reemergence of British protest, and therefore, in order to consider any impact on the mass participation tactics of C100, a short overview of them is also required. None of these influential factors can stand alone. They were all mutually interactive, effectively giving rise to the widespread British youth counterculture out of which C100 emerged.

### **Consensus and The Postwar Domestic Economy.**

Following their landslide victory in 1945, the Labour government initially enjoyed popular support despite a slow, gradual economic recovery and a delayed end to wartime rationing. Political historian Adam Lent describes how a combination of this prudent environment, alongside postwar reconstruction and the setting up of the welfare state, created an atmosphere with insufficient incentive for explicit complaint.<sup>22</sup> Political sociologist Peter Kerr, however, suggests that this presumed political consensus was more likely due to a lingering sense of compliance rather than any positive sense of satisfaction.<sup>23</sup> Some degree of wartime rhetoric was maintained well into the 1950s, with a continued emphasis on duty, deference to authority and national imperialist pride.<sup>24</sup> Housewives, however, who were more immediately affected by consumption trends, were increasingly frustrated with prolonged austerity. There was also rising dissatisfaction with other political issues, such as the nationalisation of bankrupt industries (including the Coal Board and railways), and a failure to deliver the promise of full employment or to address the massive housing deficit.<sup>25</sup> All of this eventually contributed to the Conservative electoral recovery in 1951.<sup>26</sup>

A distraction soon appeared in the shape of a sharp increase in affordable consumer goods supported by improved wages and extensive borrowing. The austere atmosphere

<sup>22</sup> A. Lent (2001) *Op. cit.* p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> Kerr, P. (1999) 'The Postwar Consensus: A Woozle that Wasn't', in D. Marsh et al., *Postwar British Politics in Perspective*, Polity Press. p. 67.

<sup>24</sup> National service continued until 1960.

<sup>25</sup> Davies, A. (1984) *Where did the Forties go?* Pluto Press. pp. 70 – 80.

<sup>26</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I. (2002) *Austerity in Britain*. Oxford University Press. p. 226.

of the early postwar years in Britain was, by the mid 1950s, substantially replaced by a new and growing sense of affluence. Newly relaxed hire purchase laws added to the high street fever, and a widespread investment in television sets, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and motor cars effectively increased the average household debt in the years between 1956 and 1959 at a rate hitherto unseen.<sup>27</sup> This affluence was somewhat unstable and short-lived, however, and this period has since been described as an 'age of illusion'.<sup>28</sup> Also, while living standards in Britain are generally regarded to have improved during these years, it is important to note that the domestic and economic situation was often dependent on class and ethnicity.<sup>29</sup> For the white middle-class wife and mother, however, we see a new confidence in spending, rivalled only by that of the young, single wage earner.

### **Youth Identity, Affluence and Selfhood.**

The earliest influential research into youth and spending in postwar Britain was carried out by Mark Abrams who suggested that teenagers were the single most affluent social group in the late 1950s.<sup>30</sup> It is important to recognise, however, that the appearance of teenagers was not a postwar phenomenon. There is clear evidence to indicate a rise in youth consumerism and culture between the wars.<sup>31</sup> It is not easy, however, to contrast these groups of young adults, separated by a generation, without any clear terms of reference. Abrams' research was pioneering in the field, but his definition of teenagers, as being between school age and marriage, is less than ideal because the average age of school leaving and marriage fluctuates over time. Arbitrarily grouping together 'young people', 'youth' and 'teenagers' into a single category is clearly problematic and although a general increase in postwar spending by the young is evident, it is necessary to be cautious about who this actually represents. Cultural historian Bill Osgerby argues that:

<sup>27</sup> Osgerby, B (1998) *Youth in Britain Since 1945*, Blackwell. p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Bogdanor, V and Skidelsky, R (1970) *The Age of Affluence, 1951-64*. Macmillan. p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> For a better understanding of living standards in Britain at this time see Webster, W. (1998) *Imagining Home. Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945-65*. UCL Press. And Gazeley, I. (2003) *Poverty in Britain, 1900-1965*. Palgrave.

<sup>30</sup> Abrams, M (1961) *Teenage Consumer Spending in 1959*. London Press Exchange. p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Fowler, D. (1995) *The First Teenagers. The Lifestyles of Young Wage-earners in Inter war Britain*, Woburn. p. 110.

...the concept of 'youth' is a social concept – a subjective set of cultural characteristics shaped by the social, economic and political conditions of a particular historical context.<sup>32</sup>

While to some extent we can differentiate between types of postwar youth culture in terms of class, with the more middle-class New Left and Beatniks, and the working-class Teds and Rockers, there is evidence to suggest that something new was happening here that defined the era.

There are clearly many complex ideas that require attention for a reliable examination of the relationship between youth and society at any one time. For the purpose of this inquiry, however, I will consider a generalised interpretation of the spending habits of young people and the impact of this on youth identity. Osgerby has examined the distinguishing features of postwar youth and concluded that;

In the 1950s and 1960s the wage packets of young workers were not bulging. Yet compared to those of their predecessors, they were proportionately more replete and many young people did enjoy a degree of relative prosperity on entering the world of work.<sup>33</sup>

The 'discretionary spending' of young wage earners had doubled in comparison to prewar levels with the sale of goods targeted at the young such as records, record players, bicycles and motorcycles on the increase.<sup>34</sup> The impact of young peoples' disposable income on the entertainment industry and their interest in popular music soon began to shape youth culture in Britain. As a group in 1959, teenagers were responsible for the purchase of 49% of record players, and the same study showed the film industry began to address the youth market, with young audiences accounting for 29% of cinema ticket sales.<sup>35</sup> It was in this environment that the 'pop star' phenomenon emerged, with Britain having its own successful response to America's icons with the

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<sup>32</sup> Osgerby, B. (1998) *Op. cit.* p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

<sup>35</sup> Abrams, M. (1961) *Op. cit.*

likes of Adam Faith, Cliff Richard and the Beatles taking the lead. Coffee bars, especially targeting the young, with juke boxes and live entertainment, were springing up in city centres, and the customers began to sense that they themselves had an impact on what was provided for them.

This consumption-led youth culture rested upon a historically distinctive sense of self. Young people were encouraged to make their voices heard and their desires and opinions were increasingly regarded. Significantly, the venues that attracted young adults were valuable recruiting grounds for a variety of campaigns and protest group support. C100 consistently made use of coffee shops, for example, for distributing leaflets and gathering pledges for demonstrations.<sup>36</sup> These environments created a separate space for young people to nurture and define a common culture. For some, this included a counterculture. To many young adults, involvement in demonstrations and events such as the Aldermaston march marked a further detachment from their parents. A particular attraction of this three day event was the reported participation of well known pop artists. This legal demonstration became a valuable occasion for C100 recruitment. The fact that many of C100's celebrity artists, actors and writers were also young adults was also significant. It promoted a commonality of youth, pop and countercultural identity. This inspired in a generation an unprecedented sense of self confidence and personal power.

A postwar shift in notions of the self which increasingly emphasised self-expression is characteristic of the generation who came to be known as the baby boomers.<sup>37</sup> These young adults were also influenced by a range of other social forces. For any individual, the dominant political or social rhetoric and ideologies that pervade their formative years have a profound and lasting psychological effect. As a child who grew up in the postwar years in Britain, historian Carolyn Steedman witnessed an end to rationing and the implementation of the welfare state. In *Landscape for a good woman* she suggests that for the people of her generation this context encouraged a sense of self worth and

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<sup>36</sup> The Partisan Coffee House, for example, was a meeting place for young socialists.

<sup>37</sup> Donnelly. M, (2005) *Sixties Britain. Culture, Society and Politics*, Pearson Education Limited. p. 26.

entitlement, saying:

I think I would be a very different person now if orange juice and milk and dinners at school hadn't told me, in a covert way, that I had a right to exist, was worth something. My inheritance from those years is the belief (maintained always with some difficulty) that I do have a right to the earth.<sup>38</sup>

Steedman also explains how the postwar British state school system's mainstreaming of creative and autobiographical writing was further responsible for the promotion of self-expression and consequently self-importance, in school children.<sup>39</sup> Steedman lived through this postwar cultural shift, and implicit in her account is a sense that this emergence of self-worth and expression was a positive experience.

More recently, cultural historian Mark Donnelly has taken a more critical view of this era. He considers that, in contrast to those of their parents' generation, postwar children were seen to be entering a 'golden age' of consumerism out of which eventually developed a culture of self that favoured 'hedonism over self-discipline, play over work and sexual gratification over restraint'.<sup>40</sup> He regarded the generation which reached adulthood by the early sixties to have developed a common belief in the personal right to self-gratification and well-being that was made manifest in pop culture and having fun.

Whilst there is evidence to support some of Donnelly's claims for this generation, the C100 narratives suggest that the emergent celebration of personal rights was not necessarily altogether selfish but also had political outcomes. A concurrent development of interest in human rights, that exceeded the realms of self, will be investigated further in chapter two. A global rise in identity politics and demands for civil rights was to follow, out of which would emerge the campaigns and demands that came to be regarded as the rebellious and permissive 1960s.

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<sup>38</sup> Steedman, C. (1986) *Landscape for a good woman*. Virago press. p.122.

<sup>39</sup> Steedman, C. (1999) 'State-Sponsored Autobiography' in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort, Chris Waters (eds) *Moments of modernity. Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964*. Pandora Press. pp. 41-54.

<sup>40</sup> Donnelly, M. (2005) *Op. cit.* p 9.

### **The Permissive Society.**

The term 'Swinging Sixties' denotes this era of permissiveness and is often used to imply new levels of promiscuity rather than an inclination for civil rights. Clearly, this decade witnessed a move, especially in the young, to disentangle the realms of law and morality, of public and private. The term 'permissive', however, has developed negative overtones as it has mostly been used by moral conservatives whose main agenda is the reaffirmation of the nuclear family and Christian belief. Sociologist Jeffrey Weeks has argued that the term 'permissiveness' became:

A political metaphor, marking a social and political divide. [...] A charged and emotive term, obscuring, in its ambivalence, more than it illuminated'.<sup>41</sup>

Weeks' ideas are relevant here, as he suggests parallels between the permissive society and the capitalist society. He identifies two significant effects of postwar consumerism and affluence. Firstly the working-class involvement in this mass consumer market initiated the demise of their clear distinction as a social group. Historian Lucy Robinson reminds us that by the early 1960s, British class distinctions were less apparent than ever before. She argues:

Cultural experiences rather than traditional class definitions seemed to be impacting voting patterns. The working class seemed to be blurring with the middle class and the age of affluence had unsteady traditional alliances.<sup>42</sup>

The effect of this was to transform social attitudes, or at least create more flexibility in social thought, leading some to civil liberty campaigns which would not otherwise have appeared to be in their interest.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, Weeks looks to German philosopher Herbert Marcuse to explain the theorised links between moral ideas and consumerism. Marcuse considered how self denial and restraint in terms of saving, which was necessary for early capitalist accumulation, could be likened to postwar deference and morality. This gave way to permissiveness and eroticism that might be analogised in terms of spending

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<sup>41</sup> Weeks, J. (1981) *Sex, Politics and Society. The regulation of sexuality since 1800*. Longman. p 249.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, L (2007) *Gay men and the left in Post-war Britain*. Manchester University Press, pp 10-11.

<sup>43</sup> Weeks, J. (1981) *Op. cit.*

to support the developed capitalist consumer society.<sup>44</sup> Marcuse's ideas were hailed by the radicalised youth of 1960s Britain as a clear explanation of liberal changes in social life.<sup>45</sup>

Michael Schofield's research *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People*, which investigated youth culture in the late 1960s, found that despite the media excitement, promiscuity in young adults was exaggerated.<sup>46</sup> Whilst it is evident that this era gave rise to a new liberal attitude towards sexual behaviour and orientation, there was actually only a gradual increase in premarital sex.<sup>47</sup> A media focus on sexual morality defined the 1960s in terms of increased and widespread promiscuity, and yet the other effects that these new values had on British postwar society are often neglected. Increasing demands for civil liberty were eventually reflected in political legislation, and can be seen in the relaxation of laws concerning, for example; gambling, suicide, capital punishment and obscenity. Old principles were replaced with a new moral code based on humanitarian issues, the greatest of which was the individual's right to health and survival. The anti-nuclear movement was a fitting response to these new values and concerns, and encouraged an increasingly global outlook, forging links with many other international civil rights campaigns.

### **The Emergence of an Increasingly Global Identity.**

A rapid increase in television set sales, from the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 onwards, aroused fresh interest in international politics.<sup>48</sup> By the mid 1950s the destructive nature of human conflict was widely apparent to the majority of the population through television and cinema. Often shockingly explicit, it induced concern for, and an understanding of, what Donnelly refers to as the 'global village' and the 'interdependence of nations'.<sup>49</sup> Images of the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p. 250.

<sup>45</sup> Marcuse, H. (1964) *One Dimensional Man*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

<sup>46</sup> Schofield, M. (1973) *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People*. Allen Lane.

<sup>47</sup> Weeks, J. (1981) *Op. cit.* p. 253.

<sup>48</sup> Sandbrook, D (2005) *Never had it so good*, Little, Brown. p. 360.

<sup>49</sup> Donnelly, M (2005) *Op. cit.*

Civil Rights Movement in the US and South African Apartheid enabled a new level of consciousness to permeate the prevailing propagandas of military veneration and heroism. Personal rights, human rights and civil rights were emergent terms in an evolving language which, using writer Liz Heron's words, generated a 'fever of optimism' compared to the 'hardships and horrors of war'.<sup>50</sup> The struggles faced abroad entered British homes and conversations in an unprecedented manner. International images of mass demands for change proved inspirational, especially for the younger viewers.

The significance of this unparalleled exchange of information should not be underestimated. It was supported by an increase in global travel which encouraged communication between political campaigns on an international scale. More students were travelling overseas to complete their studies (Ralph Schoenman, for example, had come from the US) and, by the late 1950s, campaigners were beginning to travel to support each other's causes. The Aldermaston march often featured foreign participants and speakers. African-American civil rights campaigner Bayard Rustin spoke at the first march and returned home inspired with ideas of peaceful mass demonstrations.<sup>51</sup> He went on to organise the march on Washington of 1963. A young Japanese woman, Miyoko Matsubara, also attended in 1962 to discuss her experience of surviving Hiroshima.<sup>52</sup> This reciprocity of international information worked to interconnect and motivate civil rights campaigns on a global scale. Aldermaston in particular was precursory to many other international events as Peggy Duff recalls:

By 1963 sixty other countries had marched in its wake - not always with the same theme, but in the same spirit, with the same mass refusal to conform, the same mass determination to change the world.<sup>53</sup>

Never before had so many political ideas traversed the globe so swiftly, in such an unofficial capacity. The effect of the rise in television and international travel was, it

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<sup>50</sup> Heron, L, (Ed) (1985) *Truth, Dare or Promise. Girls growing up in the Fifties*. Virago. p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, J. (1997) *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen*, Harper Collins, p. 214.

<sup>52</sup> *The Daily Herald*, 24 April 1962, p 9.

<sup>53</sup> Duff, P. (1971) *Op. cit.* p. 132.



seemed, potentially revolutionary and at least for some people did prompt a revolution of thought and a confidence in dissent. This also gave the government a new concern; that they should give even more careful thought to public opinion in making policy decisions.

### **Cold War Politics and The New Left.**

An increasingly intense Cold War situation preceded a swift decline of confidence in British international policy in the late 1950s. From the demarcation of control in Germany, through the Berlin blockade of 1948, growing Soviet influence over other communist countries and the formation of NATO, the fervent military build up eventually spiraled the Soviet-American relations into an all-out military stand off.<sup>54</sup> Nuclear testing by both sides of the East-West divide was on the increase. Only half a decade on from what was seen to be a victory for peace, the world had once more become a very dangerous place. Although there was still much public support for Britain's involvement in NATO and a widely perceived need to take part in a military race for power, there was, at the same time, evidence of an emergent sense of public doubt. The Suez Crisis of 1956 was the most significant event of this era to generate widespread disillusionment and profound embarrassment for the British government.

In March 1956 Britain, under some pressure from the US, adhered to an earlier agreement and withdrew its last colonial troops from Egypt. The Suez Canal, controlled by the British owned Suez Canal Company, was the main thoroughfare for importing oil to Britain. Indeed, two thirds of Western Europe's oil supply was delivered via the canal.<sup>55</sup> It was clearly an enormous blow, especially to Britain, when on 26 July 1956, Egypt's leader Colonel Gamal Nasser announced that the Suez Canal Company was to be nationalised, and that fees would be collected from those making use of the waterway. British Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden was outraged and immediately began plans for military action, in direct opposition to US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' expressed wishes. In October, at a secret meeting in Paris attended by British,

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<sup>54</sup> Dockrill, M (1988) *The Cold War 1946-1963*. Macmillan. pp. 44 - 47.

<sup>55</sup> Blake, R. (1985) *The Decline of Power 1915-1964*. p. 366.

French and Israeli delegates, a clandestine plan for invasion was agreed. On 29 October Israel attacked Egyptian forces close to the canal as part of the underhand plan. Britain and France then gave what they knew to be an unrealistic ultimatum for both armies to retreat from the area. This was followed on 31 October by British and French air strikes and then an invasion on 5 November. The UN demanded an immediate ceasefire, and the Soviets threatened nuclear intervention, but all was promptly halted two days later when news about the secret meeting surfaced. The affair achieved none of the perpetrators' objectives but instead gained them widespread international acrimony, the closure of the canal until March 1957 and an economic crisis with a run on the British pound.

The timing of the affair, in that it diverted international attention from the Soviet invasion of Hungary, only added to the controversy. The situation provoked intense protest both inside and outside the House of Commons. Hugh Gaitskell, the opposition leader, called the situation a 'disastrous folly' and claimed that there were:

Millions and millions of British people - the majority of the nation - who were deeply shocked by the aggressive policy of the Government.<sup>56</sup>

The public responded with numerous demonstrations and, on 1 November 1956, 2,000 demonstrators marched to the Houses of Parliament chanting 'We don't want war'.<sup>57</sup> Some were arrested following scuffles with the police. The Suez Crisis brought to the foreground debates and doubts in British postwar international policy which would echo throughout the years to come, giving strength to the left-wing radical groups that proved to be increasingly popular with the young, and having a major impact upon future protest and youth counterculture.<sup>58</sup>

The intellectual left in Britain had experienced what cultural historian Dennis Dworkin described as a 'decade of defeat' as an era resounding with Prime Minister Harold

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<sup>56</sup> *The Times*, 1 November 1956, p.10.

<sup>57</sup> A, Lent (2001) *Op cit.* p. 32.

<sup>58</sup> Bartlet, C. (1977) *A History of Postwar Britain. 1945-1974*. Longman Press. p. 136.

Macmillan's reported slogan 'You've never had it so good'.<sup>59</sup> C100 playwright John Osborne illustrated the despondency of young radicals at the time in his play *Look Back in Anger*, in which lead character Jimmy Porter argues 'There aren't any good, brave causes left'.<sup>60</sup> The combination of an increasing dissatisfaction with the British Communist Party (or Old Left) and the political events of 1956 laid the foundations for a new intellectual and leftist political movement that became known as the New Left. A common ground here was a rejection of the orthodox Marxism of the Old Left, but there was some divergence in practice and on grounds of intellectual significance. Some individuals joined the Trotskyite Socialist Labour League, and others took their revisionist Marxist ideas to the Labour Party. Universities also became focus points for many debates and demonstrations, and it is here that the name New Left emerged, denoting a fresh voice of dissent, bringing energy to the intellectual left in Britain.

The origins of the name New Left were to be found in two journals of political theory; *The Reasoner*, which later became *The New Reasoner (NR)* and *The Universities and Left Review (ULR)*. In short, the authors of the *Reasoner* were mostly former Communist Party members such as E.P. Thompson. They came from the prewar generation which had resigned from the party in response to Krushchev's 1956 speech concerning Stalin's atrocities.<sup>61</sup> The *ULR*, in contrast, was formed by a group of young academics with Oxford University connections, and its initial editors had an average age of twenty-four. The convergence of these young academics with common anti-imperialist, cultural and political ideas, soon formed what Political historian Lin Chun described as:

A new intelligentsia which, compared with the older generation, came up by way of scholarship rather than privilege, and lacked some of the social graces or class snobberies of its predecessors.<sup>62</sup>

Despite some years of debate and minor conflict *NR* and *ULR* eventually merged

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<sup>59</sup> Dworkin, D. (1997) *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, Duke University Press, p. 45.

<sup>60</sup> Osborne, J. (1957) *Look Back in Anger*, Faber.

<sup>61</sup> For a transcript of the speech see <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956krushchev-secret1.html>

<sup>62</sup> Chun, L. (1993) *The British New Left*. Edinburgh University Press, p. 95.

together to form one academic journal in January 1960; *The New Left Review (NLR)*. It was the formation of this journal that prompted the widely recognised name of the New Left. Initial subscriptions to the journal surpassed nine thousand, and although this was not a revolutionary scale of distribution, it clearly pointed to an increased radicalisation of, amongst others, the intellectual youth within British universities.<sup>63</sup> The New Left had crossovers with the anti-nuclear movement. E.P Thompson, for example, was one of the founding members of CND. Their anti-state ideals also fitted well with what C100 were trying to achieve, so they could often be relied on to support NVDA demonstrations.

This overview of the British postwar context from which C100 emerged suggests that a range of influences gave rise to the dissent manifested in C100. An analysis of these cultural and political developments clarifies the background of C100's conception and demonstrates how it recruited mass support. Through increased affluence, consumer trends and some detachment from their parents' generation, many of the youth of postwar Britain pursued a new counterculture. As a group, they became an increasingly politically mobilized generation that budded in the mid fifties and flourished into the late sixties. Although C100 was certainly not an exclusively youthful campaign, its success relied on their support. They were to be found in the coffee shops, pubs and student unions, defining their own new ideals and sense of selfhood. This emergence of confidence in personal power for change gave rise to numerous demands for improved civil liberties and, for the architects of C100, this was undoubtedly a force to capitalise on.

### **Postwar Anti-Nuclear Politics. A Literature Review.**

C100 were skilled at publicising their campaign, not only through courting media interest, but also by publishing their own material (often through alternative publishers such as *Peace News* and Freedom Press). This ranged from posters and leaflets to pamphlets and even booklets. C100 kept minutes at meetings and collated regular campaign progress reports.<sup>64</sup> There are two main examples of secondary research that

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<sup>63</sup> Kenny, M. (1995) *The First New Left*. Lawrence and Wishart Ltd. p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> Much of this can be found at the Commonwealth Collection at the University of Bradford.

have examined these C100 documents to illustrate the campaign. Firstly, Frank Myers' unpublished Ph.D. thesis 'British Peace politics: The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Committee of 100 (1957-1962)' gave rise to a published article entitled 'Civil Disobedience and Organizational Change: the British Committee of 100'.<sup>65</sup> Despite the fact that Myers' work is limited to the first two years of C100's campaign, his focus on C100 generates some excellent ideas about how small NVDA groups develop. The second example, Richard Taylor's *Against the Bomb: The British Peace Movement 1958-1965*, devotes a chapter to C100 (in a section called 'The Radicals'). To give an account of campaign progress, along with this documentary evidence, Taylor also draws upon a small selection of interviews he conducted with leading figures from across the wider movement. Both of these authors were also informed by Christopher Driver's earlier work, *The Disarmers: A Study in Protest* which drew mostly on newspaper resources to chronicle the first wave British anti-nuclear movement.<sup>66</sup> Each of these studies sketches C100's response to and position within British peace politics, and makes an invaluable contribution to an overview of anti-nuclear politics in mid twentieth century Britain. Neither, however, tell us about who the C100 protestors were or what inspired them to become involved in NVDA.

Four previous studies have investigated the first wave anti-nuclear movement with attention given to who the activists were and what motivated them. Only one of the four had a specific focus on C100; the others instead deliver analyses that reflect the wider expanse of CND support. Frank Parkin's 1968 study *Middle Class Radicalism* surveyed questionnaires resulting from the 1965 Aldermaston March and argued that a certain 'deviance syndrome' prompted young middle-class support for the cause.<sup>67</sup> Directly before the second wave peace movement erupted, Richard Taylor and Colin Pritchard's book *The Protest Makers* used a detailed questionnaire to conduct a retrospective socio-

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<sup>65</sup> Myers, F. (1971) 'Civil Disobedience and Organizational Change: the British Committee of 100', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol 86, No 1.

<sup>66</sup> Driver, C. (1964) *Op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> Names and addresses were collected on the 1965 march and questionnaires were then sent out which resulted in 445 responses. Parkin also sent out questionnaires to regional CND committees and received 358 back. Parkin, F. (1968) *Middle Class Radicalism*, Manchester University Press, pp. 6-7.

political study of CND in order to examine the decline of anti-nuclear activism.<sup>68</sup> A more recent survey was John Mattausch's *A Commitment to Campaign. A sociological study of CND*, which employed semi-structured interviews to indicate that the majority of CND members' involvement could be assigned to their 'social location' as welfare state employees.<sup>69</sup> C100 support is examined within these three research projects, yet none addresses the separate parameters of this smaller NVDA campaign. Because of this they have given rise to an inaccurate view of C100 as the radical fringe of CND, and we are left with no clear indication of a specific C100 identity. The fourth study was conducted by C100 activist Ruth Walter in 1965, and up until now has been the only one to concentrate on C100 membership identity.<sup>70</sup> This work is housed at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam and is unpublished. Whilst Walter's research is based on questionnaire responses from C100 supporters, it is not limited to individuals who, throughout the campaign, were officially signed-up C100 members.<sup>71</sup> Her collected data is very useful in giving a demographic sense of who the NVDA protestors were yet, due to the fact that it elicits short written responses to questions, it contains only limited biographical detail. I will present a more complete evaluation of all four of these research examples in chapter three, where I will further demonstrate the specific need for my biographical-based analysis of C100 member narratives.

Other sources from which a better understanding of C100's campaign can be acquired are three autobiographical accounts. *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* provides the personal reflections of the campaign founder and a short analysis of C100 from his presidential perspective.<sup>72</sup> CND secretary Peggy Duff in *Left, Left, Left*, delivers an external view of C100 that, written five years after the climax of CND/C100 tensions,

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<sup>68</sup> Taylor, R. and Pritchard, C. (1980) *Op. cit.*

<sup>69</sup> Mattausch, J. (1989) *A Commitment to Campaign. A sociological study of CND*, Manchester University Press.

<sup>70</sup> Ruth's husband Nicolas Walter's name was included in the questionnaire request, but Ruth informs me that the research purpose was her undergraduate Open University assignment and he was added purely to attract more responses.

<sup>71</sup> Her call for respondents was wider than this and included, for example, anyone who had ever worked for C100.

<sup>72</sup> Russell, B. (1969) *Op. cit.*

briefly considers what might have happened had CND and C100 joined forces.<sup>73</sup> The third account is written by two of the Wethersfield Six. Michael Randle and Pat Pottle's *The Blake Escape. How we freed George Blake and why* begins with an assessment of the Wethersfield trial.<sup>74</sup> It is an excellent resource for looking at C100 experience of imprisonment.

### **A Researcher's Motivation.**

My motivations for undertaking this research can be traced back to my own formative experience of protest. I was late to develop an interest in politics, and it was not until my second year of college, in 1990, that I became involved in the campaign against the Thatcher government's newly imposed Community Charge (or Poll Tax). The following life story will explain not only how I became politically radicalised, but also how I gained an interest in protest narratives and the use of memory as a qualitative resource.

Early on Saturday, 31 March 1990, I met up with my old school friend Mina and we joined thousands of others at Kennington Park, London; the starting point for the Anti-Poll Tax Federation march.<sup>75</sup> I was twenty-one years old, a psychology student with newly formed and idealistic politics. Vast numbers gathered, creating a joyous, carnival atmosphere and I fully expected that our peaceful parade to Trafalgar Square would motivate grass-root support for the 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' campaign.<sup>76</sup> What happened on that day is, by now, well documented, and I need not discuss in full the levels of violence and confusion that followed.<sup>77</sup> Important here, however, is that in the aftermath of this particular event, I felt changed forever. Gone was the fresh faced idealist and

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<sup>73</sup> Duff. P (1971) *Op. cit.*

<sup>74</sup> Randle. M and Pottle. P (1989) *The Blake Escape. How we freed George Blake and why*. Harrap. George Blake was a double agent whom they met in Wormwood Scrubs and subsequently helped escape to The Soviet Union.

<sup>75</sup> Mina is a pseudonym.

<sup>76</sup> The campaign aimed to generate national support in refusing to pay the Community Charge, the idea being that the costs involved in bringing resisters to court would prove to be too expensive, thus making the tax inoperable. This is, in effect, what eventually did happen despite the efforts of the authorities.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example: Burns, D. (1992) *Poll Tax Rebellion*. Attack International/AK Press. And *People Power* (2005) BBC 1, 13 March.

instead stood a political cynic.<sup>78</sup> The following morning, I scanned the newspaper and television coverage and was distressed to see what I regarded as the calculated lies of the state controlled media, and to face the crushing reality that instead of viewing our protest in terms of its successes, the public, who we so desperately needed on board, would now consider it a disgraceful organised riot. The memory of this realisation has always remained with me, and it taught me an important historical lesson; that rather than relying solely on newspapers and official documentation for information about events, we should pursue the other side of the story, and if possible interview those who were there and experienced it.

There is relevance to this episode beyond how it shaped my own life. A particular retelling in 1995 demonstrated what I now understand to be evidence of constructed memory and contested shared experience. That evening, five years after the event, Mina and I were reminiscing, and the story of the Anti-Poll Tax demonstration came up. I recounted my version of events, excited to reflect on what, for me, had been a momentous occasion. I spoke of police brutality; their determined effort to create conflict and undermine the intended protest message. Not long into my version of the story, Mina interrupted with the words, 'That's not how I remember it'. Mina's own version of events was quite different. She recalled a much more even battle between the police and protestors. She reminded me that at one point firemen were having to shelter from missiles hurled from the crowd and she also described some protestors who clearly revelled in the looting and violence. Some of the police, she argued, were obviously frightened and at times extremely vulnerable. Her position was not directly opposed to mine, just less extreme, and we agreed to disagree.

Now, twenty years after the actual event I see things a little differently. I realise now that both of our contested stories were valid, and certainly true for us as individuals at the time. In the five years between the event and its retelling in 1995 we had each selected and shaped our own accounts to fit with our newly formed identities. Graham

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<sup>78</sup> This is an example of the 'ironic' narrative mode, see: Portelli, A. 'What makes oral history different' in *Oral History Reader*, Perks. R and Thomson. A (2000) Routledge. p. 69.



Dawson and the Popular Memory Group's play on the word 'composure' is useful here; to show that both Mina and I constructed or 'composed' our own narratives to give ourselves peace of mind or 'composure'.<sup>79</sup> Neither of us purposefully fabricated or consciously withheld events. From that episode onward, however, our divergent lives had created for us more disparate identities from which we generated seemingly conflicting accounts. I was radicalised by the experience and began to mix with highly motivated anarchists. I dropped out of college and for a couple of years lived in well organised squats. My version, by then, had been shared with others whom I now identified with more greatly. I had listened to their experiences of that day and read alternative versions in the radical press and newsletters.<sup>80</sup> All such accounts were weighted heavily in favour of the protestors, telling tales of police brutality and a politically instigated riot. My account thus focused on what best presented this popular memory.<sup>81</sup> I had seen relatively little of Mina in those five intervening years, and her life had taken a path quite different from my own. She had completed college and was employed as a teacher, living in West London. The fact that she was employed by the state gave her a more sympathetic view of the authorities, and her working with children, in a relatively deprived area of London, meant that she often experienced a socially compassionate side to the police. Her version of the Poll Tax riot fitted, then, with this new identity, and explains the fact that she commented less on the police aggression and brutality, but delivered an account that represented both points of view. By including the greater context of our life stories when considering specific memories we can begin to understand much more about personal meaning. Mina and I experienced the same historic day in each other's company, and yet five years on had conflicting narratives about it. In examining this, I have demonstrated how our identities at the time of telling are likely to impact upon our memories. In short, each of us recounted a version of events from that day that was true to us at the time of telling and it is this kind of truth that the life historian must address.

<sup>79</sup> Dawson. G (1994) *Soldier Heroes, British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*, Routledge. pp. 22-23.

<sup>80</sup> In *Militant* for example or Anti-Poll Tax Federation literature.

<sup>81</sup> Yow, V. (2005) *Recording Oral History*, Second edition, Alta Mira Press. p. 54. considers a popular memory to be that which is commonly advanced by those who do not possess power, as opposed to 'official memory', by those who do.

When I eventually began my MA in Life History I knew that I wanted to record protest stories. I was eager to find a fitting protest group whose stories I could collect and examine. I was interested to see how newly recorded protest narratives might provide versions of events significantly different to what was already available in newspapers or other forms of documentary evidence. It was then that I came across C100 for the first time. In Sasha Roseneil's *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham* I read:

The DAC and the Committee of 100's stress on the responsibility of individuals to oppose nuclear weapons and their opposition to the parliamentary 'Labour - path' strategy of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), were precursors of Greenham's ethos and mode of action in the 1980s.<sup>82</sup>

Up until this point I had never heard of either the DAC or C100 and, intrigued by the precursory effect suggested by Roseneil, I decided to read further. It was then I found that there was very little written about either group (especially from a qualitative research perspective), and I recognised a gap that required attention. A growing interest in the particularities of C100's campaign cemented my new research focus and I set about finding some of those involved to interview. My MA research prompted a desire to broaden the investigation and make sense of emergent inconsistencies, and this, my doctoral thesis, is in part a response to that.

In chapter one *Methodology*, I will demonstrate the value and validity of taking a life history approach to researching C100. In chapter two *Middle-Class Radicals? Make-up and Motivation* I will examine who these C100 members were with reference to backgrounds; influences and their own reasons for participating. Chapter three *Non-Violent Direct Action. A Contentious Issue* will look at the tension between the absolute pacifists within C100 and those with more tactical intentions, and how this evolved. Chapter four *'Fill the Jails'. Committee of 100 in Action* will investigate practical

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<sup>82</sup> Roseneil, S. (1995) *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham*, Buckingham, Open University Press. p. 20.

engagement within C100 by regarding the protestors' own interpretations of their many actions and arrests. I will assess the dynamics of protestor/authority relations and trace how these changed over time. The following chapter *Imprisonment. Gender, Class and Entitlement* deals with the experiences of C100 members inside prison, with special focus on issues that emerge around class and gender. Finally in chapter six *A Libertarian Spirit? Organisation and Values* I make sense of an apparent theme across both the narratives and other literature; that C100 was increasingly libertarian in ethos, and discuss whether or not this brought about the campaign's demise. It is here that I consider further C100s' evolving organisational structure.

# Chapter One

## Methodology.

### Introduction.

Life History Research draws on subjective qualitative data to create subjective interpretative theory. It is essential, therefore, to consider a variety of factors that will invariably shape a narrative, such as memory, intended audience, personal agenda, the interpersonal relationship between researcher and researched and the social, cultural and political parameters of telling. The life historian must carefully evaluate their own influence in the collection, interpretation and presentation of other peoples lives. Psychologist Molly Andrews reminds us that:

Stories are never told in a vacuum, and nor do we as researchers simply tabulate information which we gather. Rather, we feed into the process at every level, and our subjectivity is always a part of that which we are documenting.<sup>83</sup>

This by no means makes such an investigation the 'poor cousin' of that performed by the traditional historian who works with the likes of archival documents and legal reports; nor indeed that of the sociologist who strives for representative surveys and statistically credible outcomes. The acknowledgement of this subjectivity is, in fact, one of the strengths of the life history approach, where realist notions are rejected and meaning is evidence; where interpretative analytical skills are refined and carefully employed in order to generate, build on and test theory. Reflexivity is an essential ingredient to ensure a keen understanding of, not only the research subject and focus, but also one's own investigative practice. Ken Plummer explains this as an awareness:

...of the spaces/locations - personal, cultural, academic, intellectual, historical - of the researcher in actually building the research knowledge.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Andrews, M. (2007) *Shaping History. Narratives of Political Change*, Cambridge University Press. p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Plummer, K. (2005) *Documents of Life 2. An invitation to critical humanism*, Sage Publications Ltd. p. 208.

In the introduction I reflected upon one of my own life stories to demonstrate the motivation behind my collection and interpretation of C100 protest stories. From this foundation, I must now move forward to evaluate my personal impact upon the research process and outcomes. In addition to positioning myself within the investigation reflexively, my own narrative analysis has given me some immediate insight into how and why we construct our stories, particularly within the protestor narrative genre. I can recognise what Michael Roper argues to be the psychic 'overlay' and 'underlay' of a narrative, which is:

...a psychically-orientated process, and one which operates forward from the event as well as backwards through the impact of public representations.<sup>85</sup>

Twenty years on from the Poll Tax riot, I can now re-assess it from a more remote position and regard its construction with a more discerning eye. Kirby reminds us that:

As people grow and have more experiences, their interpretation of the value of certain past actions changes. Just as succeeding generations of historians re-evaluate the past, individuals re-evaluate the various stages in their personal development.<sup>86</sup>

When I first set out, in 2002, to record C100 stories, it was forty years after the described events. In listening to the accounts I began to empathise with the idea that through contributing their versions of events, these respondents intended to set the historical record straight, and put C100 firmly on the political protest map. Within these twenty-four C100 life stories, the narrators are often reflectively interpretative and, from a position of hindsight, evaluate their own earlier held ideas and actions, contesting some and expanding upon others. This process is further enhanced by the fact that many of them are now entering their later years. Reminiscence or life review is a natural and normal process in ageing and, through these narratives, individuals are able to add shape and cohesion to their own lives and identities.<sup>87</sup> These stories can therefore be examined in this light, as rounded

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<sup>85</sup> Roper, M. (2000) 'Re-remembering the soldier heroes: the psychic and social construction of memory in personal narratives of the Great War', *History Workshop Journal*, 50, Autumn. p.184.

<sup>86</sup> Kirby, K. (2008) 'Phenomenology and the problems of Oral History', *Oral History Review*, 35, 1. p.30.

<sup>87</sup> Bornat, J. (2001) 'Reminiscence and oral history: parallel universes or shared endeavour?' *Ageing and*

accounts, often rehearsed, and purposefully composed.

In this chapter I will examine the principal methodological insights, challenges and rewards of my research into C100. I will investigate these particular protestor narratives collectively in order to identify any meaningful common memories, and/or modes of construction. I will demonstrate the implications of how these stories were collected and consider the representativeness of the procured sample. A focus on the intersubjective nature of my research is also in order, as due to the illegal nature of what occurred in some of the recounted stories, and the levels of mutual protection that are still evident between members, there are some significant ethical and methodological issues to unravel. Finally, to demonstrate the dilemmas faced when working with protest narratives I will introduce a specific case study concerning the stories of four C100 members who, during my investigation, revealed to me their involvement in the Spies for Peace episode. Before all of this, however, in order to further explain my choice of method and locate my work within the wider qualitative research context, I will briefly examine the historical evolution of life history as an approach and consider the methodological debates met along the way.

## **Life History Research: A Historical Overview**

The interdisciplinary field of Life History Research is often believed to have originated in the Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s, when a new ethnographic approach to urban sociology produced renowned texts such as Thomas and Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant* and Shaw's *The Jack Roller*.<sup>88</sup> The methodological development of the approach was guided by epistemological advances in a diversity of scholarly fields, and has been chronicled by two main overviews. Chamberlain, Bornat and Wengraf describe the approach as having a pivotal moment which they refer to as the 'biographical turn'.<sup>89</sup>

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*Society*. pp. 219–241.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas, William, I. and Florian Znaniecki. (1918). *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an Immigrant Group*. Boston: Richard G. Badger; Shaw, Clifford, R. (1930) *The Jack Roller: The Delinquent Boy's Own Story*, University of Chicago Press.

<sup>89</sup> Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J. & Wengraf, T (eds) (2000) *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Sciences*, Routledge. Introduction. p 5.

This, they argue, took place during the mid 1970s, when narrative analysis gained strength within the fluctuating borders of history and sociology. Studies up to this time they classify as the 'antecedents', that centre on 'bottom up' research; popularised by the emergence of personal tape recorders and championed by the likes of Paul Thompson in his study *The Edwardians*.<sup>90</sup> They classify the following era as the 'Early 1980s: questioning of memory and identity', where an invaluable contribution was made by a collaboration of oral historians known as The Popular Memory Group, who, as we have seen, coined the term 'composure' in describing narrative construction.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini gave meaning to misremembering and silences in order to confront the traditionalist disregard for memory as an historical resource.<sup>92</sup> Portelli argued that the originality of oral history is:

... that it tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*... oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.<sup>93</sup>

During the 1990s, Chamberlain *et al.* point to the era of 'historical and cultural understanding of agents and actions', where the inter-subjective nature of the life history approach itself came to be investigated and eventually celebrated. Feminist historians contested the objective researcher and introduced new ethical guidelines, Frisch raised the concept of 'shared authority' and, with the formation of the International Oral History Association (IOHA), a global approach was encouraged that advocated political change.<sup>94</sup> The second life history overview, in which Alistair Thomson describes four paradigm shifts in oral history, is a similar model except that it includes a more recent transformation; the digital age.<sup>95</sup> The advancement of technology in recording, archiving

<sup>90</sup> Thompson, P. (1975) *The Edwardians, The Remaking of British Society*, Wiedenfeld and Nicholson.

<sup>91</sup> Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory. Theory, politics, method', in Perks, R, and Thomson, A. (eds), (2006) *The Oral History Reader*, Second Edition. pp. 43-53. and Dawson, G. *Op. cit.*

<sup>92</sup> Portelli, A. (1991) *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, SUNY Press. and Passerini, L. (1979) 'Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 8. pp. 82–108.

<sup>93</sup> Portelli, A. (1991) *Op. cit.* p. 50.

<sup>94</sup> Armitage, S. and Gluck, S. (1998) 'Reflections on Women's Oral History: An Exchange', in *Frontiers: Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 3. pp. 1–11. Gluck, S, and Patai, D (1991) *Women's words: the feminist practice of oral history*, Routledge. And Frisch, M, (1990) *A Shared Authority. Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, SUNY Press.

<sup>95</sup> Thomson, A. (2007) 'Four paradigm transformations in oral history', *Oral History Review*, 34, 1.

and analyzing the spoken narrative has created an exciting and rapidly changing world for the oral historian. For Thomson this digital age is 'dizzying', and he leaves us uncertain as to where we are heading.

Over the years, the life history field has progressed in defiance of critical scrutiny from positivists who contested the reliability of memory and personal narrative. Qualitative researchers drew upon and developed philosophical ideas to support a new interactionist and phenomenological research position. Kirby exemplifies this perspective by arguing that:

...we cannot know the world objectively; all we can know for sure are the phenomena that appear to us in consciousness. But these phenomena, despite their subjectivity, are all we know, and all we need to know, of the world beyond us. Our perceptions of things and events, experienced, interpreted, and then communicated to others, form our history, our culture, our world.<sup>96</sup>

Life historians vary in philosophical thought, but as a practical response to criticism have pioneered new ways of collecting and assessing qualitative material. Thomson describes succinctly how the interdisciplinary nature of the approach was cultivated over time, in order to strengthen the reliability of research outcomes:

Goaded by the taunts of documentary historians, early oral historians developed guidelines to assess the reliability of oral memory (while shrewdly reminding the traditionalists that documentary sources were no less selective and biased). From social psychology and anthropology they showed how to determine the bias and fabrication of memory, the significance of retrospection, and the effects of the interviewer. From sociology they adopted methods of sampling, and from documentary history they brought rules for checking the reliability and internal consistency of their sources. The guidelines provided useful signposts for reading memories and for combining them with other historical sources to find out what happened in the past.<sup>97</sup>

The methodological advancement of life history research has clearly benefitted from a reflexive dialogue with the wider academy. Likewise, within the field, it is generally

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<sup>96</sup> Kirby, K (2008) *Op. cit.* p. 23.

<sup>97</sup> Thomson, A. (1998) 'Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History', *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 2. pp. 581-595.



accepted that reflexive practice is essential, and so the dialogue continues. With regard to my research into C100, reflexivity has been invaluable for a deeper understanding of the narratives presented to me, and it is to this discussion that I will now turn.

## **Researching C100: Methodological Context and Issues.**

### **Narrative Memory and the Nature of Oral History.**

Narrative memory cannot be regarded as definitive fact. Irrespective of how vivid and true a memory is for the individual reporting it, there are a multitude of influences on its presentation. The role of the oral historian in particular will often affect how a narrative emerges, and yet the intimacy of the interview process has some clear benefits. The possibility of negotiated meaning and the availability of visual cues, such as facial expressions and hand gestures, give the researcher an additional level of understanding which is otherwise very difficult to achieve.<sup>98</sup> Paul Thompson has argued that:

Oral evidence, by transforming the 'objects' of study into 'subjects', makes for a history which is not just richer, more vivid, and heart rending, but *truer*.<sup>99</sup>

Irrespective of whether or not oral accounts are more truthful than other resources, it can only be helpful to include them, if possible, in any historical investigation. As I have argued, official accounts of protest politics found in newspapers mostly represent the perspective of authority, as do court and parliamentary records. Clearly, then, the collection and preservation of alternative accounts (especially from those who have challenged such authority) is essential for a fuller and more balanced comprehension of the subject. Protestors' memoirs, letters and diaries are alternative historical sources, and we can learn much about Suffragette experience, for example, from Constance Lytton's *Prisons and Prisoners* and Hannah Mitchell's *The Hard Way Up*.<sup>100</sup> Yet such accounts are often limited in that they represent those with a more literary nature and personal

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<sup>98</sup> For a discussion of this see Williams, R. (2001) 'I'm a Keeper of Information': History-Telling and Voice', in *Oral History Review*, 28, 1. pp.47-48.

<sup>99</sup> Thompson, P. (2000) *The Voice of the Past*. Third edition. Oxford University Press. p.117.

<sup>100</sup> Lytton, C. (1988) *Prisons and Prisoners. The Stirring Testimony of a Suffragette*, Virago Press; Mitchell, H. (1968) *The Hard Way Up: the autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, suffragette and rebel*, Faber.

drive to reflect autobiographically in writing. To search out and record the stories of protestors who might otherwise remain silent, is a particularly attractive element of oral history.

Throughout my investigation into C100 I have collected relevant newspaper cuttings, minutes from meetings, pamphlets, posters and even copies of personal documents such as bail cards and magistrates' court fine receipts.<sup>101</sup> Along with the secondary literature on the subject I am able to identify a strong sense of veracity, both from and between these collected narratives. The identified discrepancies have, after some investigation, been revealed to be around minor factual errors (such as dates) or due to differing opinions and edited versions (like my own and Mina's over our protest narratives). This process of checking, known as triangulation, strengthens analysis by enabling one to rely more strongly on evidence that emerges in agreement with another piece of evidence. There is no hierarchy here, and each resource should be approached with equal caution. Despite Thompson's assertion that oral evidence is truer, we cannot elevate one single account above the others, and must consider that each version can tell us something specific about how and why it was produced and the significance of its composition. In using oral history, however, we can often address gaps in our understanding, ask questions and refer back to the narrator to check any disparity. Through such negotiations we are able to attain greater clarification in formulating our evaluations.

It was once believed that by the time we reach old age our memories will have deteriorated to such an extent that they can no longer be considered trustworthy.<sup>102</sup> We have since learned that, while we actually forget a good deal within the first day following an event, the greatest amount is lost during the following three to five years, and after that, we are sometimes able to retain the 'constituents of memory' for over fifty years.<sup>103</sup> A prominent factor in determining what we are able to retain is the importance

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<sup>101</sup> These were donated or lent to me by the interviewees.

<sup>102</sup> Yow, V. (2005) p. 38.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

of that memory to us. It is not so much the deterioration or fallibility of memory that requires analysis in these narratives, but what can be learnt from the factors which have determined their construction. Portelli explains that 'memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings'.<sup>104</sup> Autobiographical memory can be likened to a patchwork of available scraps that we stitch together to create the narrative quilt that best suits us at the time of telling. This, as Harold Rosen explains:

... is not a single kind of monolithic process which delivers equally a monolithic kind of text. It grows out of different kinds of images which in their turn, when they are verbalised, are shaped by a diversity of textual resources and social contexts.<sup>105</sup>

and Liz Stanley describes 'memory's lane' as:

... a narrow, twisting and discontinuous route back through the broad plains of the past, leading to a self that by definition we can never remember but only construct through the limited and partial evidence available to us - half hints of memory, photographs, memorabilia, other people's remembrances.<sup>106</sup>

These fragments of the past upon which we draw are processed to formulate a succession of personal identities throughout our lives, and each time we access them they are further shaped by a range of additional influences. As Norman Denzin explains; 'The self is a psychosocial, narrative production' and we continually recreate our selves by constructing narratives.<sup>107</sup> It is, therefore, essential for any valid theoretical analysis of C100 narratives to consider carefully how, why, where, when and with whom these stories have emerged. The intersubjective nature of this research will be discussed later, but for now, I will consider that, in constructing memories, these individuals are putting things in order, both for the history of C100 and for their own sense of well being.

The C100 respondents were aged between their late sixties and early eighties when I first

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<sup>104</sup> Portelli, A. (2000) *Op. cit.* p. 69.

<sup>105</sup> Rosen, H. (1998) *Speaking From Memory: The Study of Autobiographical Discourse*, Stoke on Trent, Trentham Books. p. 129.

<sup>106</sup> Stanley, Liz. (1996) *The Auto/Biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/Biography*. Manchester University Press. p. 62.

<sup>107</sup> Denzin, N. (2000) Foreword to Andrews, M. *et al.* (eds) (2000) *Lines of Narrative. Psychosocial Perspectives*, Routledge.

met them. Throughout the interviews I was aware of a strong sense of consistency. Opinions varied, but within steady parameters; mostly reflecting on the campaign in a very positive light, despite acknowledging their lack of success in what they had originally set out to do. For most, C100 was a highly significant feature of their lives. Diana Shelley recalls it as; 'A touchstone of how I started to think for myself,' and Christopher Farley described it as 'as a meteor across the sky'.<sup>108</sup> A recurrent emergent perspective focused on C100's impact and the precursory effect of their protest method. They argued that their drive for mass NVDA set a precedent (certainly in postwar Britain) for challenging the state. Hugh Court called it 'a new pattern for empowerment, of people to change, rather than through the ballot box.'<sup>109</sup> Peter Cadogan spoke of promoting a personal sense of responsibility saying, 'We restored conscience as a power in its own right, regardless of party lines'.<sup>110</sup> Wendy Butlin gave an example to demonstrate the same idea:

Say it was a group of people in a neighbourhood, a group of women who were living on a dangerous street and they were worried about their kids and thought they should have a street crossing. I think that now they would go back and block the road.<sup>111</sup>

It is fair to say that they may well have given greater attention to the positive aspects of C100 participation. To have discussed the campaign in terms of its failures might have demonstrated that they had wasted their time, and they clearly would have been keen to avoid such an uncomfortable narrative. As we have seen, people tend to construct their memories in order to feel good about themselves and justify their choices in life. Yow argues that we use stories:

... to profit from past experience in making current decisions about present and future, and to reassure ourselves that we have come through life's challenges and that we have learned something.<sup>112</sup>

For these respondents the C100 experience was both educational and inspirational. They learned from debates in meetings, arrests and imprisonment, and successfully raised the

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley; Interview with Christopher Farley.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Hugh Court.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Peter Cadogan.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Wendy Butlin.

<sup>112</sup> Yow, V. (2005) *Op. cit.* p. 35.

profile of the anti-nuclear campaign through non-violent people power. In a world now, where direct action is habitual, and C100 is little noted historically, these individuals clearly intend to set the record straight. My research provided them with an opportunity to do just that, within an academic setting.

This strength of similarity across C100 stories in terms of narrative construction is striking, particularly in descriptions of notable events. While my own influence as interviewer may certainly have steered the accounts (and I will touch on this later), there is still a strong indication that some form of common memory has also guided the narratives. Research shows that collective memories depicted in film and media representations, literature, folklore, song and conversation inevitably impact upon our recollections. Thomson demonstrates the effects of the film *Gallipoli* on his Anzac respondents' narratives, and Roper illustrates how popular war imagery can turn up in veteran accounts.<sup>113</sup> Rosen reminds us how the phrase 'Do you remember when...?', which he describes as 'common currency in every family', can create collective memory through negotiation.<sup>114</sup> In any community there will be some ideological similarities enhanced by conversation. In a protest group, much like a political party, strong rhetoric is pervasive and, unless dismissed through discussion or a sharp change in perspective, often durable. When we remember we make use of cultural scripts that are both drawn from our memories and regulated by the social, cultural and political context at the time of telling.<sup>115</sup> In discussing C100 involvement these respondents not only deliver accounts of what they directly experienced, their stories are also affected by memories of speeches at rallies, discussions and reports in meetings, pamphlets and newspaper reports, all of which will have fed into a common memory. This in turn is also shaped by a mutual desire to reflect positively on their campaign. Some of these narrative accounts noticeably reflect articles from *Peace News*, especially in reference to demonstrations or actions. This is understandable, as most respondents subscribed to this

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<sup>113</sup> Thomson, A. (1994) *Op. cit.* Roper, M. (2000) *Op. cit.*

<sup>114</sup> Rosen, H. *Op. cit.* p. 132.

<sup>115</sup> See Roper, M. (2000) *Op. cit.* and Kamp, M. R. (2001) 'Three lives of Saodat: communist, Uzbek, survivor', *Oral History Review*, Vol. 28, no. 2. pp. 21-58. and Thomson, A. (2007b) 'Anzac Stories: Using Personal Testimony in War History', *War and Society*, 25, 2. pp. 1-22. for further discussion of this.

particular publication, and many even worked for it in some capacity. Ideas raised in sympathetic journalism would certainly have fed into the discussion and debates of the time and, in addition, pamphlets compiled and written by C100 members themselves would have been especially influential.<sup>116</sup> The significance then of the strong agreement found in these collected stories, in describing past events and even, to some degree, in delivering opinions, demonstrates a common C100 memory. It is important to add, however, that in considering this, I am assuming that these twenty-four respondents portray the wider C100 experience and perspective, a factor which I will address below. I will explain how I came to contact my respondents, and whom it is fair to say their narratives represent.

### **Respondents and Representation.**

Life historians do not always strive towards examining representative samples. In many circumstances of qualitative research there are limited resources, and representativeness is not always achievable. In oral history projects, for example, individuals of interest may have died, moved away, or be unwilling to participate. Plummer points to a 'continuum of representativeness' in life history research and argues that 'There is no necessary superiority in the ability to generalise'.<sup>117</sup> A regular question we are met with then is 'how do we conduct reliable social interpretation from an unrepresentative sample of respondents?' An answer to this is twofold. Firstly, it is possible to identify particular case studies or even the 'telling case' whose life story will contain the significant components of the lives they come to symbolize, a closer examination of which will strengthen our understanding of such experience.<sup>118</sup> Secondly, we can strive to examine as representative a set of narratives as possible (as I have attempted with C100). From this we can code, extract and categorise the data into themes in order to construct new ideas, build theory and raise new questions. With triangulation and reflexivity to audit the process we can evaluate and make sense of our resources rather than generate generalised statistical 'fact' or 'spurious science'. Grele argued that:

<sup>116</sup> An example of this will be discussed in the Spies for Peace case study.

<sup>117</sup> Plummer, K. (2005) *Op. cit.* p. 153.

<sup>118</sup> An example of such an approach can be seen in Shostak, M, (1989) "What the wind won't take away" The genesis of Nisa- The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman" in Personal Narratives Group (ed.), *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp. 228-240.

Interviewees are selected, not because they represent some abstract statistical norm, but because they typify some historical processes. Thus, the questions to be asked concern the historian's concept of a historical process (i.e.: his [*sic*] own conception of history) and the relevance of the information garnered to that particular process. The real issues are historiographical, not statistical.<sup>119</sup>

It is still important for qualitative researchers to be scientific; in systematic, rigorous and critically analytical terms. Creative, intuitive and exploratory skills are required for making sense of the material. It is helpful to remember that those with a more quantitative historical approach must also be cautious. To obtain a truly representative sample of any study group is virtually impossible, and a reliance on statistical significance does not produce absolute fact, but statistical generalisations. With a more interpretative process we make analytical generalisations and, in addition to making sense of the material at hand, such an approach can give rise to further avenues of investigation that may otherwise have remained undiscovered.

Locating C100 respondents for my investigation was not easy, and many months of dead-ends and refusals passed before my request for interview was accepted by a South London woman named Jay Ginn.<sup>120</sup> She was a little abrupt at first on the telephone and made it very clear that she had little time to spare. When I asked her if she could pass me on to any other potential respondents she declined. On the day we met, before beginning the interview, we discussed my research aims and objectives. I soon realised that at this point it was in fact me who was being examined. Looking back, I can fully understand Andrew's description of her experience when interviewing British radicals. She said:

As they considered my request to partake in my study, some of the potential respondents were rather explicit in what I later came to call 'interviewing me for the job of interviewer'.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Grele, R. J.(1985) 'Movement without aim', reprinted in Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (eds)(1998) *The Oral History Reader*, First Edition, Routledge. p.41.

<sup>120</sup> I got in touch with her through a contact from the Brighton Peace and Environment Centre.

<sup>121</sup> Andrews, M. (2007) *Op. cit.* p. 47.

My interview style and responses to Jay's questioning were clearly acceptable, as by the end of the session she informed me that she was in fact involved in archiving C100 material, and in charge of a confidential list of names and contact details of all past members willing to contribute. This was clearly a major research breakthrough. Her demeanour had completely changed and she scanned a list of names in a book (without letting me see). At this point, she gave me five telephone numbers for women who she concluded would not mind me contacting them. These women, along with Jay, became the foundation of my MA dissertation and its publication.<sup>122</sup> On completion of this initial research I felt that I had only chipped the surface of what I wanted to know about C100, and so emerged this further investigation; my DPhil thesis.

Some research ideas arose from my original C100 interviews that, at the time, were beyond the scope of the investigation at masters level. This inspired me to take a similar interview approach for my doctoral research, only this time with a broader sample, and including men. I used the same interview guide, which enabled me to include the six 2002 recordings in the eventual analysis.<sup>123</sup> My aim was to conduct one interview with each respondent; however, it was necessary to modify this approach for three particular individuals, each of whom was reinterviewed in order to clarify discrepancies that had arisen between their stories. Moreover, two of these respondents were interviewed together on both occasions. Whilst I would have preferred to keep my approach consistent across all of the interviews, and I am aware that having a greater focus on three particular individuals will have some impact upon my findings, I had little choice other than to go ahead with them and there was not scope to reinterview all the respondents.<sup>124</sup> I judge the stories that emerged, especially those that I detail in the Spies for Peace case study, to be worth the concession.

In considering the scope of my study I was guided by Andrews' deliberation on sample

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<sup>122</sup> Carroll, S. (2004) "I was arrested at Greenham in 1962": Investigating the oral narratives of women in the Committee of 100. 1962-1968". *Oral History*, Spring Edition.

<sup>123</sup> Appendix 6

<sup>124</sup> I will demonstrate an impacting factor of two people interviewed together in the section 'Subversive Stunts' in Chapter Three.



number when she said; 'Did I wish to learn a lot about a small number of people, or a little about many people'.<sup>125</sup> I decided to keep my investigation relatively small, aiming to find about twenty respondents. I was also limited by the fact that C100 was a finite group, having just over 300 signed-up members throughout its entire duration, and that I depended on Jay's assistance and the C100 archive list. Jay's support was invaluable to my research, yet she did not give it without caution. I will discuss later the mutually protective nature of C100 members, but for now it is important to note that it was essential for Jay to preserve the confidentiality of those who had entrusted their personal details to the archive list. After some telephone discussions we agreed upon a plan. I drafted a letter inviting potential respondents to contact me, and within this letter I directed them to my personal research website to introduce myself and my research aims.<sup>126</sup> The site also gave them access to an on-line version of my earlier C100 article. I devised a basic biographical questionnaire and, with the invitation letter, I passed fifty-one copies on to Jay.<sup>127</sup> She took them home and referred to her archival list in order to add names and addresses to the stamped envelopes I had supplied. She then sent them all out, including more stamped envelopes (addressed back to me), and her own covering letter, in which she explained who I was and how she had ensured their anonymity.<sup>128</sup>

I was aware that Jay's position within my research was that of a powerful gatekeeper. She could, if she chose to, recruit only the C100 members with whom she was friendly and who she believed would reflect her own views on C100's campaign. By this point, however, it was clear to me that I was not going to get very far without her, and so to some extent I had little choice. Despite this, I came to trust Jay. She is a retired sociologist, aware of the methodological issues around choosing samples and clearly familiar with the many ethical issues around conducting qualitative research. I can also say in retrospect, having met with those she passed my letters on to, that there was no

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<sup>125</sup> Andrews, M. (1991) *Lifetimes of Commitment. Ageing, politics, psychology*. Cambridge University Press. p.43.

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.samcarroll.org/>

<sup>127</sup> See Appendix 1 and 2. We decided upon 50 then added one extra.

<sup>128</sup> See Appendix 3.

indication that she had done anything other than that which we had agreed; to send the letters out to those on the list that were the easiest, in terms of location, for me to visit.

The furthest I had to travel to interview was Leeds. Due to the fact that six of the addresses were sent to co-habiting C100 couples, the number of individuals reached amounted to 57 (23 women and 34 men). Jay also gave me a statistical breakdown of the C100 members on the archive database which she had collated on 29 December 2001.<sup>129</sup> This showed that out of a total of 313 named C100 members (237 men and 76 women), the individuals for which there were contact details amounted to 136 (102 men and 34 women), a further 65 (56 men and 9 women) were known to have died. For the remaining 112 (79 men and 33 women) there were no contact details, either because they had declined to be included or because they were untraceable. This early groundwork by the C100 archivists was invaluable to me. As an outsider, I would never have managed to produce such a relatively comprehensive foundation for selecting interviewees. I felt that the limitation of having a third individual between myself and the potential respondents was insignificant set against the advantages of that relationship. Rather than being methodologically restricted to snowball sampling I found myself in a position with restricted but reliable access to a secret glacier, with knowledge of the exact proportions of what remained of that glacier, above and below the surface, and what had melted away.

An important feature here for this qualitative investigation is the finite nature of C100. These records can give some indication of how representative my interview sample is. Representation, however, was not high on my agenda for collecting narratives and so I arranged interviews as and when the individuals made contact. I initially completed twenty-three interviews, then, during my first stage of analysis I became aware that there was an element missing. From the outset, I was committed to a 'bottom up' approach and was therefore not overly concerned by the absence of celebrity voices in my collected narratives. I understood that the celebrities were not the most active

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<sup>129</sup> See Appendix 4.

members of the campaign, and were unlikely to attend working group meetings or participate much other than during demonstrations. As I intended to discuss their position in terms of C100 structure, however, I began to worry that to have no celebrity voice at all was an oversight. I contacted writer and poet Christopher Logue, who agreed to meet me and, including this new perspective, I now had fifteen male respondents and nine female.<sup>130</sup>

My decision to accept interview respondents as and when they made contact was based on the need to get going with the project. I neither selected nor restricted interviewees during this process and so am now forced to qualify the resulting sample retrospectively. As most photographic representations of C100 demonstrations indicate, it was a very white, male and middle-class campaign and, apart from a minor gendered discrepancy, my respondents largely reflect this.<sup>131</sup> Although my sample consists of mostly male narratives, I have collected a larger proportion of female narratives in comparison to the proportion of women C100 members in the campaign overall. This might be partly because my earlier article focused on women's narratives. I already had six contacts and more women may have been attracted to talking to me because of the nature of my earlier work. This did not concern me greatly, however, as I will demonstrate that for the majority of emergent themes, the male and female narratives are mostly non-conflicting, and where they differ there is still a range of perspectives to evaluate gendered experience.

It is also important to note that all of my respondents came from the archive list and therefore had previously consented to their names and details being added. This may well have impacted upon the outcomes. Perhaps a different kind of narrative might have emerged from those who no longer wished to be associated with C100, or had for whatever reason objected to participating in any form of historical account (some of whom may well, of course, have even been included in the selected fifty-one members

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<sup>130</sup> Christopher Logue was referred to in more than one narrative as having recited poetry to fellow inmates in prison. This will be discussed in chapter five.

<sup>131</sup> Ruth and Nick Walter's C100 questionnaire responses also indicate that their proportion of responses were mostly male 73% and middle-class 76%.

and did not respond). Whilst this is worth noting, there is little to be done, as there is no way of accessing such respondents, and it is unlikely that they would wish to meet with me were I able to find them. The narratives that I have collected then lean perhaps in some degree towards a more favourable view of the campaign. They represent those who wish to contribute to the historical record and who, in many ways (as will be demonstrated in my analysis), were the movers and shakers of C100. With this in mind their stories serve my purpose well. The timing of my research with the collation of the C100 archive list was serendipitous and this is the first set of recorded interviews of C100 membership ever undertaken. After twenty-four interviews, recurrent stories and common themes became progressively evident. Before long, it was clear that for these respondents, a point of saturation had been reached. An extensive picture of C100's campaign had now surfaced, from the perspective of those who had taken part, to build on earlier interpretations and broaden the existing knowledge of postwar political protest in Britain.

### **The Research Relationship.**

To examine the intersubjective nature of a life history research project it is necessary to explore the diversity of relationships and potential audiences that might arise in such an investigation. A narrator will not only take into account any immediate presence when telling their story, they will also be presenting themselves to a wider audience. This depends, of course, on the nature of the project and the manner in which it is to be published, exhibited or archived. With oral history the relationship between interviewer and respondent must be critically evaluated, with careful attention to any differences or similarities in agenda and any personal attributes such as class, gender, ethnicity, age, etc. The power relationship within the interview is particularly important, as a comfortable setting and sense of rapport will often elicit the richest material. The interviewer will have their own agenda, and yet it is also important to attend to the narrator's purpose and reasons for telling. Portelli argues that:

By opening the conversation, the interviewer defines the roles and establishes the basis of narrative authority. In fact, although an oral autobiographical narrative

may look on the surface very much like any other autobiographical *text*, it constitutes a very different autobiographical *act*.<sup>132</sup>

Such an act requires a dynamic process of reflection at every stage, including analysis and presentation. It is not an easy task, but can be managed effectively through developing reflexive research skills.

The intersubjective nature of my C100 investigation and the ethical issues that arose focused upon three main issues: establishing rapport, building trust and having a common aim. Beginning with an overview of these twenty-four encounters I will then move on to demonstrate these issues more explicitly within the Spies for Peace case study. Firstly, a little of my background is necessary to outline my subjective position for this inquiry. I am a white British woman, from a working-class background, second in my family to study to degree level and the first to continue beyond. I began this project when I was in my mid-thirties and am therefore at least a generation younger than my respondents. Politically speaking, I consider myself left-wing, atheist and libertarian, much like many of the respondents. C100 was largely a white, middle-class British campaign and, as my findings will later show, those involved had a high regard for knowledge and education. My academic position, philosophical outlook and politics therefore caused me to further identify with the majority of these C100 members, and likewise they were more sympathetically disposed towards me.<sup>133</sup> On this level, my relationship with those I interviewed often felt like that of a like-minded daughter-in-law, or niece.

It is interesting to note that this sense of mutual identification worked even further than was explicitly apparent. For example, the more pacifist respondents often engaged with me as if I, like them, were pacifist, and those with more radical and subversive perspectives discussed their memories with me as if I was in their club. I did not disclose my position on this matter until after the interviews (when often further discussions took place), as I wanted

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<sup>132</sup> Portelli, A. (1991) *Op. cit.* p. 9.

<sup>133</sup> The biographical page to my website indicated my politics, as did my earlier article about C100.

to hear what they had to say without their feeling the need to convince me of their ideals.<sup>134</sup> This was especially important as I was aware of some historical tensions within C100 around these issues. Other than this, I saw no benefit in omitting my political and philosophical beliefs from the research relationship. In fact, I saw such engagement as having a positive effect; that our common ideals would elicit freedom of discussion and promote an openness in the research relationship that might otherwise not have occurred. As Portelli argues:

An informant's dissent from his or her own culture is more likely to emerge when speaking to a dissenting interviewer.<sup>135</sup>

There has been some discussion in the life history arena about the risk of 'over-rapport' especially from those who take a more neo-positivist position.<sup>136</sup> I maintain, however, that for a mutually protective political group such as C100, there was little option but to approach them from an openly sympathetic position. Jay would not have assisted me, nor the respondents met with me otherwise. The narrators relaxed into recounting their memories as a direct response to my political position, and the emergent stories were richer for it. This does not mean that they always said what they thought I wanted to hear; far from it in fact. Their narratives gave an overall sense of strongly maintained political and philosophical conviction, and at times during discussion I was corrected for misconceptions and mildly lectured over my areas of ignorance. Thomson indicates how the benefits of having a more transparent interaction with his Anzac respondents may have outweighed the risks, saying:

The explicit introduction of my attitudes into the interviews may have encouraged men to tell stories for my approval, though I usually felt that it facilitated discussion and provoked dissent as much as agreement.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> I'm not a pacifist, but believe in the importance of striving for non-violence if possible.

<sup>135</sup> Portelli, A. (1997) *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press. p.12.

<sup>136</sup> See discussion of this in Andrews, M. (1991) *Op. cit.* p.50.

<sup>137</sup> Thomson, A. (1998b) 'Anzac Memories' in Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (eds) *The Oral History Reader*, First Edition, Routledge. pp 246-247.

And, in a similar vein, Andrews discusses the value of a more concordant research relationship, saying:

It is through establishing rapport, or 'bias' as some may call it, that interviewers come to understand interviewees. Ideally, sympathetic understanding is a reciprocal process which aids mutual comprehension; as such, one would have thought that it also improved the quality of the data. Interviews are not, however, just conversations, they are conversations of a particular sort, conversations with a purpose.<sup>138</sup>

I began this research with a favourable pre-formed opinion of the C100 campaign and consequently expected to relate well to those who participated. This preconception was almost completely sustained, and the near comprehensive rapport I experienced throughout the interviews generated some fruitful narratives and, for me, increased understanding over time.

The more individuals I interviewed and then engaged with afterwards in discussion, the greater my ability to critically interpret these narratives. The research relationship does not cease to exist when the recording equipment is turned off; it is after the interview, over tea perhaps, that some essential learning can take place. This, of course, is much more likely to occur when the relationship is compatible. I could test my developing ideas in such an environment, and refine or dismiss emergent concepts. During the interviews I avoided leading the narrators, but now I could ask direct questions about my embryonic thoughts which would sometimes be met with answers such as 'Yes, I never thought of it like that', or 'I'll tell you why that is completely wrong'. Whether or not I agreed with their responses, it was useful to consider what they had to say. In doing this, I also gained a clearer comprehension of the commonalities of reflection and interpretation within C100 as a group.

As noted earlier, a sense of mutual protection between C100 members, even after forty years, was apparent across the interviews. Australian historian Leonore Layman

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<sup>138</sup> Andrews, M, (1991) *Op. cit.* p.51.

experienced this when exploring reticence in the narratives of power-station employees.

She says:

Friendships and more formal reunions continued after work finished and they remember one another still (some more clearly than others of course). Although its numbers decline yearly with fewer face to face contacts, the group continues to exist, this existence is manifest in the community of memory revealed in the oral history interviews. The affirmations and reticences are an expression of group identity.<sup>139</sup>

My collected narratives indicate a C100 group identity, within which common memories and a sense of comradeship are maintained. Clearly part of the strength of C100 in the early sixties was that of deep rooted support, and it makes sense that an enduring group loyalty was established, especially when they acted together to plan tactics and face regular arrest and imprisonment. This explains why it was so difficult for me to recruit interviewees without assistance from an insider such as Jay. In addition to this, the recently collated archive list gave me the impression that C100 was undertaking its own research. Jay's participation would therefore have transformed my work from being the illegitimate, insignificant and potentially duplicative investigation of an unknown outsider, to the sanctioned research of the archive.<sup>140</sup> I was no longer an outsider, and although clearly I was not a C100 member, I was now to some extent accepted and trusted within the group. My work was discussed within the group, I began to form friendships and I also became a recognised face attending events such as memorial services alongside my respondents.

Life historians are ordinarily faced with the challenge of establishing trust within their research, and a consideration of ethics is intrinsic to that. Unlike researchers who interview narrators with whom they disagree, such as Kathleen Blee and her investigation into Klan narratives, I took an explicitly discursive subjective approach.<sup>141</sup> This was guided by a genuine regard for C100, alongside a commitment to reflexivity

<sup>139</sup> Layman, L. (2009) 'Reticence in Oral history Interviews', *Oral History Review*, 36, 2. p. 213.

<sup>140</sup> See Appendix 3 for a copy of Jay's letter to recruit interviewees.

<sup>141</sup> Blee, K. (1993) Evidence, empathy and ethics. Lessons from oral histories of the Klan, *Journal of American History*, Volume 80, no 2. pp. 596-606.



and reliability. My agenda was to record these protest accounts, build theory and produce valid academic outcomes. My interviewees had a range of motives for taking part, which included maintaining their connections with the C100 network, putting the record straight for posterity and having the opportunity to reflect upon their own lives. We had a common aim; to record and preserve these stories within a historical setting.

### **Ethical Implications.**

The ethical implications of my research centred on minimising harm, as advocated by sociologist Ken Plummer.<sup>142</sup> Not only was I concerned with the illegality exposed in some of the elicited material, I was also aware that narratives form identities, and are psychological constructions of the self. When asking people to share their memories, it is essential to ensure that the interview and analytical processes are comfortable and to avoid any detrimental effect on the narrator. As Thomson *et al.* remind us:

Interviews which explore the ways in which a person has remembered his or her past can be rewarding for the interviewer but may be disturbing or even damaging for the interviewee. Unlike the therapist, oral historians may not be around to put together the pieces of memories that have deconstructed and are no longer safe.<sup>143</sup>

Throughout interpretative analysis the psychological and emotional impact of our work, both on the narrator and any other individuals who might be affected, should be regarded carefully. I was therefore committed to taking an ethical approach to this study, and at the same time maintaining the critical position expected of me, not only by my academic colleagues, but also by these often erudite C100 narrators. Universities have ethical guidelines to adhere to, and further advice is offered by the Oral History Society and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).<sup>144</sup> In undertaking this research an awareness of these codes of conduct was essential for devising my own approach. It was important to me to be honest and reflexive and avoid any exploitative position. A

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<sup>142</sup> Plummer, K. (2001) *Op. cit.* p 228.

<sup>143</sup> Thomson, A. *et al* (1994) quoted in Roberts, B. (2002) *Biographical Research*, Open University Press. p.104.

<sup>144</sup> <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/res/1-6-12-4.html>

<http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/ethics/index.php>

[http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC\\_Re\\_Ethics\\_Frame\\_tcm6-11291.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf)

particular point made by Portelli resonates well with my thinking. He said:

I have a commitment to *myself* not to use the material in ways that may hurt or displease the person that gave it to me, and therefore I am unlikely to get any complaints that cannot be cleared in good faith.<sup>145</sup>

Legal obligations such as ownership, intellectual property rights, and informed consent are important considerations. All twenty-four respondents knew that I was collecting narratives for my doctoral research. At the end of the interviews I presented a consent form with options over the extent to which I could make use of their words.<sup>146</sup> I made it clear that they could decline signing even at this point, and that they could add any restrictions they wanted. One individual decided not to sign his consent, and so this analysis therefore mostly draws on the narratives of twenty-three individuals.<sup>147</sup> Considering the nature of my research, and the fact that some of these narrators were discussing illegal activity for which they might never have been prosecuted, I also gave them the option to choose a pseudonym if they felt necessary. I thought that this was important despite some debate within the field on this subject. Donald Ritchie argues how:

The issue of anonymity created the greatest single area of disagreement when the Oral History Association revised its principles, standards, and eventually guidelines in 1991. After protracted debate, the OHA adopted guidelines that ask whether 'the interviewee understands his/her right to refuse to discuss certain subjects, to seal portions of the interview or in extremely sensitive circumstances even choose to remain anonymous'.<sup>148</sup>

It is clearly advantageous for the life historian to be able to work with real names in research for the purpose of reliability or further investigation, and yet, if such inclusion has the potential to injure the narrator, then we have an ethical duty to protect them. In

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<sup>145</sup> Portelli, A. (1997) *Op. cit.* p. 56.

<sup>146</sup> Appendix 5.

<sup>147</sup> I can consider John Papworth's biographical information in quantifiable terms, and his ideas in a general sense, but I cannot quote him directly.

<sup>148</sup> Ritchie, D. (2003) *Doing Oral History. A practical guide*. Oxford University Press. p. 127. in reference to Oral History Association, Evaluation Guidelines, Los Angeles: Oral History Association, 1992, p. 2.

my research, I have used real names for all C100 respondents apart from two individuals who, because of the nature of their activism, have opted for pseudonyms. These will now be discussed in the following case study. The Spies for Peace story will further demonstrate the importance of approaching respondents and their narratives in an ethical manner. What we might lose in taking care can be made up for in terms of trust, respectability, return-ability and the knowledge that our interaction has avoided harming those who have been so generous with their time and participation.

### **Spies for Peace: A Case Study.**

An open and dialogic approach to oral history will elicit narratives shaped by the agendas of both the researcher and those telling their stories, and this can often reveal entire new avenues of investigation which further influence the developing exploration. My own research took such a turn as the result of an interview in which two C100 members, Mark Fyfe and Mike Lesser, disclosed their willingness to be identified as original members of the Spies for Peace, something which they claimed they had never before admitted publicly.<sup>149</sup> Considering C100's NVDA approach, I had expected to encounter stories of open illegal activity, and yet, I did not anticipate such an unprompted revelation of this extraordinary action. A more detailed account of the Spies for Peace episode will follow in chapter four. For now, a discussion of my methodological approach to this disclosure demonstrates many of the issues referred to previously in this chapter. It therefore serves well as a case study. Drawing on this specific example I am able to illustrate the significance of rapport and trust in the research relationship, and explore the shaping of memory and motivations for telling. I will begin by considering why and how, after nearly fifty years of silence, these Spies for Peace narratives have now emerged, before moving on to assess the ethical implications of examining and presenting these particular stories.

### **After Nearly Fifty Years. Why Come Out Now?**

By early 2006 my research was clearly becoming known within C100 group circles. Before returning their biographical questionnaires and contact details, Mark and Mike

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<sup>149</sup> Mark Fyfe is a pseudonym.

had discussed my work and decided to be interviewed together. Unaware of this, my intention was still to interview them separately, and it came as a surprise when Mike collected me at a London station and drove me straight across the city to Mark's house. I was not aware at the time that these two men had a shared agenda or were considering any dramatic disclosure. In fact, I was a little disappointed at the technical and methodological implications of them being interviewed at the same time. Despite this, I was eager to record them, and they mostly took turns in speaking without interrupting each other. After a brief biographical overview from each, they directed their narratives in a more conversational style, describing their involvement in the group that produced *Beyond Counting Arses* and then began to hint at further links with the Spies for Peace. I was soon aware that they had been part of this more subversive and controversial campaign but, due to its secret nature, I avoided asking any direct questions that might prompt a revelation from them.<sup>150</sup> Just over half an hour into his story, however, Mike chose to disclose his direct involvement in the original RSG6 raid. A change from third to first person denotes his decision when he said:

Two things happened. One was the cracking and the other was the analysis. I mean the one thing that happened was the penetration operation, the raid, two raids. Those raids gathered disparate information because the [he tuts]. Oh sod it... We were trudging across this bloody ploughed field and we came to this dell and there was about four feet of motorway in the middle of this dell and these huge great steel shutters.<sup>151</sup>

No adverse reaction to this disclosure came from Mark. Somewhat stunned, I quickly checked that my equipment was still recording. I hadn't expected to hear first-hand accounts of the Spies for Peace raid and it was not easy to maintain my composure. Mike went on to explain:

You're gonna have to be very subtle and think very carefully about how you go about this. Because if you play it right, you're gonna have... well you'll get your doctorate I'll tell you that [laughs] because you've cracked open a major story, because we've never ever talked. [Mark] and I discussed it, and decided that this was the kind of

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<sup>150</sup> See Layman, L. (2009) *Op. cit.* pp. 207-230 for a discussion about how much to probe in an interview.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

opportunity.<sup>152</sup>

Both men agreed that although many C100 members may have guessed the identities of the Spies for Peace, there has never been any corroboration from within the group itself. Likewise, the Special Branch were unable to find sufficient evidence to charge the perpetrators, despite having their suspicions about who was involved.<sup>153</sup> A new, heightened sense of responsibility descended upon me.

It was clear that Mark and Mike wanted to tell their stories and were keen that this disclosure should be made within an academic rather than a journalistic setting. My open, congenial research approach as a doctoral student, sanctioned by other C100 members, provided the ideal platform for this. Mike explains:

The important thing as far as we were concerned, what decided us, was that rather than us coming out in a newspaper article or coming out in a sensational book or something, it was gonna come out in a learned thesis. And that seems to us to be the right way for it to appear.<sup>154</sup>

Contributing to their decision, Mark and Mike suggested, was the trial at the Old Bailey in 1991 of two other C100 members, Michael Randle and Pat Pottle, on a charge going back twenty-five years. The case against them followed publication in 1988 of their *The Blake Escape. How we Freed George Blake and Why*, which recounted their role in the escape from Wormwood Scrubs prison of George Blake, convicted Soviet spy serving a record-breaking sentence of forty-two years.<sup>155</sup> They each faced a total of nine years in prison with a charging order put on their homes based on an ordinance designed to retrieve the royalties or profits resulting from a crime, but in the end the jury acquitted them.<sup>156</sup> Mark and Mike decided that by telling their stories without prospect of financial benefit they would minimize the risk of prosecution. Mark questions the likelihood of his ever being charged, saying: ‘I mean no one is going to get prosecuted

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> After all some had signed *Beyond Counting Arses*.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006)

<sup>155</sup> See Randle, M. and Pottle, P. (1988) *Op. cit.*

<sup>156</sup> Email exchange between Michael Randle and myself, 9 April 2009.

for God's sake ... a load of doddering old pensioners'.<sup>157</sup> Having completed the interview with me both men signed a recording consent form and Mike stipulated 'not for profit'.

A second factor which might explain why they were prepared to talk to me is more personal and reflects the wider motivations of C100 respondents in telling their stories. Heading towards their later years they wished to take stock of what they had done. Mark, for example, is himself, amongst other things, an historian, and clearly alert to the ways in which hidden identities can surface posthumously. Arguably both men wanted to have some influence over the disclosure during their lifetimes. In line with the other C100 respondents they wish to set the record straight.

Neither Mark or Mike were interested in viewing an interview transcript. Instead, Mike was eager to see some sort of analysis. In response to this, I decided to write an article in order to publish an account of their disclosure. In this there would be some immediate return, rather than Mike having to wait for my thesis to be completed. I was encouraged to send them both an early draft and they requested very minor edits.<sup>158</sup> I also sent a copy to Ruth Walter (an earlier C100 respondent), as she had been married to the late Nicolas Walter, a well-known anarchist journalist, C100 member and to date the only publicly known Spy for Peace.<sup>159</sup> Up to that point she had been presented in my write-up as a passive insider, not an active member of the Spies for Peace group. Upon reading the article, however, she promptly requested a meeting to correct what she took to be some significant errors and assumptions. Ruth was disgruntled by what she regarded as a very one sided account of events, and consequently identified herself as having been a fully participating Spy for Peace, significantly, one of the two female members referred to by Nicolas Walter in an article about the Spies for Peace that he had written anonymously in 1988.<sup>160</sup> She was also uncomfortable about the fact that

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<sup>157</sup> Interview with Mark Fyfe (2006).

<sup>158</sup> This eventually became: Carroll, S (2010) Danger Official Secret! The Spies for Peace: Discretion and Disclosure in the Committee of 100'. *History Workshop Journal*, 69, Spring edition.

<sup>159</sup> Walter, N. (2002) 'How my Father Spied for Peace', *New Statesman*, 20 May.

<sup>160</sup> Anon.(1988) 'Spies for Peace and After', in *Raven Anarchist Quarterly*, 5, Freedom Press. p. 68.

these two revelations had emerged without a wider internal group discussion. Reflecting on why she thought the others had decided to speak, she suggested:

I think it's interesting that [Mark] and Mike want to come out more. And I think it's to do with age. [...] You know they're retired. Children are grown up and I kind of think rightly that no-one is going to bother us now. But I still feel, why? You know, why come out?<sup>161</sup>

Despite her earlier reluctance, she was now keen to have her version included in this new collaboration of first-hand accounts, especially as it differed slightly from Mark and Mike's. Around the same time, I was also informed that Mark and Mike had circulated the draft amongst other Spies for Peace with whom they were still in contact. Before long, Guy Roberts got in touch, wanting to add his own personal perspective.<sup>162</sup> It was he who informed me that his would be the final contribution. All other surviving members, he claimed, had refused to participate in this or in any future research. A desire to add his own point of view was also evident in Guy's narrative. He explains:

I mean I felt that it was worth, having found out that Mike and [Mark] had given you a good deal of detailed information, and that Ruth was also involved to some extent, in doing so it seemed to me as the only other living person who was on the raids, I should probably give you some more detail about it.<sup>163</sup>

Again this element of insider communication reflects the way in which almost all of my C100 respondents came forward. A combination of personal recommendations from other group members and the desire for their perspective be included worked together to encourage participation.

In many important ways, these four narratives validated each other; the respondents referred to each other by name and there was a definite overriding commonality in description of the Spies for Peace episode. Conflicting perspectives, however, soon emerged to complicate the investigation and I became aware of the fact that my

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<sup>161</sup> Interview with Ruth Walter (return meeting in September 2008).

<sup>162</sup> Guy Roberts is a pseudonym.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Guy Roberts.

researcher role was in danger of becoming directed by the agenda of these four respondents. On the one hand, the stories were such an original and exciting discovery that I simply had no choice but to pursue them; on the other hand, I had limited time and was eager to resist heading off at a tangent to my original research aims. In the end I decided that, somehow, I had to fit this important story into my work. In fact, without losing sight of my original objectives I soon realized that the material which had emerged from this encounter was essential for understanding the underlying tensions between the individual and the collective within C100.

### **Making Sense of Conflicting Stories.**

To date, although there have been various articles offering general descriptions of the Spies for Peace episode, the only available insider accounts of the RSG6 raids and of the production of *Danger! Official Secret* are to be found in the *Guardian* of 9 April 1966 and various extended versions of that article which culminated in 'The Spies for Peace and After' account which appeared in the *Raven Anarchist Quarterly* in 1988. These, as mentioned earlier, were published anonymously, although it is widely understood that the author of both was Nicolas Walter.<sup>164</sup> Walter's recollections have informed much that has since been written on the subject, effectively becoming the definitive chronicle of events of the RSG6 revelations and of the publication of *Danger! Official Secret*. The reminiscences of Mark, Mike, Ruth and Guy thus provide not only additional detail, but new personal reflections and evaluations which, after nearly fifty years, bring further light to the story. Having met with all four respondents, however, I identified some internal discord within the group. To understand this, a brief description of events is in order.<sup>165</sup>

On 16 February 1963, four men set out in a car in search of RSG 6. They were successful and managed to enter the underground bunker. This original raid included Mark, Mike, Guy and one other man. A meeting was organized for 20 February to

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<sup>164</sup> Both Ruth Walter and Guy Roberts acknowledged that these two articles had been written by Nicolas Walter.

<sup>165</sup> A fuller account can be found in chapter four.



discuss the next course of action. A full list of those who attended is unlikely ever to be known, but as Nicolas Walter intimates, the ‘group’ of eight who had produced *Beyond Counting Arses* was by now ‘reinforced by some new members’.<sup>166</sup> Mark, Mike, Ruth and Guy were all present. After much discussion it was agreed that the information contained in RSG6 was of significant public importance, and that a further, more strategically planned raid was therefore necessary. At this point two members of the group decided that they could no longer be involved. One of them was Mike, who was still reeling from the first raid. He recalled thinking:

I’ve just got to withdraw from this, I can’t take it any more, I’m gonna have a nervous breakdown, I’m gonna be a danger to everybody else.<sup>167</sup>

According to Nicolas Walter, it was at this point that the group chose to let go of its more ‘prominent and vulnerable’ participants.<sup>168</sup> Following the meeting, and until after the second raid and publication of *Danger! Official Secret*, a total of eight members remained: six men and two women.<sup>169</sup>

All four narrators agreed that only those who were directly involved were ever sure of the exact parameters of the group. It was over this issue that some discrepancies emerged, specifically between the accounts of Ruth and Mike. The main conflict is not about what roles they played, it is over what actually defined a Spy for Peace. My job was to negotiate between these two camps and, taking into account each perspective, I was pressed to draw some kind of a conclusion. The main problem here was that Ruth's description of the term Spies for Peace did not include Mike, and contrariwise Mike's version omitted Ruth.

Before explaining the reasons behind this, I would like to reiterate the significance of the label Spy for Peace. It has been assigned almost legendary status within the wider

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<sup>166</sup> ‘Spies for Peace and After’, *Op cit.* p. 67.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

<sup>168</sup> ‘Spies for Peace and After’, *Op cit.* p. 68.

<sup>169</sup> The Spies for Peace continued with later campaigns involving more members.

campaign and, understandably, for the direct participants, it has been a secret and exclusive club. The individuals who risked most in the Spies for Peace episode were undoubtedly those whose actions resulted in the production and publication of *Danger! Official Secret*. Numerous others, however, readily and repeatedly risked arrest by undertaking supporting roles, mostly after the original copies were sent out in time for the Aldermaston March. The extent of this essential assistance included widespread duplication and distribution of the banned document, and might account for what Mark meant when he said: 'I wish I had a few quid for everyone who claimed to have been in the Spies For Peace'.<sup>170</sup> As he sees it, a number of people have since identified themselves as having been members of the group when they played a relatively minor role. The essential question here then is: who were the Spies for Peace? What level of involvement in this particular episode warranted such a title? I could not ignore the substantial risks taken by this small activist set. Mike, at one point in hiding, describes where he believed a criminal conviction might have led:

Labour MPs were calling for, you know, that they should be hung. [Laughter] If you imagine, if you look at the headlines that were around the time, it was absolutely gut-churning.<sup>171</sup>

His use of laughter here reflects a state of apprehension that he has had to endure over the years, as indeed does his return to the third person. The other three respondents were less explicit about how they had been affected emotionally, but did explain how they had often thought about the potentially serious consequences of their actions. For all four of them, this episode had significantly changed their lives and shaped their identities. I became increasingly aware of the importance of taking a sensitive approach with these narratives, especially if I was going to attempt to define the Spies for Peace.

Mark, Mike, Ruth and Guy each certainly played an important role in the Spies for Peace episode. The three men had all raided the RSG (two of them twice) and Ruth joined to take an active part in compiling the procured information and getting it

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<sup>170</sup> Interview with Mark Fyfe (2006).

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

published. Ruth's account conforms to that of her late husband Nicolas Walter who limits the Spies for Peace to eight individuals: those who remained active after the meeting on 20 February following the initial RSG6 raid.<sup>172</sup> Whilst this includes those who took part in the second RSG6 break-in and the publication of *Danger! Official Secret*, it excludes any group members who had been involved up to this point but no further, notably Mike, who was on the first RSG6 raid. Ruth argued that it was sometime after the 20 February meeting that the group eventually agreed upon the name 'Spies for Peace' (a play on Stalinist propaganda signatures such as 'Farmers for Peace' or 'Scientists for Peace'). Those who agreed upon the name, and continued to be actively involved when it was decided upon, may feel greater ownership. Mike, however, as one of the five individuals who actually entered RSG6, clearly identifies himself as a Spy for Peace. Despite his active involvement and a life since affected by a lingering fear of judicial reprisal he is not included by Ruth. Although he broadly agrees with her version of events, Guy also regards Ruth's definition as problematic. He argues:

Well in my view, the best way to sort of describe who is a Spy for Peace is it was somebody who in a sense could have been charged with procuring the information and publishing the information about RSG6. That if you were, you know chargeable with that offence then you were probably a Spy for Peace, which on my count means, well, you could actually on that basis include quite a few other people [...] I would argue there's at least one more, so that would be ten in all if you include Mike.<sup>173</sup>

The disagreement as to where the boundaries of the group should fall is clearly problematic. Mark includes Mike and describes the number involved as being 'about eight'; Ruth firmly includes only the eight who remained active after the first raid; Mike mostly focuses on the RSG6 raiders and therefore eliminates Ruth. From these reminiscences it would seem that the number of those actively involved was between eight and ten, with perhaps a couple more who were party to the secret. In attempting to make sense of these set opinions and conflicting perspectives I found myself in a tricky position. In order to use any of the narratives I required their consent. Were I to present

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<sup>172</sup> 'Spies for Peace and After', *Op cit.* p. 68.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with Guy Roberts.

the analysis in a manner to which any of them strongly objected they might withdraw their consent. For a short while I struggled with this, before clarity resumed. Their stories corroborated each other in all but their opinions of the definition of the term Spies for Peace. Their memories were reliable (if steered a little by personal composure) and they certainly were who they claimed to be. In fact, the internal tensions convinced me even more greatly of this. I had collected these first hand accounts of a momentous historical episode, which may otherwise have been left unrecorded. When taking this into account, in the interest of this research, the exact parameters of the group is unimportant. What is certain, is that it was a small and finite group of people who, to a greater or lesser degree, were instrumental in getting the original *Danger! Official Secret* into the public arena; and that these individuals, if caught, would undoubtedly have been labelled 'The Spies for Peace'.

Having carefully discussed this issue with each of the four respondents I redrafted my writing, taking this new position. This time the feedback was more favourable. Minds were not changed in any substantial manner, but, perhaps by their stepping back to re-examine the events through an outsider analysis, opinions were no longer so rigid. Mike, for example, told me that he had no idea how much work had gone into producing the document (as by then he was in hiding). He now considered Ruth's role in a different light. As for Ruth, who had originally been offended by my early Spy for Peace interpretations, she now gave her willing consent to the publication of the finalised article.<sup>174</sup>

### **Recording the Spies for Peace: Ethical Considerations.**

The Spies for Peace disclosures brought about some serious ethical considerations in my research which have required careful regard and negotiation. The main focus for this is the illegal nature of the activities described in these stories. Not only have these individuals never before spoken openly about their participation in this extraordinary action, they have

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<sup>174</sup> Carroll, S. (2010) *Op. cit.*

never been charged, and some have never even been questioned. Their security and well-being (along with that of their families and any others potentially affected) was and is a paramount concern for me. Over the course of my research, I engaged in some careful discussions with these four narrators about the possible repercussions of their disclosures. The fundamental deliberation was over whether or not we thought the authorities today would have any interest in pursuing their arrests. Back in the Cold War climate, the Spies for Peace actions were taken extremely seriously. The group had provoked the full force of MI5 and the Special Branch and prompted stern parliamentary debate. Newspapers printed headlines such as 'War Secrets Leak' and 'Huge Spy Hunt is on,' and a Whitehall security official was quoted as saying, 'We are going all out to catch these people. When they are caught we shall throw the book at them'.<sup>175</sup> It is not surprising that the activists decided to adopt a rigorous adherence to secrecy. If captured they potentially faced decades in jail. In the years since, however, much has changed. The divide between East and West is no longer the single most significant political fact. Nearly fifty years on, the Cold War is regarded in terms of its popular history and many decommissioned nuclear bunkers are now even home to museums. At Hack Green, for example, one can now have the 'Nuclear Shelter Experience', and at Kelvedon Hatch you can take an underground tour or even hire the bunker for a special occasion.<sup>176</sup> Much of what was originally published by the Spies for Peace in *Danger! Official Secret*, and caused such an uproar in 1963, is now exhibited for a family day out. Although legal repercussions are not completely out of the question, we felt that the likelihood of any of the activists being charged today for their crimes was negligible. Michael Randle's and Pat Pottle's acquittal on charges relating to their freeing George Blake indicates a new public perspective on these cold war crimes and a long drawn-out trial would almost certainly cause some embarrassment to the authorities. In the current anti-war climate this older generation of anti-nuclear activists could well be considered heroic by the public.

This considered, these respondents still have some strong concerns about their own privacy.

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<sup>175</sup> *The Evening Argus*, 13 April, 1963. p. 1.; *The Sunday Express*, 14 April, 1963. p.1.

<sup>176</sup> <http://www.hackgreen.co.uk/index.htm> and <http://www.secretnuclearbunker.com/index.html>

As Mark said 'I don't want anyone coming round knocking on my door'.<sup>177</sup> His objection here is the very real possibility that the publication of these stories might attract some media interest. He now lives a rather quiet life and is keen to avoid any such intrusion. This view is echoed by Ruth and Guy, who also want to maintain some element of control over how their stories are presented. Mike is less worried. Telling his story has been somewhat cathartic, a release from the weight of secrecy that has troubled him for many years. An important issue of negotiation was deciding how to refer to them in the publication of my early analysis. Mike was happy for his real name to be used, but, for the above reasons the others were hesitant. None of them claim to be overly concerned, and yet they could not see the need for being completely open. At length we decided for that particular purpose to identify them as 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'. The use of letters rather than pseudonyms worked well, giving something of a Cold War flavour. When it came to writing up my thesis, however, I had to return to this discussion, as amongst the other twenty respondents, real names or pseudonyms would better fit. In this context Mike and Ruth were now happy for me to use their real names. Ruth wrote in an email 'I have thought about it and decided that you can use my name. I stand by what I did. So you have the final say.'<sup>178</sup> The other two, however, opted for pseudonyms and we agreed on Mark Fyfe and Guy Roberts. Any further publication that might include their narratives would require further deliberation and negotiation.

Other parties should also be taken into account when examining narratives such as these. The respondents' families, for example, are also likely to be affected by any such revelations. I am led to understand, however, that the close members of these four respondents' families are already party to the secret. Were the Spies' identities to be made public, the possible impact on the families would not be a surprise and therefore somewhat minimal (perhaps the Spies' grown up children even would be proud of their parents' history). As Ruth asserted, things may have been different were they not all retired; jobs could have been compromised by the revelations, which would have had a greater impact

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<sup>177</sup> Telephone discussion with Mark Fyfe 20 September 2008.

<sup>178</sup> Email to myself from Ruth Walter 28 January 2010.

on a younger family. As things stand, and as far as I can surmise from the various discussions I have had; any close family member would, in fact, be supportive of the roles these respondents played in postwar anti-nuclear protest.

Any renewed interest from the media or authorities would also impact upon the other Spies for Peace who have opted to remain silent. It is especially important, and highly stipulated by the four respondents, that the other Spies' identities should be protected. Although I have some assumptions as to who else was involved, I do not intend to pursue that route of investigation. With absolute respect for their right to anonymity, I refrained from asking direct questions about any others and concentrated on the first hand experiences of those willing to speak.

My own position as researcher meant that I was also affected by these revelations. After the initial meeting with Mark and Mike I returned home, carefully copied and concealed the recordings, and for six months told no-one (apart from my husband) about what had been divulged to me. The potential consequences of these disclosures weighed heavily, and I decided that, rather than act hastily, I would ruminate on them for a while. I continued with my wider C100 research, collecting C100 narratives until all interviews were completed. After this, however, I immediately embarked upon the Spies for Peace article and, for the first time, consulted my supervisors. I have not revealed any real names, at any point, without permission. Whilst I do not think that the authorities of today will be interested in examining these revelations for any sort of criminal investigation, I still maintain a serious commitment to protecting the identities of those individuals who have opted for pseudonyms. The whole encounter for me has been a steep learning curve in the application of ethics to research. It reminds me that in taking an oral history approach one can never be quite sure of what will emerge. This unpredictability means that despite all preparation, one can only really be prepared to act ethically in so far as having a commitment to minimising harm. Anything else has to be decided depending on the particular circumstances, and once again this depends upon taking a considered and reflexive approach. Following the

publication of the article in Spring 2010 there was no evidence of a looming investigation by the authorities. Mike Lesser even decided to talk directly to the media and an article appeared soon after in the *Sunday Times* naming him as a Spy for Peace.<sup>179</sup> As we expected, there have been no further outcomes.

I have decided to examine this Spies for Peace case study, not only because it is a particularly interesting story in itself, but also because it can act as a microcosm in which I can present the methodological issues raised in my wider C100 research. These four individuals undertook perhaps the most controversial action in C100's history, with almost certainly the greatest risk of reprisals if caught. And yet the fact is they never were caught. Other C100 members repeatedly endured arrest, imprisonment and the threat of both. It was a hazardous campaign for all. Both C100 and the Spies for Peace were exclusive and mutually protective groups that were not easy to enter. On finding my way into one, however, I was unexpectedly faced with the other, a group within a group. Each respondent delivered an activist narrative that frames their political identity; they evaluate their own lives and reflect constructively upon their experiences. I was fortunate enough to encounter them and have therefore taken care to approach their narratives and the effect on their lives with ethical rigour.

## **Conclusion.**

These twenty-four C100 narratives are a valuable new resource. Timing is key, as the interviews have taken place when the respondents are in their seventies or eighties, a point at which it is normal for people to reminisce on and evaluate their lives. This project has given the narrators both an opportunity and a purpose to do so. The narratives I have drawn upon here would not be considered statistically representative but they bring to light some common memories and analytical themes that illustrate C100 experience. To have access to such full and reasoned life stories is particularly

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<sup>179</sup> Hastings, C. (2010) 'Nuclear bunker spy comes out of hiding', *Sunday Times* [Online]. Available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article7069772.ece> I was asked to contribute to this article but declined on the grounds that I did not have consent from the other three involved.



beneficial to the life historian, especially as the respondents often reflect in a self-interpretative mode, with the benefits of hindsight. They too are attempting to assess C100's campaign, and I can take this into account when examining their stories. The assessment of a range of documentary resources alongside these oral accounts has enabled them to be tested by triangulation, which only supports their reliability as historical evidence.

The fortunate timing of this research draws on some earlier efforts of the C100 group to self archive, and my work effectively takes on a dual role; both of furthering my own academic development as an oral historian, and of creating a resource which can assist the C100 archivists in their endeavours to preserve their history. An overt approach built on rapport, combined with a common ground between myself and the respondents concerning motivation, has opened doors which might otherwise have remained closed. The Spies for Peace revelations, despite introducing some more complicated ethical dilemmas to the project, is testament to this. The value of the life history method employed in this C100 investigation has undoubtedly overshadowed the methodological issues met along the way; and what has emerged can only add to our historical understanding of British postwar protest and the position of such an innovative group on the global political stage.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Middle-Class Radicals? Make-up and Motivations.**

#### **Introduction.**

In order to understand the identity and purpose, both collective and individual, of these C100 members it is necessary to examine their backgrounds and pathways into activism. As I demonstrated in the introduction, there are four main research examples that have, until now, focused on the first wave anti-nuclear movement and considered protestor identity and motivation. These are Frank Parkin's *Middle Class Radicalism*, Taylor and Pritchard's *The Protest Makers*, Mattausch's *A Commitment to Campaign. A sociological study of CND*, and finally Ruth Walter's C100 questionnaire responses which are housed in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. Only the last of these four had a specific focus on C100, and the others, instead, deliver analyses that reflect the wider expanse of CND support. In this chapter, I will begin with an assessment of each of these studies in turn, as they shed light on anti-nuclear motivations at the time, and go on to demonstrate the need for a C100 focused biographical approach.

The oral history interview is particularly useful for an investigation into the background identities and motivations of C100 activists, as it enables fresh access to life story data and the narrators' own interpretation of their early lives. My twenty-four newly-recorded interviews give rise to the wealth of such information that I will present in this chapter. They tell us about C100 family and political influence, early religion, education, eventual employment and inclination for activism. A close analysis of this material reveals common factors amongst the individuals who were inspired to openly engage in NVDA to strive for nuclear disarmament in the early 1960s. The collected narratives of C100 signatories, as opposed to those who were merely supportive of C100, also helps to define this group. It creates a necessary distinction between them and CND supporters which until now has been absent from the socio-historical analysis

of the anti-nuclear movement. This is especially important as I will later show that many of the C100 members were neither CND members nor supporters, and in some cases were strongly opposed to CND's method and leadership.

### **First Wave Anti-Nuclear Protestors: Earlier research.**

Parkin's *Middle Class Radicalism* was published in 1968, just as C100 was coming to a close following a steady decline of five years. The British anti-nuclear movement was losing momentum to other protest directions such as the Vietnam War, radical student politics and the homeless or squatting campaign. It is significant that Parkin recruited for his questionnaire during the 1965 Aldermaston march when participant support had greatly diminished compared to earlier years (1958-63). This was partly due to the cancellation of the 1964 march, following the disruption caused by the previous year's diversion to RSG 6 over the Spies for Peace revelations. In addition, many anti-nuclear protesters had, by then, found themselves disillusioned with the three day trek from Aldermaston to London. In chapter four I will demonstrate how, certainly for C100 campaigners, the march had lost its appeal due to a lack of radicalism, and was no longer viewed as having any serious prospects of provoking a parliamentary response to the nuclear issue. On the other hand, some individuals were put off by the radical edge that climaxed in 1963 and, determined to avoid association with any potentially illegal and divisive activity; they too opted to boycott the demonstration.<sup>180</sup> Without including any other factors that may have impacted upon this selection of respondents (such as who would have been willing to complete and return the questionnaire), it becomes apparent that the marchers who remained would, for Parkin, have been the more middle of the road protestors with longer-term campaign commitment.<sup>181</sup> This would certainly have affected the collected data and consequently Parkin's findings, and would not have included the C100 perspective.

It is immediately evident in Parkin's analysis that he aims to distinguish his respondents'

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<sup>180</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 104. argues that many of the regular march veterans did not attend in 1965.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* According to Taylor there was still a small anarchist splinter group who were determined to disrupt the march, the majority would fit this description.

motivation for CND involvement in terms of class, and used the Hall-Jones scale to classify his 803 respondents as being 83% middle-class.<sup>182</sup> The fact that Parkin's research was contemporary with that of sociologists Robert McKenzie and Alan Silver, who were investigating working-class support for the Conservative Party or 'deferential voting', is significant.<sup>183</sup> In this context, Parkin recognised that in comparison to the working-class and their voting behaviour, little attention had been directed towards any political 'deviance' exhibited by the middle-classes. It seems likely that Parkin designed his research to address this gap and pursue the question of why middle-class CND supporters were apparently acting in a manner contrary to their own class advantages. He argued that:

Even more than the working class conservative, the middle class radical may be thought of as a political deviant, supporting policies and parties which are against his own 'class interests' as these are commonly perceived.<sup>184</sup>

Parkin described the middle-class in Britain as having a propensity for what he called 'expressive politics' with an 'emphasis on means' in contrast to what he saw as a working-class inclination towards 'interest politics' which had an 'emphasis on ends'. He argued that:

...whereas working class radicalism could be said to be geared largely to reforms of an economic or material kind, the radicalism of the middle class is directed mainly to social reforms which are basically moral in content.<sup>185</sup>

Whilst morality is an elusive term, it is clear that these young activists were at least partly motivated by conscience. I will later show, however, that this was not the whole story. Parkin took this focus on morality to support the idea that these middle-class radicals were experiencing a common 'deviance syndrome' which alienated them from

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<sup>182</sup> Parkin, F. (1968) *Op. cit.* p. 17. citing Hall, J. and Jones, D.C. (1950) 'Social Classification', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 31-55.

<sup>183</sup> McKenzie, R. and Silver, A. (1968) *Angels in marble: Working class Conservatives in urban England*. Heinmann Educational.

<sup>184</sup> Parkin, F. (1968) *Op. cit.* p. 47.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2.

the mainstream values of their parents' generation.<sup>186</sup> He proposed that involvement in CND and the Aldermaston Marches was an outlet for these youngsters to express their dissatisfaction in a more effective and public way than they might by voting. He stated that:

More than any other political issue the bomb could be shown to symbolize the troubled and menacing world which the older generation had created for the young to live in. Thus to protest against the Bomb was also in large part to protest against much of adult society in general; it was a telling way of making manifest certain of the latent tensions inevitably present between the generations. It is undeniable that many of those attracted to CND were simply against authority or the 'powers that be' and would have found it difficult to give expressly political reasons for their support for the Campaign.<sup>187</sup>

Parkin's conclusions are drawn without taking his respondents' own personal reasons for participation into account, instead they deliver a general interpretation based on statistical analysis that demonstrates their common frustrations with their inherited world.

*Middle Class Radicalism* reflects its time in not considering self interpretation, and Parkin's essentialist research design and analysis is now questionable in an academic environment that has developed significantly since then. Whilst his work added some early insights into anti-nuclear protestor identity, his findings do not pursue any alternative explanation for activist involvement and so there is an absence of motivational explanations based upon personal interest. Parkin does not claim to represent C100 in his work, and in return I cannot properly assess those that remained active at Aldermaston in 1965. My findings demonstrate something new, however; that in addition to moral issues, the inspiration to join C100 included a real fear for health and survival in what the protestors saw to be an increasingly toxic and dangerous world. In the years since, sociological surveying methodology has progressed enormously and in the postmodern world, the benefits of qualitative analysis are more widely accepted. A legitimate evaluation should now, if possible, be determined by including the studied

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* p.158.

individual's own interpretation of events. Of course, memories themselves are prone to distortion and this must be taken into account. To dismiss such information, however, and rely on the idea that subjects will react each in the same manner to the same stimuli, makes for an unsatisfactory and outdated explanation.

Twenty years on from the first Aldermaston march Taylor and Pritchard revisited the first wave of the anti-nuclear movement, drawing on CND members questionnaire responses in the late 1970s. Their research collected information regarding individuals' participation in the campaign's early years and examined what members had been up to in the years since. In *The Protest Makers* they explain how respondents were traced through means such as local media and national newspapers; receiving the greatest response from *Observer* readers, followed by those from the *Guardian* and *Peace News*.<sup>188</sup> Taylor and Pritchard did address some methodological issues in a way that Parkin did not: the intervening years gave rise to some methodological advancement and they were able to use new computer technology to test and minimize bias in their questionnaire design. They also conducted interviews with individuals who they claimed were leading figures, which at least provided some top down accounts of the movement. There is little detail of this however, and in the list of names in the appendices there is no indication of precisely who was interviewed and who was not. Despite the particularly low levels of public interest in the anti-nuclear movement at the time of collation, Taylor and Pritchard satisfied themselves that they had an adequately 'representative cross section' of respondents by comparing their results to Parkin's and finding strong similarities.<sup>189</sup> It is fair to say that those who remained active in CND in the late 1970s were committed CND campaign members. By participating in this research they were helping to make sense of why CND had lost its following, quite possibly in an effort to revive it. A concern here is that, like Parkin, Taylor and Pritchard are excluding some significant responses; those who, by then, were long disillusioned with CND.

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<sup>188</sup> Taylor, R, and Pritchard, C. (1980) *Op. cit.* p. 144.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21. They looked, for example, at factors such as the proportion of the sample with religious beliefs.

Taylor and Pritchard's work delivers an excellent and informative overview of the movement giving careful consideration to motivational distinction and striving to distinguish between 'political protestors' (from the liberal and marxist left) and 'moral protestors' (those with a more pacifist and even religious inclination).<sup>190</sup> They also included a separate category for an analysis of C100 supporters, and yet the key word here is 'supporters'. It is clear, when looking at the wording of the questionnaire, that by asking, 'Were you a supporter of : 5 (b) (ii) the Committee of 100?', there is no distinction to be made between the individuals who were actually C100 members and signatories, or those that merely approved of C100's method and showed support by attending demonstrations.<sup>191</sup> Most C100 members, by the mid 1960s, had rejected CND in both method and purpose. Even if a minority remained involved in CND to this point, the wording in Taylor and Pritchards' questionnaire leaves questions unanswered. It may or may not have been a coincidence that their figures correlated with Parkin's. It is likely, however, that in their selection of respondents both of these studies neglect the stories of the more radical first wave anti-nuclear protestors of the early successful years: C100.

In *A Commitment to Campaign: A sociological study of CND* Mattausch gives a more qualitative evaluation of CND membership and motivation, and while he acknowledges NVDA support he does not claim to represent C100 as a separate entity. Beginning with an analysis of *Middle Class Radicalism* Mattausch also finds fault with Parkin's portrayal of CND supporters as what he calls 'incipient middle class radicals, attracted to the Campaign by its anti-establishment appeal'.<sup>192</sup> He contests Taylor and Pritchard's analysis of CND too, asserting that, by concentrating on the movement's decline, they have also effectively diverted any analytical focus away from the respondents' own personal explanations concerning their motivation. Mattausch goes on to argue that, like Parkin's, Taylor and Pritchard's emphasis is on a common incentive for action that is

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.* Appendices.

<sup>192</sup> Mattausch, J. (1989) *Op. cit.*

portrayed solely in moral terms, and this gives them a convenient explanation for the campaign's inevitable failure; that a more interest driven protest campaign would have been more effective. He states that:

The authors seem to suggest that whereas ethics may be acceptable stimuli for social movements, they will inevitably prove to be an insufficient basis for actual achievements; nuclear disarmament is only obtainable by the recasting of CND in a New Left mould.<sup>193</sup>

As we have seen, the significance of the timing of Taylor and Pritchard's research in 1980 means that their conclusion about CND membership is historically situated within a particularly low period of anti-nuclear campaign. Writing in 1989, Mattausch astutely infers that much of their analysis is both informed by and framed within this context.

Mattausch is determined to redress some of these earlier oversights concerning CND motivation, and focuses on what he argues to be a significant misinterpretation by Parkin: That the early protesters were attracted to specific areas of employment in the fields of creativity and welfare, which they chose because it would not cause them to moderate their radicalism.<sup>194</sup> This, Mattausch contests, is in fact precisely the other way round. His conclusions, drawn from fifty five 'systematically selected', retrospective, semi-structured interviews with CND activists and lay members (collected in 1984), indicate that it was in fact the welfare state training and ethos that stimulated such ideals in its workers. He argues that:

Typically, welfare state employees undergo a period of formal state-run training in order to qualify as legitimate teachers, doctors, etc. [...] In addition, as state apprentices, they also learn the ideology of their profession, the ethics and rationale of their work [...]. In this way, welfare state employees become personally committed to socially evolved and defined practices, and, as the interviews show, this commitment is often deeply held and valued and spills over into other areas of their lives.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.



This phenomenon that Mattausch calls 'state class radicalism' is a fascinating concept, and for the CND members he interviewed it is a fair interpretation. It is important to note, however, that his sample was collected in 1984, from two separate CND groups, and again excluded any individuals that left the campaign before then. Work commitments in areas other than these protest-tolerant professions are thus under-represented, and his sample is only indicative of those who continued to be active in CND right through to its second wave. Whilst his research strives to address the oversights of earlier more quantitative studies, he still does not attempt to represent the more radical NVDA activists who were, by then, long gone from CND.

The only research to avoid subsuming C100 into a wider analysis of the first wave anti-nuclear movement is that of Ruth Walter. Her questionnaire appeared in the June 1965 issue of C100 publication *Resistance* and her research interests were also advertised in *Peace News* and *The New Statesman*.<sup>196</sup> It was designed for short or tick box answers and is useful in assessing succinct statistical representations over issues such as political identities, number of arrests, prison sentences and why members eventually lost interest. The fact that Ruth (and in name Nicolas) hoped to receive 'at least a thousand responses' indicates that they were willing to include replies from beyond the C100 named membership, and anyone 'who has ever done any work for the Committee'.<sup>197</sup> This includes a much wider representation of protesters than my study of C100 signatories. To some extent Ruth's conclusions (which are mostly statistical) did encourage me. Her respondents were also mostly middle-class unilateralists who considered themselves to be socialist or anarchist, and this corresponded well with my own findings.<sup>198</sup> Ruth was disappointed, however, with the level of response she received. In a letter to her tutor she stated:

In the event we had made the survey too late, since the Committee was generally

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<sup>196</sup> *Resistance* (1965) Committee of 100 Bulletin, Vol 3, No. 6, p 41. There is reference to the other two newspapers in Ruth's own methodology.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> Two essays written by Ruth accompany the data and her assessment shows that just over 75% were middle-class, with 69% referring to themselves as socialist and 10% as anarchist. This fits with the image of C100 make-up that my work reveals.

felt to be in decline, and most people were unwilling or uninterested in recording their views.<sup>199</sup>

There is further evidence to indicate this lack of willing in the form of rejection letters. C100 may have been in decline, but Cold War paranoia was certainly not. Jim Radford (one of my respondents) for example, wrote at the time:

With the June issue it seemed that my worst fears had been surpassed. Infiltrators from the Special Branch had taken over! [...] Nicolas Walter you say! Don't make me laugh. Can anyone imagine him completing such a questionnaire? He would be the first to wipe his arse on it. [...] It could easily have been foreseen that those who have been most active in the Committee would be least likely to fill in this form and that many would consider it a ridiculous waste of time and space.<sup>200</sup>

Despite this rejection, it is interesting to note that a questionnaire response from Jim is to be found along with the others in the archive. Perhaps those who openly objected were then approached by Ruth or Nicolas in an attempt to persuade them to participate, and that others would have simply ignored the original request. Only eight of my respondents, for example, are included in this earlier project. In 1965 C100 members were becoming increasingly aware of the records kept about them by the authorities. Whether or not they shared Jim's suspicions, to willingly divulge personal information at this time would be to risk it getting into the wrong hands. It is likely then, that Ruth's respondents represented those who were committed to C100 openness, or those with little to hide.

Timing in research is an important factor that requires some acknowledgement. Ruth's research clearly indicates how the socio-political situation at the time of telling impacts upon the resource in both content and extent of engagement. Certainly my research omits the narratives of the oldest C100 members, many of whom have since died. When I set out to interview, a sense of mutual protection still lingered among those who remained, yet fear of reprisals for C100 involvement are now minimal. A new agenda

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<sup>199</sup> Letter from Ruth Walter to Open University course D301 tutor Dr Hurt (1966) This letter is to be found in a folder along with the essays. She had 290 responses out of a desired 1000.

<sup>200</sup> Letter from Jim Radford found with questionnaire responses.

has emerged representing both my own interest as researcher and the interests of those I am investigating: to adequately record and assess C100 as a distinct group in their own right. I have discussed these four research examples to demonstrate the historical gap that my own research is designed to address. My work relies on interviews with C100 members as an autonomous group, out of which emerges some rich life story data. Issues concerned with distinctly C100 activist background and motivation can now be considered for the first time.

### **Who are the narrators?**

An appropriate starting point in any life history interview is a question about where and when an individual was born and, out of this, childhood narratives almost certainly emerge. My intention was to direct the interviews as little as possible in order to elicit narratives as the respondents chose to shape them. In my research, the way the narrators chose to reveal their background and upbringing varied, but each to some extent described this part of their lives. The main themes emerging from this were focused on parental (or guardian) influence and support, education, personal lifestyle choice and employment. These then, can be considered as the factors that have shaped and informed their identities as young activists and motivated their involvement in C100's radical campaign. With attention to respondents' own interpretations of events, I will attend to each of these factors in turn.

### **Age, Class and Politics at Home.**

My twenty-four C100 respondents were all born between 1921 and 1943. Seven were born before 1930 and were therefore young adults aged sixteen or over for at least part of the war. Five of these were in active service during the war (RAF, Navy, WRNS and the Army) and of the two others (both women) one stayed on at sixth form and the other was recruited into the civil service. Ten of the respondents were born in the 1930s and were therefore at school during the war years. The extent to which the war impacted upon their home lives and schooling depended largely on where they lived and whether or not they had been evacuated. The other seven respondents were all born in 1942 or

1943 and could therefore be categorized as early baby boomers.<sup>201</sup> Although only seven of my respondents strictly fit this category, to some extent all of my collected narratives reflect elements typical of this generation. While there is just over twenty years age difference within my sample of respondents it is not easy to make any distinctions between them on grounds of age alone. In fact, despite their many differences, as will be examined in the emergent themes, a striking factor throughout all of the interviews is the overwhelming sense of common ground amongst them, which transcends age.

In examining the parental and family backgrounds of these C100 activists, their early political, religious or class influences become apparent, and any significant factors from these formative years that have contributed towards their eventual identities as activists are now identified. I can evaluate Parkin's description of so called 'middle class radicals' in more reflexive terms, and assess the term's relevance to this group of individuals who were mostly under-represented in his and the other analyses of first wave anti-nuclear campaigns. During the C100 interviews I did not ask about social class, and mostly the narrators revealed the nature of their parents' employment and general standard of living without prompting. If stated, I took the individuals' own self classification to determine social class otherwise I used the Hall-Jones scale in line with Parkin. This former indication, however, was mostly given by those who considered themselves to be working-class, and this fits with the idea raised by social historian Mike Savage that the middle-classes often refrain from discussing class due to the 'vulgarity' of such self-assessment.<sup>202</sup> The vast majority of my respondents, in these terms, are defined as middle-class (over 70%), a quarter working-class, and one described himself (with an air of contrition) as coming from an upper-class family.

A noticeable and recurring theme emerging from these narratives was that, as opposed to being alienated from their parents' generation, a significant number had, in terms of politics, been directly influenced by their families. For these mostly middle-class

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<sup>201</sup> Steedman, C. (1999) *Op. cit.*

<sup>202</sup> Savage, M. (2007) 'Changing Social Class Identities in Post-War Britain: Perspectives from Mass-Observation', *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 12, Issues 3. p 7.

narrators, the majority of parents or carers were regarded as left-wing, communist, anarchist, peace-activist or progressive (and sometimes a combination of these). Their recollections of home life often reflected this. Only six out of the twenty-four saw their parents as conservative voters and three were non-political. For Diana Shelley, whose father and mother were, respectively, a freelance photographer and a commercial artist, it seemed that to be leftist was normal. She recalls:

Well it was part of the *milieu* I suppose, it was what I grew up in. The assumption that you know, you were against apartheid and you were involved with nuclear disarmament and it was a sort of, it was a given really.<sup>203</sup>

This idea that a radical background informed many of these future activists is to be found in many of their stories, and yet of course, the degree of that influence varies. Jim Huggan's father, for example, who worked for British Airways, became an active trade unionist. For Jim, his home life was highly political, as he explains:

Well my father was an old time Communist Party member, all right. Back in the '40s he'd actually stood for the council by the Communist Party, and I remember we had, when I was a very small boy, junior school, you know, we had these old 'Vote for Huggan' posters with my father's picture on them left over, we always used to enjoy painting moustaches on them and cutting them up and things.<sup>204</sup>

Even from prosperous business family backgrounds, stories of strong leftism at home emerged. Mike Lesser, whose father was a Jewish industrialist and Communist party member remembers:

My dad owned factories and he was a socialist so we didn't feel threatened by our own workers, quite the reverse, [...] We insisted on equal pay for equal work um oh the riots! The libertarian working-classes [in lighthearted mocking voice] went barmy when the girls got the same money as the fellas on the job. They were ready to strike. But they never got the chance. I mean dad would say 'don't be a cunt' um and they understood that language [laughs].<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with Jim Huggan.

<sup>205</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

For others, parental political influences were more subtle. Christopher Farley, whose father was also a successful businessman, recalls the effects of the kind of literature that was to be found around the family home. Left-wing newspapers for example, provided an informative political tone. A particular article, concerning a Captain Lader during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya (1952-1960), made a lasting impression on Christopher and showed him the importance of being able to think for himself. He recaptures the moment saying:

He [Captain Lader] was required, for publicity purposes, to stand on a prostrate body of a Kenyan, with one foot, holding a rifle, like a big game hunter standing on a tiger and he refused, he said, 'I'm not doing this, this is insulting'.<sup>206</sup>

That Christopher remembered such a moment is significant and indicates the relevance of this political atmosphere, albeit passive, at home. Alongside Steedman's historical labels, the cultural, political, social or religious character of the family will also imprint upon a developing identity.<sup>207</sup> Whether or not, as a young adult, that individual decides to accept the given ethos, it will clearly have informed the shaping of that person. Christopher spent much of his childhood away at school, and so it is not surprising that he does not recall a strongly political family life. The politics of his parents, however, are also reflected in their choice of school for him. He attended A. S. Neill's Summerhill, and was one of three respondents who had what could be termed a progressive background. Jo Foster, whose father was a photographer, also classified herself in such terms. She lived in a large country house community along with nine other families and describes how:

Each family had a flat but we ate and played together and the women took it in turns to bath and put the children to bed and then they had a big grown-up dinner after we'd all disappeared, and the women grew vegetables and sold them in the local market and the men shared a car to the local station if they commuted to London.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Interview with Christopher Farley.

<sup>207</sup> Steedman, C. (1986) *Op. cit.*

<sup>208</sup> Interview with Jo Foster.

Jo argues that her background had a significant impact on defining her political identity. She talks fondly about her extraordinary childhood and recalls that her peace activism began with family trips to the Aldermaston march. Her story, along with these other examples from C100 members' narratives, can be seen as telling cases that describe the effects of having middle-class parents who were left-wing and politically-minded. Of course, other respondents, who came from families that they described as politically disinclined, had little to say on the subject. This was more prevalent within the working-class narratives, despite their willingness to locate their own class position. Dennis Gould, for example, whose father was a stoker in the Royal Navy, describes his parents as 'loving *Express* readers' and Jim Radford explains that everyone in his Hull fishing community were 'born Labour Party supporters'.<sup>209</sup> Neither of these individuals go any further in describing their childhood political influences, but, as we will see later, they both discuss at length their own political awakening in early adulthood.

The respondents with more right-wing parents also spoke little about any strong political influences at home. Peter, whose father managed a shipping company, spoke little about his parents, but when he did it was said with warmth and fondness, although he clearly differed politically from them. He stated, 'I'm afraid my parents were loving philistines! Neither of them had any education to speak of.'<sup>210</sup> This particular comment indicates that he sees their conservative voting as being due to their political ignorance rather than to any significant conviction. Peter's learning about political history through reading (and eventually becoming a teacher of history) was his way of moving on from this background, and at the same time avoiding conflict with his family. There is no evidence in these twenty-four narratives to suggest that any of their political activism was motivated by rebellion. Jay even tried to enter fruitful discussions with her conservative parents and was usually frustrated by their lack of interest.<sup>211</sup> Her futile attempts to engage her family in her personal political inquiry were not contentious, and certainly not based upon dissent. It became apparent to Jay that her radical journey into

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<sup>209</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould; Interview with Jim Radford.

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Peter Cadogan.

<sup>211</sup> Interview with Jay Ginn.

activism was hers alone, and whilst this, to some extent, may have distanced her from her family, it was not a reactionary effort.

From these twenty-four interviews, two stories (those of Peter Lumsden and Ruth Walter ) emerged to present the greatest examples of what seemed to be political deviance from their family background. Once again, neither narrative indicates a straightforward rebellion and both show other factors that have acted as catalysts to their radical progression. Peter Lumsden whose father was an aircraft test pilot revealed that:

You just took it for granted they were Conservative and all political questions had been solved and there was no point in discussing these questions, you know. We just did what was expected of us, you know, behaved as we were conditioned to behave.<sup>212</sup>

Coming from an upper-class Catholic family, Peter, in his early years, encountered enormous pressures to conform to his class expectations. His schooling, however, had a profound effect on him. As a boarder at Ampleforth his immediate guidance for many years was from Benedictine monks, which could help explain his eventual disregard for material wealth and strong inclination towards 'serving others'.<sup>213</sup> The death of Peter's father in an aircraft accident when he was still a child may well have alleviated many immediate pressures on him for class conformity and may also have encouraged his search for a spiritual and moral direction. What is significant here, is that rather than reacting to his childhood influences it becomes evidently clear that he is actually guided by them.

Ruth's narrative gives the greatest indication of actual struggle concerning parental reaction to their child's activism. Her parents were actively opposed to her involvement in C100 and their attempts to prevent this participation created an enormous strain on their relationship with her. There is more to the story, however, that suggests this was

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<sup>212</sup> Interview with Peter Lumsden.

<sup>213</sup> See <http://www.college.ampleforth.org.uk/the-school/our-mission/>



not a rebellious act on Ruth's part. Both parents were German Jewish refugees and her father had suffered greatly from his anti-fascist activist past, some of which was due to his betrayal by close associates. Their new life in Britain was a way forward for them as a family unit and, in their minds, dependent on keeping a low profile with the authorities. Ruth relates this saying:

Oh my parents were very very, were really quite strict about going out and I think they were very nervous. I mean looking back on it, they'd come to this country, they didn't speak the language, they were trying to be really conventional and they were scared.<sup>214</sup>

Their reaction to Ruth's radical progression was understandably based on fear and protectiveness towards their daughter. Ruth was fully aware of their political past, and, instead of deterring her, it inspired her. Although her actions seemed deviant and rebellious, she was in fact continuing their earlier struggle for what she and they saw to be a more humanitarian future.

Before moving on to examine parental support for or reaction to C100 membership further, a conclusion can now be drawn; that these twenty-four narratives demonstrate little evidence to support the idea that the respondents' radical inclinations were based on alienation from parental (or guardian) values. In fact, for many, their informative family ethos was embraced and actively taken further by joining C100. This 'taking it further' is significant, as even though there are many parallels to be found here between parent/guardian and child politics, the novel methods employed by C100 were often met with scepticism by the older generation. Parental support for the campaign was therefore limited. Only two sets of parents can be described as supportive, some were explicitly opposed, but most were tolerant. The direct action methods employed by C100 was often seen to be provocative and many parents were less than pleased with the prospect of their children 'filling the jails'.

Ernest Rodker grew up with his single-parent mother Joan in a house that she shared

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<sup>214</sup> Interview with Ruth Walter (2002).

with writer Doris Lessing. His story includes a progressive schooling and his mother's left-wing political engagements such as the campaign to end American actor-activist Paul Robeson's passport ban.<sup>215</sup> His narrative is one of the two that suggests parental support for C100 involvement. He recalls his mother's positive response, saying:

Oh yeah, no, she's always backed me up. Oh absolutely. No I think she was, although I think she didn't agree with me entirely in principal, she backed me up and I think was probably very proud of the fact that I'd found a voice, you know.<sup>216</sup>

With so many of the narrators coming from radical backgrounds, like Diana, who claimed her parents were: 'Oh fine, obviously it was on their agenda as well', one might expect their parents to have some obvious level of admiration for their C100 engagement.<sup>217</sup> This was not the case across the board, however, and a more common reaction centered on caution.

Most of the respondents describe a less supportive parental position, although this was not altogether oppositional. Christopher recalls his parents' reaction to his involvement in C100 saying:

They didn't say much about it, I took that as a sign of great tolerance and possibly they felt it was something of a cross they had to bear.<sup>218</sup>

Oonagh Lahr refers to her anarchist parents' response, stating:

My mother started complaining of me and saying, 'I don't know where she gets it from!' and a friend said, 'From you!' Because my mother had been in the Suffragette Movement.<sup>219</sup>

The fact that many of these parents, with radical, anarchist or leftist political pasts

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<sup>215</sup> Black civil rights and left-wing campaigner Paul Robeson had his passport held by the American government from 1950-58.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Ernest Rodker.

<sup>217</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley.

<sup>218</sup> Interview with Christopher Farley.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Oonagh Lahr.

avoided encouraging their childrens' activism is not overly surprising. Most parents intend to protect their offspring, and along with all parents in these post-war years, they would have noted the potential for them to engage in the new 'prosperity' that was offered them. Michael Randle was employed by his father in the family clothing business and he recalls his father's strong reaction to his taking part in an early Operation Gandhi demonstration, saying:

Well when I told my dad I was about to go on this demonstration, I was going to sit down in front of the gates, he went absolutely berserk because he'd never, although he was a conscientious objector and very genuine in that, he'd never been involved in the movement in any way, and he felt that this was provocation. I remember he said to me 'this is just trailing your coat, you know it's one thing to object to and not to cooperate but to go out of your way and start provoking them', that was something else.<sup>220</sup>

It is understandable that parents wanted to protect their children and discourage their engagement in activities that might harm them or their futures in any way. Fearing the potential outcomes those like Michael's father saw their childrens' participation in direct action as taking it all too far.

It was not only protective instincts that prevented parental support. Marion Prince's mother, for example, was also concerned about how her daughter's actions might impact on the reputation of the family. Marion's parents differed politically from each other, and whilst her quietly socialist father was easy going, her more conservative mother was distressed by what she viewed as her daughter's extremist behaviour. Referring to her imprisonment in 1963 Marian says:

My Dad came to visit me but my mum was really, I mean I think she almost disowned me for a while. I suppose it came from that thing of, 'we've managed to better ourselves and our daughter's looking like a Beatnik and showing us up and breaking the law'.<sup>221</sup>

There are issues to consider here about gender and aspirational working-class attitudes

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<sup>220</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>221</sup> Interview with Marion Prince.

concerning external markers of respectability. Marion's mother seemed to feel that her daughter's behaviour reflected badly on the family, and brought into question her identity as a good mother. She may also have anticipated the risks involved in such provocative and illegal activity, especially for a working-class young woman. The level of risk would have been quite different for a young man at the other end of the social scale. Peter Lumsden was not jeopardizing his economic future and yet his mother was still concerned with his spiritual welfare. He recalls how she responded to his campaigning saying:

My poor mother was in a fearful state and went off to the Jesuits in Farm Street, very posh church, to assure that I wasn't in mortal sin for opposing the government on nuclear weapons! [Laughter].<sup>222</sup>

For diverse reasons, these narratives indicate that the vast majority of respondents' parents were unsupportive of their C100 membership despite their own often radical backgrounds. A major concern here was the risk of imprisonment. Despite this, there was a general acceptance that there was little to be done to deter their childrens' commitment to direct action, and the twenty-four respondents continued to participate fully in the campaign.

### **Religious Backgrounds.**

Another factor that Parkin, Taylor and Pritchard examined when looking at the backgrounds of the first-wave anti-nuclear protesters was that of religion. According to Parkin's 1965 sample of Aldermaston marchers, 40% of respondents claimed to be religious and this was reflected in Taylor and Pritchards retrospective sample where the figure came out as just over 41%.<sup>223</sup> A large number of Parkin's respondents also reported having no religious denomination and 34% were agnostic or atheist, which he demonstrated 'to be greatly in excess of the proportion in the population as a whole'.<sup>224</sup> These figures differed from the general population at the time. In 1960 for example, the

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<sup>222</sup> Interview with Peter Lumsden.

<sup>223</sup> Parkin, F. (1968) *Op. cit.* and Taylor, R. and Pritchard, C. (1980) *Op. cit.*

<sup>224</sup> Parkin, F. (1968) *Op. cit.* p. 27.

percentage of population in Britain who subscribed to the Church of England (C of E) was 62%.<sup>225</sup> Whilst these statistics show a tendency away from religious belief, my twenty-four C100 narratives paint an even more secularist picture. Eighteen respondents claim to have had no religious direction from their parents (although two of these did have religious schooling) and only four were even nominally C of E. Only one, Peter Lumsden, remained religious until later life, and one became religious in later life.<sup>226</sup>

A strong secularist voice comes through many of the narratives with five individuals classifying themselves as Humanist. Barbara Smoker, who eventually became the president of the British Secular Society had experienced a strongly Roman Catholic childhood. It was during the war in the WRNS that she lost her faith, she recalls:

Religion was very very important to me in my childhood and I can remember being very cross when I found out I'd been conned about Father Christmas, and then I realised that God was in the same category, and it took me a long while to realise that. So I had to become an atheist and just as I used to go round telling all the kids in the neighbourhood about Father Christmas, and I got into trouble for that, I've spent the rest of my life telling everybody, there's no God, no heaven and hell it's just here and now and it's up to us to make the best of life for everybody.<sup>227</sup>

As mentioned, the only individual who subscribed to a religion during his C100 involvement was Peter Lumsden who was part of the Catholic Worker Movement. Catholic Workers are an anarchist, non-violent association who aim to live their lives following the example of Jesus Christ. Peter discussed his experience at Ambleforth School, saying:

I was very religious as a child, very unhappy at this boarding school where I'd been dumped, I felt, and I became passionately religious and very lonely as well and I sort of say now, you know how lonely children have a phantom playmate, you see, and, in some way, the child Jesus became a, sort of, phantom playmate to me when I was ten or eleven. [...] In some sense that sense of that relationship

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<sup>225</sup> Johnson, P. (ed) (1994) *20th Century Britain. Economic, Social and Cultural Change*. Pearson Education Ltd. p. 428.

<sup>226</sup> John Papworth became a Christian long after his involvement with C100.

<sup>227</sup> Interview with Barbara Smoker.

enabled me to survive that, and that's been ingrained in me ever since, you see, so that's the origin of my commitment to religion.<sup>228</sup>

Peter's commitment was not to the Catholic or any other church. As a Catholic Worker, his lifestyle was his commitment: to voluntary poverty, working in menial positions and helping the poor and homeless. With his 'old money', he had financial stability and in his early twenties he rented a very large flat in Notting Hill Gate and invited friends and homeless people to live there with him for free. Peter described how he was determined to find work that fitted his beliefs, saying:

I was unemployed but I was quite a wealthy young man. I realised: I don't have to work again ever in my life, I've got enough money, enough income, without touching capital, what am I to do with myself? You know. And so I put an advert in *The Spectator* and *The New Statesman* which said; 'Young man, twenty-five, adequate unearned income, willing to go anywhere, do anything for nothing for a worthwhile cause'. You know, I had no idea and, of course, all the nutters in the kingdom wrote to me, you know, I wish I'd kept all the letters.<sup>229</sup>

Peter ended up offering his services to the CND office and worked there stuffing envelopes for a while. Whilst Peter was religious, he was not inclined to convert people to his beliefs and therefore managed to campaign, and indeed live, with atheists and agnostics alike. His is the only religious narrative in my sample, and it is clear that C100 members overall were a very irreligious group. The Quaker influence that assisted the formation of Operation Gandhi is not evident in these twenty-four narratives.<sup>230</sup> It is likely that some of the individuals who originated the concept of anti-nuclear direct action were older than my respondents and are consequently no longer alive. Even so, there is still a significant absence of C of E representation, and this leads to the conclusion that the make-up of these C100 members is quite different from both Parkin's, and Taylor and Pritchard's CND supporters.

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<sup>228</sup> Interview with Peter Lumsden.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 118.

### **Nuclear State Employees: Spreading the Word.**

Another issue around which these twenty-four respondents contrast with those in the earlier studies is that of employment. Mattausch's 'welfare state employees' do not feature highly in my sample with the only three examples being teachers. A significant factor emerging from these narratives concerning employment, however, is the preponderance of respondents whose work involves communicating through the written word. Seventeen describe their jobs at the time of C100 membership as being in journalism, printing, publishing, academia or to do with books. Literature, in its many forms, is clearly valued by these individuals and this is reflected in their choice of profession. The aim of communicating anti-nuclear and radical discourse featured highly, with nine members working for *Peace News* and four for Houseman's Bookshop or Freedom Press.<sup>231</sup> Of the others not employed in this field, many participated in unpaid dissemination such as the production of pamphlets, leaflets and posters. Ernest Rodker, a furniture maker, designed many of the iconic C100 posters and even created innovative graffiti. He recalls:

I had been quite active in the publicity. I remember doing these things called politz logs where you make a base and you put foam letters on it and then you paint the foam letters and you stamp the slogan on the wall. I had done a lot of that. 'Lambrakis rest in peace RIP' around London and got arrested for that.<sup>232</sup>

This quest to spread the word features for many alongside an obvious hunger for reading and learning. The narratives indicate that education was highly regarded within C100, and although academia was valued, it was a knowledge of political history and philosophy, often self taught, that conferred status. This is an important point which will be further explored in chapter six.

### **Background Education.**

Looking briefly at the childhood education of these C100 members it is clear to see that

<sup>231</sup> Housemans Bookshop in Caledonian Road describes itself as specialising in 'books and periodicals of radical interest and progressive politics' <http://www.housmans.com/> and Freedom Press is an anarchist publisher and bookshop.

<sup>232</sup> Interview with Ernest Rodker: Gregoris Lambrakis was a Greek peace activist who I will discuss further in chapter four.

for a significant proportion, their schooling was carefully considered by their parents who opted for alternatives to the state system. Nine respondents were sent to boarding school or private school, and often emerged with a strong regard for knowledge. Regarding conformity, however, and attitudes towards authority, they retrospectively viewed such experience as good training for enduring imprisonment. Well known poet Christopher Logue states:

Well Drake Hall was hardly a prison. It was more like being back at school. With this advantage that they couldn't beat you, and um we, rather unfairly I see now, took advantage of this, and thoroughly misbehaved.<sup>233</sup>

Examples of progressive schooling also indicate that C100 members' parents acted beyond the regular system. Diana, for example, recalls how her parents were guided by a determination to give her a secular education. She says:

I was actually very explicitly sent to um King Alfred school which was co-educational and non-religious and one of the main reasons for sending me there, it wasn't nearly as expensive to send me there as it probably is now, though it was still private schooling, one of the reasons for that was that there was no religious education at all and that was pretty unheard of at the time.<sup>234</sup>

It is important to note that most of the other respondents attended grammar school and completed up until the age of 15, which was made possible for all classes following the Butler Education Act of 1944. The three individuals whose education was affected by evacuation, however, all left early. One of these, Jim Radford became a deep sea rescue tugman and, aged fifteen at the time, is believed to be the youngest D Day veteran.<sup>235</sup> His story, as a young working-class man at sea, exemplifies some important points regarding the value of knowledge and education for those attracted to C100, and is best presented as the following large extract in his own words:

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<sup>233</sup> Interview with Christopher Logue.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley.

<sup>235</sup> <http://www.thisishullandeastriding.co.uk/news/Jim-s-cinematic-tug-war/article-193728-detail/article.html>



The period of my life when I was absorbing most information was the seven and a half years I spent in the Navy when I used to read a lot. The thing that triggered me, that led me into political activism, I think was probably, at the point, in about 1948-49, I was out in the Mediterranean, on the frigate *Surprise* and by this time, as I said, I was reading, and I came to the conclusion that I was fed up with being a nominal Christian. [...] It became an irritation to me because in the navy they have division everyday and you all parade and stand there and you've got to off caps and [...] Jews and Catholics fall out, they go down the mess and [...] read a book and the rest of you stand there with the padre reading out prayers and singing hymns. And I thought 'This is nonsense, I don't believe in any of this rubbish', so I went to see my division officer and I said. We have a thing called a station card that logs all your details on it. I said, 'I'd like to have my station card altered, it's inaccurate', he said, 'whats wrong with it?', I said, 'you've got me down as C of E', I said, 'put agnostic'. I said, 'I don't believe in all that'[...]. 'Oh, this is a very serious step, you can't do this'. I said, 'Yes I can [laughs] course I can, if its true, you know, if you'd spelled my name wrong I'd change it'. They don't like you arguing with them in the navy. So he said, 'No', he said, 'This is a serious decision you're taking and I want you to go and see the fleet padre'. So he sent me off to see the fleet padre in Malta, he was a very senior articulate Cambridge educated guy and I was just a simple working-class sailor. So, he bamboozled me with long words and talked to me about things I didn't understand and I couldn't argue with him. But, he didn't convince me. At the end of the day I said, 'I still haven't changed my mind, I still don't believe you.' He said, 'Oh, come back and see me again'. So, I went back 3 times. Well in the mean time, I studied, I got every book I got and I discovered Bertrand Russell, and and I read up and I was able to cram information. I got a good memory in those days and I mastered this subject you see in a very short space of time. I had this ability and, so by the third time I saw him, he didn't know what I was talking about! I was bamboozling him and coming up with arguments and examples that he'd forgotten, if he'd ever studied them, so, he gave me up as a bad job. And I came back to the ship and they changed my slip, you know, had to accept that I knew what I was talking about and I wasn't, you know, I was informed and articulate on the subject. [...] When I read Bertrand Russell's, *Why I'm not a Christian*, he was saying all the things I thought. But because he had command of the language which I didn't at that time, I realised words were, the English language was, how important it was to be able to express yourself, and that encouraged me even more so.<sup>236</sup>

Jim speaks for many of the twenty-four C100 respondents in expressing the value of learning in the group. This young working-class man, with no qualifications from school, taught himself well enough to match a Cambridge graduate in an intellectual debate which resulted in him achieving change in his life. Jim's narrative indicates that

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<sup>236</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

this was a turning point for him and set him on course for a life of protest politics. The idea that knowledge gained through strategic reading adds strength and persuasion to activism can be identified as a meta-narrative throughout these reflective accounts and indeed was a strategy encouraged within C100 membership. It is not a coincidence that Bertrand Russell originated this group. Mastership of philosophy and a progressive formulation and dissemination of radical ideas were tools employed alongside direct action by this innovative campaign. The fact that Jim's discussion is concerned with rejecting religion makes this story even more significant. His is a multi-dimensional telling case that represents the secularist, thoughtful, highly knowledgeable and readily challenging voice that came through most of these narratives and that I came to anticipate on meeting interviewees for the first time. Whilst I fully enjoyed almost every encounter, I felt strongly that (especially with regard to my position as a doctoral student representing academia) I was expected to have a thorough background understanding of C100 and this kept me on my toes.

For a group of individuals who had such a high regard for learning it surprised me that only four of these twenty-four respondents, at the time of their C100 involvement, had completed or were in the process of completing a university degree. Later on in life, as adult learners, thirteen eventually graduated and six went on to further postgraduate studies. I will show in chapter six that many put their formal learning on hold because of their commitment to C100 and its 'fill the jails' policy. At the time, most of the learning that these young activists engaged in was informal. Barbara Smoker, who I met at the Conway Hall in Red Lion Square, described her engagement in such alternative learning, saying:

The Committee of 100 was my university and this place Conway Hall, I've been to hundreds and hundreds of lectures here, we have lectures at least once a week and other meetings as well and I've been coming here regularly now for over 50 years.<sup>237</sup>

This informal education that many C100 members undertook was often politically

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<sup>237</sup> Interview with Barbara Smoker.

charged and secularist. The Conway Hall, Housemans Bookshop, Freedom Press, *Peace News* and other sources of such radical discourse were highly influential in setting the tone for C100's ethos and philosophy, and this is reflected in the collected narratives. In chapter six I will discuss how those who already had a university education were often at an advantage in discussions, and whilst at times this intimidated others it also inspired them to actively engage in learning. Marion Prince refers to this saying:

I remember at the time thinking I should have gone on to University, I've disadvantaged myself here, cos a lot of the stuff I couldn't keep up with and I didn't know what they were talking about in terms of concepts and theories. I knew what I felt was right and wrong but I suddenly began to feel quite naïve.<sup>238</sup>

Marion eventually went on to study sociology and politics to Masters level. Likewise, many others went on to study at HE level, often pursuing areas such as history and politics. The most popular choice of HE institution that emerged from these narratives was the London School of Economics (LSE) which had a leftist reputation.

Education, knowledge, and dissemination of the written word were clearly held in some significant regard by these twenty-four respondents. This love of literature can also be seen in their choice of employment. It could be argued that the individuals who responded to my interview request may have been those more interested in academic research, and therefore those with little interest in education are underrepresented. The ethos of learning and dissemination comes across so strongly, however, in many descriptions of the group as a whole rather than within individual personal reflections, that I can argue with confidence that these accounts describe the C100 atmosphere faithfully. Such a tone is also reflected by the many associated pamphlets, journals and articles produced by members of the campaign.<sup>239</sup> An intellectual atmosphere clearly defined this radical campaign group that attracted the well-educated and at the same time prompted the less well-educated to read, self-teach, attend alternative lectures and, for some, progress further academically. On the whole, the twenty-four individuals I

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<sup>238</sup> Interview with Marion Prince.

<sup>239</sup> These are discussed in chapter three.

encountered illustrate this well and present an exceptionally intelligent, inquisitive and erudite group of individuals.

### **C100 Member Motivations.**

Having examined the backgrounds of these C100 members as a group distinct from those assessed in earlier anti-nuclear research publications, I will now turn to consider their own reported motivations for participation. What emerges from these narratives is a focus on the health and survival of humanity, which clearly suggests that anti-nuclear protest was both moral and interest-driven. Jay Ginn for example, discussed her motivations in terms of what she aimed to prevent through striving for nuclear disarmament. She argued:

Well along with I think most of the other people in the movement, I thought that by having nuclear weapons, first of all it made Britain a target. Second it prevented Britain taking the lead in giving up nuclear weapons which could have lead to other countries giving up as well. I believed that that was the best way of getting United States and Russia to give up their nuclear weapons, and then a treaty which would prevent any other country having nuclear weapons. It would stop the development and world-wide spread, which of course has happened as we predicted. And I feared that there would be an accident, that because the American finger on the trigger and perhaps the Russian too was so ready, so light, that there would be um an accidental sending off of nuclear weapons. Something like the scenario in *Doctor Strangelove*, the Domesday scenario.<sup>240</sup>

Her narrative defines her aim to eliminate the threat of human self-destruction (which clearly includes her own destruction) through atomic weapons. Along with her C100 associates she was a serious political activist who intended to stimulate and effect change. Other narratives also deliver accounts of motivation for joining C100 which are driven by both personal and humanitarian interest. Hugh Court, soon to become a new father in 1961, had strong concerns about the toxicity of environment that his child would be born into. He recalls:

I also know it was very much connected with my wife's pregnancy and the nuclear

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<sup>240</sup> Interview with Jay Ginn. In reference to *Doctor Strangelove* (1964) Stanley Kubrick.

tests in the atmosphere were all polluting the planet we were on, and my wife got very, very upset and really was a driver for me to try to get involved and do something about it.<sup>241</sup>

Likewise, Dennis Gould explained how his motivation was to put a stop to radioactive pollution saying:

It was reading the articles about radiation, I think, that made me get involved because it was this idea that radiation would effect future generations and that just seemed pretty appalling, more than actually this thing of the nuclear bomb itself.<sup>242</sup>

These activists, from both middle and working-class backgrounds are certainly relating their involvement in interest driven campaigns. Whilst a moral tone can be identified in each of the above accounts, there is still clear evidence to indicate that the main incentive for C100 participation was around the protection of humanity which of course would also include an element of self interest. A fear of impending personal fatality was often reported. Jo Foster recalled: 'I feared that there would be a nuclear conflagration and that I wouldn't live to grow up'.<sup>243</sup> She was not alone in conveying this sentiment. Diana Shelley also states:

I think if I looked up, I did keep a diary at that stage, [...] a sort of teenage diary, and I think that does actually feature in it as you know, a huge uncertainty which in a sense is greatly linked to your huge uncertainty in adolescence. About who you're going to be and what you're going to do. Kind of, you come to a full stop sort of er, well if I grow up. Um and I think that was a very real fear.<sup>244</sup>

An important cultural factor here is that this young generation would have been the first to experience a shift from a culture of self-control to one of self-expression; from wartime deference to a widespread call for civil liberties. Any morality-based discussion around identifying the motivations of first wave nuclear activism is therefore blurred by these changes, and from a position of hindsight, complicates conclusions drawn by

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<sup>241</sup> Interview with Hugh Court.

<sup>242</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

<sup>243</sup> Interview with Jo Foster.

<sup>244</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley.

some of the earlier analyses of the movement.<sup>245</sup>

In addition to those whose motivations centered on human health and survival, some protestors attended the C100's 17 September 1961 demonstration purely because it was banned by the authorities. Their initial interest was directly with the issue of civil liberties and they consequently fully joined the campaign because they were inspired and convinced by the anti-nuclear reasoning put forward by those they had encountered on that day. These people believed that they had a right and even a duty to demonstrate against an increasingly dangerous, radioactive and poisonous world in a Cold War setting, all of which served to motivate people to join C100.

## **Conclusion.**

For the first time, these narratives reveal the life stories and motivations of C100 as a distinct group. The twenty-four accounts contrast significantly with what earlier studies, focused on CND identity, have revealed. This clearly demonstrates that C100 membership typified a different type of protestor, in background, outlook and lifestyle, from those examined before. This is not at all surprising, as C100 comprised the more radical anti-nuclear activists who were willing to face imprisonment. Ruth Walter's survey is the only other investigation to specifically focus on C100 identity and it is a useful statistical resource. The collected data, however, in the form of short written answers has no biographical depth and does not reveal the personal influences and motivations of C100 members. A gap has now been addressed and these new interviews illustrate for the first time, what sort of person was inspired to participate in the first wave anti-nuclear struggle with the employment of NVDA. It is only by talking to these individuals that some evidence and understanding of this is achieved.

I found that C100 members were certainly not alienated from their parents or in a state of rebellion when motivated to join C100. Bearing in mind the historic language and labels within which we can now frame the experience of these post war activists, these

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<sup>245</sup> Parkin, F. (1968) *Op. cit.* and Taylor, R. and Pritchard, C. (1980) *Op. cit.*

collected narratives reveal that C100 motivations had both moral and instrumental overtones, based upon the individual and universal human right to health and survival. It is clear that most had leftist, secularist, and often progressive backgrounds. They were guided from childhood to form an early identity that encouraged thinking for themselves, questioning convention and authority, and striving for peace and equality. This early access to radical thought has clearly impacted upon their life choices. Others encountered these progressive ideas a little later in their lives and, once inspired, worked hard to educate themselves. C100's atmosphere encouraged alternative learning, often with a radical theoretical edge. On the whole, the respondents were not pursuing mainstream education, and certainly not careers, at the time. Much of their work was connected to their activism, or at least compatible with it. Their lives were put on hold to fully engage in NVDA.

It is important to note that the majority of my respondents were middle-class, and although C100 attempted to be open and inclusive, the intellectually persuasive environment would almost certainly have been off-putting for some. Despite its efforts, C100 never managed to attract a large grass roots following. The working-classes were more likely too busy making a living to engage in such activism, and individuals coming from a more comfortable financial position often had the time and confidence to get involved. However, the working-class C100 members who took part in the campaign were often similarly employed to their middle-class colleagues; in low paid jobs that reflected and supported their cause.

In the increasingly dangerous post-war atmosphere Russell's call for mass anti-nuclear NVDA was particularly attractive to those who had developed a new sense of self-expression. Their involvement heightened a common political awareness and defined their collective purpose to reveal what they had learned: that the newly established Welfare State had another guise, the Warfare State, which they believed was set impose a global oblivion.<sup>246</sup> C100 members were willing to step outside of convention, directly

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<sup>246</sup> For an in depth analysis of the dual identity of the Britain at this time, in these terms see Edgerton, D. (2006) Warfare State. Britain, 1920-1970, Cambridge University Press.

confront the powers of control and risk repeated imprisonment in order to prevent what they saw to be a very serious and imminent threat. They were undoubtedly an exceptional group within the anti-nuclear movement in many ways that, until now, have not been identified.



## **Chapter Three**

### **Non-Violent Direct Action. A Contentious Issue.**

#### **Introduction.**

The earliest C100 sit-down demonstration, which took place on 18 February 1961 outside the British Defence Ministry, succeeded in attracting substantial media interest to the provocative new campaign. It was a peaceful event and the media response was largely uncritical. The very fact, however, that the interaction between demonstrators and the police was well mannered and trouble free also caused it to be somewhat sedate and arguably ineffective. In this light, an evaluation by the organisers determined the need for a more directly disruptive approach for subsequent demonstrations, were there to be any real chance of campaign success.<sup>247</sup> This fundamental issue, the extent to which a NVDA campaign should be either passive or forceful, became the most controversial and enduring debate within C100, and therefore requires special attention. Drawing on a range of historical examples including the struggles of Mahatma Gandhi and American abolitionist Henry David Thoreau, and coming from a range of political philosophical influences from pacifist to trotskyist, C100 members consistently failed to reach a consensus on this matter. This chapter will consider what such a contest of opinion meant for the campaign and campaigners, in both practical and ideological terms. Issues raised in the collected narratives concerned with NVDA include C100 descriptions of antagonism with CND, and persistent tensions within C100 between absolute pacifists and tactical pacifists. Over time the campaign's protest approach evolved from an early commitment to mass NVDA at demonstrations to the eventual emergence of more subversive protest efforts and media courting stunts. Before moving on to discuss all of this, however, a brief historical overview of the origins and legacies of passive and non-violent resistance is required.

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<sup>247</sup> Taylor, R (1988) *Op. cit.* p 200.

## **Non-Violence: an Overview.**

A careful distinction should be made between the terms passive resistance and NVDA, with the former employing less confrontational resistance such as 'go-slows' and individual conscientious objection, and the latter displaying more actively persuasive intent.<sup>248</sup> Distinctions between the two protest approaches are often blurred and confused, yet the level of active persuasion employed is an element that can assist in clarification. Mark Kurlansky in *Non-violence. The history of a dangerous idea* contrasts these terms tersely saying:

When Jesus Christ said that a victim should turn the other cheek, he was preaching pacifism. But when he said that an enemy should be won over through the power of love, he was preaching non-violence.<sup>249</sup>

It is not only the refusal to comply with one's opposition that defines non-violent resistance, it is the will to 'win over' that crosses the line from passivity; this implies pressure, provocation and is, in essence, revolutionary.

The overriding attention given to wars, battles and sieges has taken precedence over peaceful campaigns which, more often than not, have been neglected in historical research. Despite such omissions, this method of protest has been traced back over 3,000 years, an early example being a strike and sit-down protest by the construction workers of the temple of Luxor in ancient Egypt.<sup>250</sup> In Western Europe we can trace non-violent dissent from the 11th century, when the powerful notion rippled across the continent. This was in response to the emergence of centralised states such as England, France and Spain, following the diminished control of the Catholic church. Political protest historian (and former C100 member) April Carter puts forward an explanation for this activity saying, 'popular armed risings are less likely to be successful when there is a strong national force to repress them'.<sup>251</sup> So peaceful alternatives to armed conflict

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<sup>248</sup> Carter, A. Clark, H. and Randle, M. (2006) *People Power and Protest Since 1945: A Bibliography of Nonviolent Action*, Housemans Bookshop Ltd. p.1.

<sup>249</sup> Kurlansky, M. (2006) *Non-violence. The history of a dangerous idea*. Random House. p. 6.

<sup>250</sup> Carter, A (2005) *Direct Action and Democracy Today*, Polity. p. 10.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

became a more popular method for campaigns of self protection, ideological independence and progress. Despite this peaceful approach, history also reveals that advocates of such defiance often met with a fierce authoritarian response that singled out individuals for reprimand, caused communities to relocate, and more often than not, ended in extensive violent repression; the Cathars and Mennonites for example, followed later by the Chartists and Diggers. Such subjection, however, was never absolute, and the non-violent idea survived to resurface in a variety of ways; such as in the formation of alternative peaceful communities and within the theoretical codes of political and religious societies.

By the mid seventeenth century, nonconformity in Britain gave rise to many peace-advocating religious groups. One of these, the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, is still active today, and can be linked directly to the rise of postwar anti-nuclear protest, that by 1960, resulted in the formation of C100. Quakers have a history of non-violent front line activity in many moral and political endeavours, around issues such as anti-slavery, equality for women, prison reform and war resistance. Their sustained influence even beyond their own community, especially on this latter campaign, can be traced unbroken right through to 20th century Britain and the Non-Conscriptions Fellowship, Peace Pledge Union (PPU) and the formation of Operation Gandhi. As we have seen, Operation Gandhi developed into the DAC which directly informed the origins of C100. Many prominent members of Operation Gandhi, such as *Peace News* editor Hugh Brock, were both Quakers and PPU members, and had participated in developing the anti-nuclear campaign through a series of talks around non-violent methods for protest action. The focus of the discussions that gave rise to Operation Gandhi was Gandhi's practice of *satyagraha* in South Africa and India. Gandhi's philosophy was based on the old Indian ideas of *ahimsa* (to do no harm), *agraha* (to pursue) and *satya* (truth). *Satyagraha* was the term he used to explain the practice of *ahimsa*, or the pursuit of truth through non-violent resistance.<sup>252</sup> The aim of Operation Gandhi was to bring Gandhian ideas of non-violent resistance to the British anti-nuclear campaign, and it is

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<sup>252</sup> Walter, Nicolas. (1963) *Nonviolent Resistance. Men against War*, Freedom Press. p. 24.

from here that the first reports of sit-downs at air bases, and protestors being carried away limp on arrest, begin to emerge. Certainly in the early days of C100 the group's dominant ideological framework was centred upon this pacifist approach to non-violence.

Another major influence on C100 at this stage was the writing of Henry David Thoreau, an American naturalist and abolitionist philosopher known for his imprisonment for tax evasion in protest against the Mexican-American War. Thoreau's essay *Resistance to Civil Government* published in 1849 (eventually renamed *Civil Disobedience*) was reported to have also been read by Gandhi during his imprisonment in South Africa.<sup>253</sup> Amongst the variety of political and philosophical pamphlets that were circulated around the early days of C100, Thoreau's essay was particularly pervasive. It was reprinted by *Peace News* in 1963 as a pioneering text on civil disobedience and served as an inspiration to many direct activists, having given strength to the early C100 slogan 'fill the jails'. Thoreau, reflecting upon his experience of prison, states:

I have paid no poll-tax for six years. I was put into jail once on this account, for one night; and, as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up.[...] I saw that if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was still a more difficult one to climb or break through, before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar.<sup>254</sup>

Thoreau's overriding message of a personal commitment to strive for truth and freedom despite all the potential repercussions from the authorities is not altogether dissimilar from Gandhi's *satyagraha*. This ideological combination worked well in motivating early C100 activists to participate in what they saw to be the only potentially successful action available to them.

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<sup>253</sup> Thoreau, H, (1849) 'Resistance to Civil Government' (original title), reprinted in (1963) 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience', *Peace News Pamphlet*, *Peace News*, (foreword by Gene Sharp, 'Introduction to Thoreau'). p.3.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

The employment of mass NVDA was clearly not a passive endeavour. Designed to provoke, disrupt and draw attention to the anti-nuclear cause, it gave the original C100 members a clarity of method and purpose. C100 organised workshops designed to train protesters on how to remain non-violent on arrest and how to behave within police stations or cells. The clarity of these guidelines, whilst accepted in the early days of polite police/demonstrator interaction, was to be frequently tested over subsequent years as internal debates arose and responses from the authorities gained severity. The more pacifist oriented C100 members (many of whom had come from the DAC and PPU) maintained very precise ideas of what NVDA should entail and, even more, what should be excluded. Others, with even more radical agendas, began to question these limits. Issues that arose in the collected narratives included the C100 position on openness, giving names on arrest, paying fines, cooperation in prison and violence against property, all of which I will discuss below. C100, as a politically diverse group was destined to continue these debates until the end of its campaign.

### **The Anti-Nuclear Campaign Divide: C100/CND Tensions Explored.**

Alongside these discussions, there was the ever-present echo of discontent that came from the other widely-supported anti-nuclear campaign group at that time; CND. These tensions between C100 and CND are best examined in a discussion about NVDA, as it was over this issue that the two campaigns differed strongly and conflicts arose. As we have seen, CND was intent on challenging government defence policy within the law. Their leaders especially were often irritated by what they saw to be negative and disruptive behaviour from their more radical counterpart. Some C100 members were also CND supporters as one might expect. Yet, a significant proportion of C100 members were highly critical of CND (in particular its leadership) and what they believed to be an unproductively permissive stance. Before I consider the internal C100 debates in more detail, this is a good place to examine the relationship between CND and C100, employing the narratives of C100 members to illustrate this.

It is especially important to examine these C100/CND tensions in the context that C100, as an independent campaign, has been largely neglected until now and mostly subsumed within research around CND. For many C100 members, their being 'lumped in' with what they see as the less effective end of the anti-nuclear campaign, is a major irritation, and has certainly contributed to their wanting to be part of this new investigation; to set the record straight. Diana Shelley, for example, recalls how the separate natures of CND and C100 are often still overlooked saying:

Most people didn't at the time, and of course certainly don't now, distinguish between the two organisations. Even Jill Liddington, bless her, if you read the bits about me in the *Road to Greenham Common* kind of has this, 'and Diana Shelley ceased to be active in CND', and I think, well no, I never was active in CND.<sup>255</sup>

The synonymic manner in which CND and C100 are sometimes referred to is very misleading. It is essential then, to focus on C100 not only as an entity in itself, but also to investigate the contrasting nature of the two groups. As mentioned before, some C100 members attempted to maintain links with both organisations. Jim Huggan for example, would attend CND conferences. He described how along with other C100 members, spearheaded by Peter Cadogan, they would attempt to bring the discussion around to the necessity of NVDA. He says:

Cadogan would come to CND conferences [...] wanting to get CND more radicalised into parliamentary activity and civil disobedience [...]. Members of The Committee were always going to CND conferences trying to push them in a more radical direction from a non-violent perspective, you know.<sup>256</sup>

Peter himself explained how CND's rejection of C100's call for mass NVDA in turn affected C100 opinion of CND saying:

Many members of The Committee of 100 had no time for CND at all, they regard them as a lot of wankers or something, you know. Because they were sold on the

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<sup>255</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley referring to Liddington, J. (1989) *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820*, Virago Press.

<sup>256</sup> Interview with Jim Huggan.

Labour Party entirely. There was nothing else, no direct action at all.<sup>257</sup>

Many of the tensions between these two groups was very much party political. With the intention of influencing policy, CND maintained some clear links and membership overlaps with the Labour Party. C100, however, had no such relationship with any particular political group. Members instead had a variety of left-wing and anarchist political allegiances that were often far from mainstream.

The Labour Party was viewed by C100 members with extreme cynicism, especially concerning defence policy. What had seemed to be an early achievement for unilateralism at the 1960 Labour Party Conference, when a motion calling for support was successful in gaining a majority, soon became a disappointment when it was overturned by the Parliamentary Labour Party.<sup>258</sup> Jim Radford, who until then had been a party member, stated that it was from that point on that he saw no benefit in working within parliamentary parameters, saying:

I went down to speak at a few meetings. And so the Labour Party Conference 1960 we passed this overwhelming resolution and Gaitskill, that's when we realised, it was bought home to us, that the Labour Party LP wasn't a democratic organisation. You know, all you've got to do is convince a majority of members and that'll become policy, that is what they said to us, but we did and it didn't. I realised for the first time that the Parliamentary LP considered itself separate from the Labour Party and was not bound by conference resolutions.<sup>259</sup>

From the perspective of the majority of C100 respondents it was clear that, without some serious pressure, the Labour Party was not about to amend its nuclear policy. They were convinced that the only way forward was to directly challenge the government and that NVDA was the most potentially effective approach.

While some C100 members attempted to convince CND officials to join forces in

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<sup>257</sup> Interview with Peter Cadogan.

<sup>258</sup> Jones, H. (2005) 'The Impact of the Cold War' in Addison, P. and Jones, H. (eds) *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000*, Blackwell. p. 32.

<sup>259</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

NVDA, others had given up any hope for such an alliance. Many respondents openly blamed CND's leadership for holding back the anti-nuclear movement and pointed, in particular, to the combined efforts of CND's chair Canon Collins who reportedly had 'communist loyalties', and the 'Labour stalwart' organising secretary Peggy Duff.<sup>260</sup> Whilst these officials may well have been keen to display strong disapproval for C100 NVDA tactics, it can now be seen that this did not always represent the wider CND membership. This is where Taylor and Pritchard's retrospective study examining CND members' opinion of C100 is particularly helpful. They conclude that over a half of CND members were supportive of C100.<sup>261</sup> Such a figure suggests a lack of democracy within CND in that the leadership were not responding to popular opinion within their organisation. The CND leaders had committed to using legal methods to convince the Labour Party to reject nuclear weapons, and saw the provocative radical actions of C100 as detrimental to that. Likewise, C100 members viewed CND as hierarchical, authoritarian and politically suspect. Descriptions of one particular incident, during Aldermaston 1963, demonstrate the disdain for CND leadership to be found within these C100 narratives. This concerns Peggy Duff, who, standing on a crossroads with a loudhailer, attempted to prevent marchers from splitting off to demonstrate outside RSG 6 in Warren Row. Peter Lumsden remembers:

We were going to go off to blockade it and Peggy Duff was saying; 'No, no lunch up there marchers. Lunch is up ahead here.' And the big crowds said; 'Stuff the Duff'.<sup>262</sup>

This particular anecdote was frequently employed by C100 respondents to intimate a mocking disapproval of CND, whilst at the same time explaining their own position in favour of more provocative action. When Jim Huggan recounts the story his initial words, 'what was it?', suggest that this was not the first time he had discussed it. He says:

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<sup>260</sup> Interviews with Mark Fyfe (2006) and Peter Lumsden.

<sup>261</sup> Taylor, R. and Pritchard, C. (1980) *Op. cit.* p. 42.

<sup>262</sup> Interview with Peter Lumsden.



What was it? 'No tea down there marchers', you know, yes, Peggy Duff, 'Duff the Duff' and all this. I mean, I just gravitated, I just felt instinctively drawn to the libertarian wing all the time.<sup>263</sup>

The implication here, supported by the frequency of the appearance of this particular story in the collected narratives, is that this incident was one that had been recounted extensively within C100, certainly in the days immediately following the actual event. It demonstrates a common memory shaped to support the distinction, for these radicals, from what they considered to be the more compliant CND demonstrators. The emergence of this common memory not only clearly illustrates the tensions over NVDA between these two anti-nuclear groups, it also indicates how these individuals now desire to raise the historical profile of C100 and introduce their own perspectives to our understanding of first wave anti-nuclear protest. Whilst, as we have seen, there is some crossover between these two contemporary groups, it is absolutely essential to recognise what distinguished them as well as what connected them, and to focus on the NVDA tactics of C100 respondents in such a light.

## **Limits and Definitions of NVDA.**

### **Tensions within C100.**

Within C100 NVDA was also a controversial topic. The diversity of political and philosophical thought that guided this group of activists gave rise to numerous debates around its definition, limits and relevance. There are two main intersecting trajectories that give shape to a discussion here. Firstly, the tensions in C100 between absolute pacifists and tactical pacifists centring on the definition of NVDA. Secondly, the changes in dominant thought on the subject within C100 over time. Beginning with the former, the fact that all respondents were C100 members and consequently NVDA advocates, means that on a continuum ranging from absolute pacifism to gung-ho militarism, most fell in what might be described as the more peace-loving end of the spectrum. Nevertheless, opinions varied widely and consensus on this subject was never reached during the campaign. A minority of respondents considered themselves to be

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<sup>263</sup> Interview with Jim Huggan.

absolute pacifists in both political and moral terms, and a small number were careful to explain their non-violent position as purely tactical for this particular cause (they might for example have more militant views and be determined to fight under other circumstances). For the middle majority, however, there was some agreement that pacifism was the best general position, although it was acknowledged that it might not always be achievable or indeed wise. It is understandable then, within a group that intended to be anti-hierarchical, that the NVDA debate was particularly problematic and the root of endless discussion. Oonagh Lahr explains:

We always would have a problem with non-violence, because half the people were convinced that non-violence was a good thing and we were in the footsteps of Gandhi and this was the right way to do it. But, the other half were tactically non-violent, that is to say they were non-violent only because they knew it meant more sympathy from the press and so on and for public opinion. <sup>264</sup>

One aspect of the Gandhian NVDA approach around which there was some agreement was that campaign success relied on non-cooperation. Even this, however, is open to interpretation and C100 activists had to decide for themselves how uncooperative they were prepared to be.

### **Non-Cooperation and Non-Violence.**

Most of the respondents saw the benefits of non-cooperation in maximising disruption and embarrassment for the authorities, and as a particularly effective method for highlighting the coercive nature of the state. This challenging method was generally used by C100 demonstrators when they went limp on arrest but, for a minority, it was taken further. Peter Lumsden, who took a strong spiritual pacifist position, would refuse to give his name to police on arrest, which often resulted in him remaining in custody for longer than many others. He refused even to give a false name as he saw this as being 'contrary to the non-violent ethos'.<sup>265</sup> Peter's absolute pacifist position determined all aspects of his life including employment. It is important to note that his personal wealth assisted him here. He recalls:

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<sup>264</sup> Interview with Oonagh Lahr.

<sup>265</sup> Interview with Peter Lumsden.

Part of the ethos was not paying taxes, you see, and I used to do casual work as a cleaner and so forth so one didn't pay taxes, that's part of the pacifist ethos, you see, but that was a very hard way to make a living.<sup>266</sup>

Peter had capital and was therefore immune to the reality of such hardships. Whilst he chose to live on the breadline and shared his home in a generous manner, his commitment to such a spiritual pacifist approach was cushioned by the knowledge that he had a roof over his head and money in the bank. His class position undoubtedly gave him a freer reign to be more passively resistant than many of his C100 colleagues. For them, decisions concerning the extent of their involvement in NVDA had potentially greater impact. Peter was not alone in his extreme commitment to non-cooperation.

Terry Chandler (one of the Wethersfield six) was often cited in the narratives as the greatest example of the non-cooperative approach. Terry spent much time and effort in Scotland protesting at the American Polaris submarine base at Holy Loch. Mike Lesser's narrative reveals how on one particular occasion, Terry had flung himself still handcuffed and under arrest, from a boat into the water as an act of non-cooperation. Mike explains:

Terry managed to turn pacifism into a military activity, his kayaks, his Glasgow Eskimos. You've got to do the Holy Loch campaign. Now that was Terry's campaign. Terry was the leader of that. Do you know Terry turned up, they used to have a reunion of the American servicemen in Holy Loch. He turned up! And he was greeted with open arms. They loved him.<sup>267</sup>

The fact that the American servicemen had some clear regard for Terry and welcomed him at their reunions implies that his bravery and soldier like efforts, through non-violent means, managed to impress them greatly.

Such a strong commitment to hard-line non-cooperation was clearly courageous and, more often than not, a little too much for the majority of C100 members to engage in.

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<sup>266</sup> Interview with Peter Lumsden.

<sup>267</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

The idea was encouraged within the campaign, and clearly had it been employed by all of who were arrested, at every opportunity, it would have had an enormous impact. Due to varying personal circumstances and levels of fearlessness, however, this was not the case. To be arrested and held in custody was already a significant stand and many of those interned would readily give their names and even sometimes pay their fines in order to be released.

### **What Constitutes a Violent Act?**

The debates around limits of non-cooperation borders on (and blurs into) the discussion about what is considered to be a non-violent or violent act. The more prevalent middle ground saw that it was more important to be able to calculate instant specific ideals over the acceptable limits of NVDA. Hugh Court, for example, perceived violence as 'counter productive' and describes himself as a 'political pacifist', saying:

I reserve the right in self defence to obstruct or hurt, hopefully never kill, other people who are trying to damage me personally or my family, and possibly my friends as well. But I am not under any circumstances prepared to be told to kill anyone.<sup>268</sup>

And Dennis Gould who had rejected militarism following his years of national service argues that:

I am both a pacifist and an anarchist, you know. I'm not ashamed to say [...] but it doesn't mean to say I wouldn't clog someone if they were attacking friends, you know what I mean? I wouldn't serve in uniform again.<sup>269</sup>

The idea that the majority of respondents were keen to set their own limits for non-violence meant that some agreement had to be made about what was acceptable behaviour whilst participating in C100 demonstrations. A significant problem here is the difficulty for any individual to explain their own personal position on non-violence out of context. Jim Huggan demonstrates this saying:

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<sup>268</sup> Interview with Hugh Court.

<sup>269</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

I'm talking about cutting telephone wires and cutting barbed wire fences now, um, I would say, 'Give me the situation and I'll make a judgement', but in the abstract I'd find it very hard to. I just know, I just know that there is a line. I'm not exactly sure where it is because I've never actually found it. I just know there is one and some would say there isn't a line and some would say the line is, you know, one doesn't even paint a slogan on a wall, you know.<sup>270</sup>

The innovative nature of mass NVDA in Britain meant that, at least to begin with, the authorities were unsure of how to react and, in this light, it was deemed vitally important for C100 to present a common front.

The group's legal briefings, non-violence training workshops and buddy system (where individuals would commit to keeping another calm during demonstrations) were considered essential here. Jay Ginn recalls how organised C100 were, certainly in the early days, in striving to maintain a peaceful approach. She says:

We had legal observers and legal advice, um we all knew what to do when we were arrested, and everybody was sworn to be non-violent and I think that that was a great asset because subsequent demonstrations people who've attended who've not been non-violent and it's like given the police an excuse to be violent in return.<sup>271</sup>

It was not only the threat of violent escalation that prompted the need for a common non-violent approach, favourable media attention was also deemed essential for courting public opinion. Jo Foster argues:

I believe that actual public approval or disapproval is very important, [...] smashing things up doesn't impress people and it completely undermines your message and I'd go as far as saying ugly shouting is not good.<sup>272</sup>

It is on defining non-violence and what constitutes a non-violent act, however, that division of thought becomes more evident. The idea that there is such a thing as 'ugly

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<sup>270</sup> Interview with Jim Huggan.

<sup>271</sup> Interview with Jay Ginn.

<sup>272</sup> Interview with Jo Foster.

shouting' that should be avoided is one of many points of contention that arose within the campaign. Violence against property was another highly debated topic. As Ruth Walter explains:

I mean I thought kind of cutting through barbed wires onto bases was a completely legitimate form of activity. It wasn't hurting anybody, but quite a lot of people round the Committee of 100 and the pacifists felt that even destroying some property was completely against the thing to do.<sup>273</sup>

As we have seen, over time, the police not only became more calculated when dealing with demonstrations, they also became more heavy handed. John Brailey recalls his experience of their change in their approach, saying:

The state wasn't prepared for it, didn't know how to handle it. They didn't know how to handle Gandhi and a non-violent protest movement, they just didn't know. And eventually they compromised and thought, 'Well, we've got to stop this, so we start duffing people up'. Its like the civil rights movement in America, started off fairly quietly and non-violent, but then it really got really nasty.<sup>274</sup>

There was never any C100 consensus over the definitive line between violent and non-violent acts. Over time, however, with increasing obstacles to the pacifist ethos to contend with such as air base fences, and with greater aggression from the police, the protestors did begin to take a marginally less passive approach.

### **Openness With The Authorities: The Tactical Pacifists Get Heard.**

The early ideas held by C100; having a named committee of 100 to ensure that individuals would not be singled out for penalty, and organising mass demonstrations in order to cause prison overload and system collapse; were increasingly viewed by the campaigners to be idealistic, naïve and blatantly wrong. Consequently, the tactical pacifists began to gain voice over limits of non-violence. This introduces the second trajectory, in that opinions apparently change over time. For many of the original 100 named members, a number of whom were dedicated absolute pacifists, this was a

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<sup>273</sup> Interview with Ruth Walter (2002).

<sup>274</sup> Interview with John Brailey.

difficult development to accept. Guy Roberts gives his recollection of how, the pacifist poet Herbert Read quickly became disillusioned by the new wave of thought. He remembers:

When it was created in '61 it wasn't a mass movement. It was 100 people, who wanted to create a mass movement by their example and sought to do so. Some of them actually I think, once they saw what they'd created, in a sense, just didn't quite like what they'd created. I mean Herbert Read [...] found it difficult to cope with the beast that had been created, because it included people not only identical to himself if you like, [...] but it also included people whose non-violence was fairly voluntary. It wasn't something of deep principal and this was a key issue for him.<sup>275</sup>

The new C100 direction, away from absolute pacifism, was too much for some. By the end of 1962 many of the original named members had left the campaign.

The main contention of these tactical pacifists was that, in order to be non-violent, one had to be completely open with the authorities about what was being planned. It was policy to inform the police in advance of demonstrations, and certainly in the early days, there was no occurrence of underhand planning or action. Guy Roberts explains why he thought this approach was far from practical, saying:

There was always this interpretation debate about what does non-violence mean. And non-violence equals openness, well you know, to some of us it didn't. Never did for me, um I accept that there are, there are good things about being open. I don't have a problem with people saying it's a beneficial area, you know, what you should hope for. It is, but not because it's non-violent. There are good reasons for trying to be open, but if you can't be open because if you're going to be open you'll get your head chopped off, then you're not going to be open.<sup>276</sup>

By early 1963, it was clear that C100's method was losing impact. Armed with prior warning of all demonstrations, the authorities were intent on obstructing C100's campaign and were beginning to gain an obvious advantage. This gave weight to the argument that campaign policy should be revised accordingly. Inevitably, within

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<sup>275</sup> Interview with Guy Roberts.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*

working group meetings of a campaign that aimed to employ an ethos based on equity and consensus, discussions would often go round and round the same subject, until the majority had participated and delivered their opinion. Whilst a comprehensive agreement on openness was never reached, the tactical pacifists' perspective was increasingly absorbed.

C100's tactical pacifists included Mark Fyfe, Mike Lesser and Guy Roberts. All three men were signatories of *Beyond Counting Arses* and *Spies for Peace*. They also claimed involvement in the libertarian socialist group Solidarity. Solidarity were a small group that had been expelled from the revolutionary left-wing Socialist Labour League and came together to produce the eponymous magazine, *Solidarity*. They called for grass-root, self-managed resistance on a variety of political issues. Solidarity had no official membership list against which to check the extent of overlap with C100, and yet the narratives indicate that a significant component of Solidarity were also positioned strongly within C100. It was their time to challenge the absolute pacifists and push for change. In reference to the tensions around NVDA and Mark Fyfe recalls:

The pacifists would be attracted by the non-violent aspect and we were attracted by the direct action part of that slogan, and it's not that we were in favour of violence. [...] People knew where we stood and in fact it wasn't just the two wings. It wasn't just the pacifists, cos the pacifists were themselves divided. What I call the passivists, [he spells out passivist] and the radical pacifists. The Committee of 100 people, by and large, were the radical pacifists, with whom I found many areas of agreement. I found them basically straight people and I found it no problem at all.<sup>277</sup>

The explicit disregard for the 'passivist' elements of the campaign by this anarchist fringe soon took hold, and it is here that the progression of dominant thought and influence in C100, becomes increasingly subversive.

The change in dominant theoretical political perspective in C100 from a pacifist to an anarchist inclination was subtle, and I will examine this further in chapter six. What

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<sup>277</sup> Interview with Mark Fyfe (2006).



emerges from these narratives about debates on the limits of NVDA is that, over time, the voices and opinions of the tactical pacifists gained strength. Whilst clearly not advocating outright combative techniques against the authorities, Mark Fyfe and his collaborators did propose a different kind of challenge; to do away with openness, and design more shrewd and devious methods of protest with wider demands for change. Mark recalls:

As far as I'm concerned the Committee of 100, which was a temporary organisation, all organisations are temporary, the tactics were available to us at that time. There was a revolutionary situation, which now would be completely different. So your tactics are related to the situation of the time. But you have to be honest about it, I wasn't trying to turn the Committee into you know, suddenly half way through a demonstration they would have, brought out petrol bombs.<sup>278</sup>

Mike Lesser, interviewed with Mark, added details of their attempts to devise all sorts of creative and subversive C100 spin off actions, such as the setting up of a pirate television channel called Voice of Nuclear Disarmament (VND).<sup>279</sup> Although this particular example was seemingly harmless, other ideas suggested at working group meetings, such as interrupting parliament with a noxious substance or disrupting the budget speech, caused heated debate.<sup>280</sup> Many C100 members remained committed to non-violence. Dennis Gould, for example, recalls:

I can remember one meeting [...] it was this group who didn't believe in non-violence and I think, in a way, they really wanted to have more aggro. I don't think they were necessarily in favour of violence, but they weren't in favour of non-violence, and it was this group that produced this pamphlet *Beyond Counting Arses*. [...] Rather than have to wait and speak through a chair person people just went in hammer and tongs, there was this open discussion about it. And, I was, I'm in favour of non-violence, and I could never get my head round whether these people were people who really believed in violence or they were *agents provocateurs*.<sup>281</sup>

It is easy to see why such new ideas, which were in many ways tactically opposed to

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<sup>278</sup> Interview with Mark Fyfe (2006).

<sup>279</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

<sup>280</sup> 'Spies for Peace and after', (1988) *Op. cit.*.

<sup>281</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

what C100 originally stood for, unnerved other C100 working group members and triggered arguments. Whilst the dominant perspective on NVDA had indeed shifted, the confrontational and revolutionary path suggested by some was resisted and, by others, even considered extremist and suspicious.

The reaction to *Beyond Counting Arses* at the 1963 Way Ahead conference was similar. The remaining absolute pacifists were appalled, and those with a more middle ground perspective insufficiently moved. Despite the fact that the tactical pacifists were now being heard, their new proposals were not agreed as policy. The proponents went underground to form a splinter group from which, eventually, the Spies for Peace would emerge. The Spies for Peace story, which has already been introduced as a case study in chapter two, will be examined further in the following chapter. Important here is that, after the event, the success of this subversive group in breaking into RSG6 and revealing state policy on war preparations was significantly supported by the wider campaign. Through assisting this anonymous splinter group in duplicating and distributing the publication *Danger! Official Secret*, those who had originally rejected the *Beyond Counting Arses* proposals for C100 policy, now indicated their approval. Likewise the crowd that broke away from the 1963 Easter Aldermaston march to protest at RSG 6 demonstrated a change of heart in C100 middle ground. The *Beyond Counting Arses* group had made their point; that mass non-violent demonstrations for nuclear disarmament were no longer the only way forward. A variety of other protest issues began to emerge which were no longer located within the sit-down/base invasion method of protest, giving new shape to the campaign for its remaining years. C100, as it had been originally conceived of had, by now, run its course and a new more subversive form of protest was set to emerge and see the campaign out.

### **Subversive Stunts: Humour and Spectacle.**

Before concluding this analysis of NVDA limits in C100, I will examine the emergence of subversive stunts in the group's mid to late campaign years that evolved after other attempted forms of protest were consecutively compromised by the authorities. I will

address this subject here, rather than in the following chapter on actions and arrests, as it signifies the letting-go of many early campaign ideals, stretching the contested boundaries of NVDA. Links here between the Solidarity group and the revolutionary group Situationist International (SI) become apparent.<sup>282</sup> This developing trend, which involved creating protests with a proclivity for humour and cleverness, strongly impacted upon this new type of activism in Britain. Robinson in *Gay men and the left in post-war Britain*, describes the general shift in identity politics around this time saying:

The world should be playful and so protest should be playful, the world should be truly equal and so political meetings must have no hierarchical structure. These simultaneous reactions to the past and present brought something specifically new to the world of identity politics in the 1960's.<sup>283</sup>

My argument is that the reactions referred to here echo much of what was emergent in C100's struggles, and therefore demonstrate the precursory effect of this innovative campaign on what was to become widespread practice in Britain.

The revitalising effect, albeit short-lived, of the Spies for Peace episode on the anti-nuclear movement had convinced many in C100 that a less open approach was the way forward. This, it was argued, should involve some form of trickery in an effort to undermine the authorities' grip on the campaign and at the same time reestablish media interest.<sup>284</sup> Considered alongside the increased mainstream appetite for surrealist satirical comedy, trail-blazed by the Goons and developed further by future Pythons; this new form of protest can be seen to fit with a more general tendency towards mocking authority.<sup>285</sup> Mark Fyfe and Mike Lesser, interviewed together, were very keen to discuss this aspect of C100 history. They sparked off each other in a humorous exchange of anecdotes, laughing loudly and clearly enjoying the process. Mark asserted his belief in the importance of humour within a protest movement, saying:

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<sup>282</sup> Solidarity's French sister organisation *Socialisme ou Barbarie* was highly influenced by The Situationist International, with founding member Guy Debord involved in both groups.

<sup>283</sup> Robinson, L. (1997) *Op. cit.* p. 30.

<sup>284</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

<sup>285</sup> Satirical television programmes such as *The Frost Report* and *Do Not Adjust Your Set* were very popular and influential.

First of all humour [...] it's a very effective way of passing on ideas. I mean, you know, if a movement has no humour, I think there's something, you know, deeply wrong with it.<sup>286</sup>

And Mike Lesser agreed, adding, 'Humour is the dynamite of anarchism'.<sup>287</sup> This subject was more sustained by these two men as they were interviewed together. Others, interviewed alone, would often discuss such antics, but were more ready to move on to better known demonstrations.<sup>288</sup> Sometimes respondents would describe particular happenings that they had not witnessed but had been told about. Mike, for example recalls:

There are some very great stories, there's one about Pat Pottle who comes upon a police van full of people who are already nicked. It's not locked from the outside it's only locked from the inside. He opens the door, shouts 'Everybody out' and just walks off, and everybody piled out. The other one was when Terry was nicked and Stan Allegranza, who always wore a suit to demonstrations, walks up to this copper and says 'I'll take that one' and just walks Terry away.<sup>289</sup>

These two particular stories emerged a few times throughout the interviews, often accompanied by laughter. This demonstrates an aspect of C100's common memory; that (certainly in reference to the later years) they were keen to present themselves as an audacious, ingenious and self-amusing campaign. Significant in this account is the blatant disregard for authority and enormous confidence with which Pat, Stan and Terry reportedly carried out their actions. These educated middle-class men were able to adopt an air of authority with which even a policeman was instinctively ready to comply, and this was to become a valuable component of their ongoing campaign.

Most other stunts that emerged were over the Vietnam War, which indicates C100's trend away from nuclear politics post 1963. One in particular was reportedly organised when, in 1964, the South Vietnam Government planned a social event at the Dorchester

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<sup>286</sup> Interview with Mark Fyfe (2006).

<sup>287</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

<sup>288</sup> An exception to this was Jim Radford, who had been a prolific stunts deviser.

<sup>289</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

Hotel to court Harold Wilson's support. The plan was to simultaneously infiltrate the meeting and embarrass public figures. Mark recalls:

We printed invitations and sent them out to all MPs and all sorts of other people, and then we held [a demonstration]. It wasn't a very large demonstration, outside and all sorts of people go in there and they get in. Edward Heath [roars with laughter] he was thrown out.<sup>290</sup>

To have successfully printed up fake invitations in order to stand by and watch as government ministers were denied entry was considered a victory for those involved. They were not hoping to engage public support as in the early days of C100. Instead they focused on attracting publicity, stimulating a new public appeal and also entertaining themselves. Jo Foster recalled this incident too, saying:

A few of us went along in little black cocktail dresses and went into the Dorchester and tried to have a sit down but the police were there waiting for us [...]. They knew everything about us, they knew about our flat in Upper St, they knew who lived there, they knew who'd been there before and who'd left.<sup>291</sup>

By now the authorities had a very close eye on these activists, and so these pranks were devised in order to keep the campaign going; embarrassing and maintaining pressure on those in charge. Any such protest success was therefore celebrated.

Another method used by C100 members to protest against British support for the war in Vietnam was to give and sustain speeches in public arenas. A small group of about four individuals would memorise an anti-war address to deliver at the beginning of intervals across West End shows. One protestor would start, as Jim Radford, who came up with the idea, explains:

I did the Palladium, thousands of people there, [...] I'd get one person to get up on stage to make this speech and I'd have a couple of people planted in the audience. If someone tried to drag you off before you'd finish, which they did, I'd have someone in the audience shout out, 'No! Let him speak, I want to hear what he's

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<sup>290</sup> Interview with Mark Fyfe (2006).

<sup>291</sup> Interview with Jo Foster.

got to say!' [...] If they dragged you, somebody else would get up and say, 'What he was trying to say, Ladies and Gentlemen....' and they would continue with the same speech you see, with a loud hailer from the audience. [...] The next day, because it was reported in all the papers we reached millions, so it was very effective [...].<sup>292</sup>

They attempted the same stunt at a church in Brighton during the 1966 Labour Party Conference. Harold Wilson was making a speech at a service when he was interrupted by Nicolas Walter shouting 'hypocrite'. This time Jim Radford and Walter were arrested and charged with indecency in a church, and sentenced to prison.<sup>293</sup>

Numerous other stunts were reported within these C100 narratives, and I have had to be selective here in order to deliver a taste of them. However, to indicate the extent of measures taken to provoke a public discussion about the legitimacy of war, I will end on an episode described by Jim Huggan. This particular instance exemplifies how contorted the assumed limits of NVDA eventually became within the campaign, as unofficial splinter groups devised their own actions. Jim tells how, soon after the American bombing of North Vietnam, instead of organising a peace demonstration (with which the media were rapidly losing interest) around twenty individuals dressed up in suits and set up a mock pro-war protest. He remembers:

We got all these placards saying; 'Frying tonight, Hanoi's alright'. I remember, 'Come on Pommie, Kill a Commie', 'Kill a Commie for Christ'. [...] We printed up a leaflet that was really foul, about what they should be doing to the North Vietnamese. And we drew up a declaration of support for 'Our brave American comrades fighting and dying in Vietnam', which we spent all night signing in phoney signatures, writing with your left hand or whatever, and we marched up to South Ruislip Airbase to present this to the Commandant, right. Now, it was wonderful. To give you a flavour we got headline news, the twenty of us, in all the local papers and some national.<sup>294</sup>

This very provocative idea also managed to get them an umbrella bashing from a

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<sup>292</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.* and Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p.263.

<sup>294</sup> Interview with Jim Huggan.

passing lady.<sup>295</sup> The employment of such stunts in these later years of C100 not only demonstrates the campaign's final attempt at engaging media interest, it also illustrates how a new wave of protest emerged, eventually replacing the old DAC pacifist style protest and, for some campaigns, the notion of NVDA altogether.

## **Conclusion.**

C100 clearly played an historic role in protest politics by initiating mass-scale NVDA tactics for the first time on British soil. Their provocative illegal approach conflicted with CND's authorised method of action, and therefore, some deep rooted tensions divided these two anti-nuclear campaigns. Even within C100 the narratives reveal a prevailing lack of consensus over the definition and limits of NVDA. The most contested issues were around violence against property and openness with the authorities. Over time, to the dismay of the more absolute pacifist members, campaign values were to shift as responses to policing strategies were explored. It was in this developing environment that the more tactically pacifist, libertarian socialist fringe of C100 was able to challenge the earlier methods, encouraging a more subversive direction. C100's legacy is not confined to leading the way for mass NVDA in Britain. Through C100's evolving method, under increasingly restrictive circumstances, they were also early advocates of the stunt or spectacle style of protest that was soon to become prevalent throughout the later sixties in wider campaigns. This is perhaps a further reason for C100 to receive historical recognition. This innovative campaign is little known for the precursory role it played in relation to more recent British protest.

The squatters campaign, for example, was coordinated by C100 activists in their effort to combat homelessness in London.<sup>296</sup> This type of community action inspired confidence in others to embark upon a new wave of Do-It-Yourself politics, resulting in a diversity of local protests throughout Britain.<sup>297</sup> C100 also directly informed the ethos

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<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> Jim Radford was instrumental in the squatting campaign. See Ward, C (2004) 'The Hidden History of Housing', History and Policy, <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-25.html>

<sup>297</sup> Like the mothers and prams zebra crossing campaign described by Wendy Butlin in chapter two.

and NVDA method of the women's movement and Greenham Peace Camp.<sup>298</sup> By the 1980s even CND had adopted NVDA as protest policy and the much later environmental campaigns of today can also be traced back to C100.<sup>299</sup> Another direction of influence rejected the notion of NVDA altogether and, maintaining the subversive spectacle approach, was spearheaded by the emergent Angry Brigade.<sup>300</sup>

In the following chapter I will investigate the relationship between these activists and the authorities more fully, but for now it is important to note that, in a brief but intense period of activity over eight years, C100's NVDA methods were tested out, modified and refined. They established the foundations for a whole new approach to protest in Britain.

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<sup>298</sup> Roseneil, S. (1995) *Op. cit.* and Carroll, S. (2004) *Op. cit.*

<sup>299</sup> See development of environmentalism in UK in the history of London Greenpeace. [http://www.mcspotlight.org/people/biogs/london\\_grnpeace.html](http://www.mcspotlight.org/people/biogs/london_grnpeace.html) and CND timeline <http://www.cnduk.org/index.php/information/info-sheets/the-history-of-cnd.html>

<sup>300</sup> Green, J. (1999) *Op. cit.* pp. 272-278 gives an overview of the development from Solidarity and SI to the Angry Brigade. Also an interview in the *Guardian* with two Angry Brigade members demonstrates links with the squatting campaign and Vietnam War protests that came out of C100's later methods. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2002/feb/03/features.magazine27>



## Chapter Four

### 'Fill the Jails'. Committee of 100 in Action.

#### Introduction.

C100's campaign centered on the premise that all members were equally liable for their participation in illegal protest activity, and would therefore be treated accordingly within the judicial system. In effect, this was not the case. It did not take the powers of control long to realize the tactical advantage to them of singling out individuals for arrest and making examples of a select few within the courts. This counter-approach eventually proved to be a significant campaign deterrent, especially for C100 members and supporters who were anything less than extremely committed. Jay Ginn's reflection on this echoes the general opinion of C100 respondents in acknowledging the early naïvety of the campaign saying:

I remember at one time the slogan was 'fill the jails'. [...] We thought that if enough people were arrested, the establishment would kind of keel over and agree to our demands, and that was an illusion I must admit, because we've seen now that the jails have far, far more people in than they ever had then, and the system hasn't collapsed.<sup>301</sup>

The anti-nuclear campaign was also trivialised by the British authorities whose argument, often supported within the mainstream press, was that the protestors were idealistic, ignorant and damaging to the security of the nation.<sup>302</sup> Situated within a postwar context, when the atrocities of the Holocaust were still emerging, public opinion still strongly considered a formidable state to be necessary. Subscription to the most powerful atomic weaponry was viewed by many as the only way to ensure the survival of the freedom and security that had so recently been fought for. It was a persuasive argument, which meant that, when confronted by C100's line of reasoning, only a minority were sufficiently convinced to repeatedly risk their liberty in support. When the Official Secrets Act was employed to charge specific offenders, many C100

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<sup>301</sup> Interview with Jay Ginn.

<sup>302</sup> See, for example, the *Sunday Express*, 14 April 1963, p. 1.

activists came to view their participation in such open illegal protest as too much of a sacrifice. In C100's later years even the deeply committed members, who endured multiple prison terms with progressively harsh penalties, had opted for more legal or subversive methods of protest, often within other campaigns.

This chapter will take a closer look at C100's tactical protest development, and survey the evolving reaction of the authorities to this eight year campaign. Drawing on C100 protestor narratives, a clearer picture of this highly charged postwar political scenario unfolds, with improved understanding of campaigner perspective and experience. These reflective accounts of C100 demonstrations, actions, arrests and court appearances contribute substantially to what, up to this point, has been mostly derived from secondary literature, press reports and political publications. My chronological approach examines these new narratives to assess the historical progression of C100's campaign. Beginning with the original Aldermaston march in 1958, I will move forward through descriptive accounts of notable C100 demonstrations until the campaign's eventual demise in 1968. I do not intend to deliver elaborate representations of these events, which can be found in other resources; but to examine the subjective perceptions of these C100 actions through the accounts of those who took part.<sup>303</sup>

## **Campaign Progression: Actions and Arrests.**

### **The Aldermaston Marches.**

In order to understand C100 actions, the Aldermaston marches provide a good frame of reference. At least until 1963, C100 members took part in the annual event with a specific agenda. For them, it was an opportunity to promote their own campaign and ensure the crowd were aware of a strong C100 presence. While the Aldermaston march was never a C100 organised action, it was devised, in 1958, by some prominent DAC members who then moved on to play important roles in C100.<sup>304</sup> Despite happening on the wettest Easter weekend in many years, the first march was considered a huge success. From this point, CND took its organisation over, turning it round in 1959 to

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<sup>303</sup> See Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* and Driver, C. (1964) *Op. cit.* for archival overviews of the campaign.

<sup>304</sup> Michael Randle, Pat Arrowsmith and Hugh Brock for example.

end in London rather than at the rocket base.<sup>305</sup>

The organisers strove to maintain an independent political stance in order to focus on the unilateralist cause. Michael Randle recalls having strict discussions with the musicians who led the first march over their potential choice of music, most importantly what they should avoid playing.<sup>306</sup> He says:

We probably went over the top [...]. We came to an agreement with the group about songs they wouldn't sing [...]. We certainly didn't want them singing *The Internationale*, although I think it's a great song actually, but I think in that context it would have been misunderstood.<sup>307</sup>

Early tensions over how the march should be regulated developed throughout the years into significant splits, culminating in 'The March Must Decide Committee' and its diversion to RSG6 in Warren Row. In the beginning, however, the Aldermaston march was regarded favourably by most who took part.

The initial ease of recruiting marchers came as a surprise to the organisers, who were often overwhelmed with responsibilities. Peggy Duff, the organising secretary of CND, recalls in *Left, Left, Left* the many practical difficulties they faced, especially around housing the thousands of marchers on their journey. Many of the young participants not only considered themselves to be part of something revolutionary, they also felt included in a new cultural experience. As Jo Foster recalls:

We thought the whole world was going to change. And on some of the Aldermaston marches rumours would say 'The Beatles are on the march' or 'such and such famous actor is on the march' and they probably were you know, but we never saw them.<sup>308</sup>

Celebrities often did join the marches yet, within the tide of weather beaten

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<sup>305</sup> Driver, C. (1964) *Op. cit.* p. 54.

<sup>306</sup> At this point Randle was in the DAC but went on to become C100 secretary.

<sup>307</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>308</sup> Interview with Jo Foster.

demonstrators, they were not easily distinguishable, and they mostly 'merged into the march'.<sup>309</sup> Adding to this new youth experience was the availability of a potential love interest. Over the three-day event, relationships were often forged in a relatively short amount of time and a comparatively free environment. Marion Prince recalls how the usual restrictions imposed by her parents were lifted for this particular occasion, albeit with some misgivings, saying:

They weren't happy, especially as I was sleeping out over the four days. Things were very different then, they were probably worried about my dignity or something.<sup>310</sup>

The courting and dating aspect to these long Easter weekends is an intriguing factor when considering the wider Aldermaston experience. Drawing solely on C100 narratives, some clear reference to romantic relations emerges, and yet this does not include their personal involvement (as far as they are willing to disclose). Mike Lesser laughs as he remembers:

I was wandering around the Aldermaston march with a clipboard and there was like these huge great tents full of all these people fucking each other, and I was absolutely certain I was gonna get bashed on the head and die before I ever got a fucking leg over. And I never actually got to lay anybody 'til I was twenty one. I was just so busy saving the world.<sup>311</sup>

Relationships were formed between C100 members throughout the campaign but, for these participants, Aldermaston was seen as an important time for organisation and recruitment. Many of the respondents talk only of their serious objectives and designated roles, and did not consider themselves part of the crowd.

Over the years, this carnival atmosphere was a growing irritation for the non-violent direct activists. Although the CND leaders were excited by high levels of support, many C100 members were progressively less so. By 1962, attitudes within this more radical

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<sup>309</sup> Duff, P. (1971) *Op. cit.* p.132.

<sup>310</sup> Interview with Marion Prince.

<sup>311</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

wing of the anti-nuclear movement saw the effect of a yearly march as benign at most. Russell stated in his autobiography that 'they seemed to me to be degenerating into something of a yearly picnic'.<sup>312</sup> C100 meetings reflected this position, as Marion Prince recalls:

I remember Terry Chandler talking about if we just go on marching, Aldermaston, it's almost becoming an institution. Next minute it'll be like a fun fair. If we go on doing that nothing's gonna change. We're just gonna have to challenge the state and the only way we can do that is by mass civil disobedience, and that made a lot of sense to me.<sup>313</sup>

Oonagh Lahr also reflected upon her growing cynicism about the march's purpose saying:

It was like nominal Christians who used to take communion once a year at Easter and otherwise they're not, you know, it hadn't any meaning.<sup>314</sup>

The point had been reached when this particular demonstration had seemingly become part of the establishment itself, and this was particularly disappointing for C100 members who were keen to employ NVDA. John Brailey argued:

When you're on the Aldermaston March, the A.A, the Automobile Association, put up on trees: 'Beware of Marchers', and I thought, 'Oh, this is it! This is all over!' I mean, you've become part of the establishment and the road network.<sup>315</sup>

By Easter 1963, this growing disillusionment was expressed by the large numbers who defied CND's party political stance and, despite being directed otherwise, diverted the march to RSG 6. This event, encouraged by the Spies for Peace revelations, also contributed to the march's eventual demise. Committed to breaking the law to pursue their purpose, the C100 radicals were unable to tolerate such a seemingly uneventful annual effort and soon came to focus on their own demonstrations with more provocative intentions.

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<sup>312</sup> Russell, B. (1969) *Op. cit.* p. 104.

<sup>313</sup> Interview with Marion Prince.

<sup>314</sup> Interview with Oonagh Lahr.

<sup>315</sup> Interview with John Brailey.

### **The First Demonstration: Polite Policing.**

Media reports of the very first C100 demonstration on 18 February 1961, were positive, describing Bertrand Russell as a 'twentieth century saint' and likening him to Gandhi.<sup>316</sup> The spectacle of this near nonagenarian Earl, sitting cross legged outside the Ministry of Defence along with a crowd of approximately 5000 supporters, was as Christopher Farley remembers:

A great novelty in Britain and everybody who witnessed it and participated in it said that it was the most extraordinary event.<sup>317</sup>

At one point, when all others were seated, Russell, along with C100 Secretary Michael Randle and Reverend Michael Scott, began to make his way over to attach the campaign declaration to the Ministry door. This particular event publicised C100's motives clearly and was recalled with humour by all who recounted it, as Michael Randle explains:

Michael [Scott] had the scroll to put up and I had the hammer and nails, and we got there and somebody came to the door [of the Ministry of Defence] and when we went to hammer up this thing. They were absolutely shocked you know, 'You can't do that to this door' [laughs]. And the police seized the hammer and the nails, so er, a true British compromise, we stuck it up with sellotape [laughs]. And we sat there for about three hours. The police [...] had given us warnings; all these streets were out of bounds. And so you know, we were fully expecting that we might be arrested, but they obviously decided to play it cool, they didn't arrest anyone.<sup>318</sup>

On this occasion both the protesters and police acted non-violently. Even the sticky tape was passed out from behind the ministry door. Despite rumours that the Government had asked the fire department to clear the demonstrators with hoses, no one was apparently willing to initiate any form of struggle.<sup>319</sup> For some of those who had just turned up to witness the occasion, the mutually respectful atmosphere inspired them to join the campaign. Mike Lesser, who was only sixteen at the time recalls:

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<sup>316</sup> Taylor. R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 199. In reference to comments in *The People* and *The Sunday Dispatch* of the following day.

<sup>317</sup> Interview with Christopher Farley.

<sup>318</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>319</sup> Russell. B. (1969) *Op. cit.* p. 113.

I went along to the first demo with my Box Brownie 'cos I thought I'd take a photograph of it, and the first thing that happened was that there was all these fire engines, and the firemen were making it very clear by word and gesture that they were not going to attack the crowd. I'd never seen industrial solidarity before and I found it very moving, I still do.<sup>320</sup>

At six o'clock, Russell called an end to the demonstration. In his autobiography he recalls proudly how:

A wave of exultation swept through the crowd. As we marched back towards Whitehall in the dusk and lamplight, past the cheering supporters, I felt very happy - we had accomplished what we set out to do that afternoon, and our serious purpose had been made manifest.<sup>321</sup>

The good natured politeness of this event, however, was short-lived due to at least two factors. Firstly, the success of this initial demonstration gave the authorities some serious concerns. Any increase in support was clearly an unwelcome challenge for both the government and police. Secondly, while the organisers were certainly pleased with the peaceful turn out, the lack of arrests did not fit with C100's challenging NVDA aims.

Soon after the event, Russell asserted that he did not wish the campaign to be met with such tolerance. In a press statement he expressed his deliberate intention to provoke a response from the authorities, saying:

Our movement depends for its success on an immense public opinion and we cannot create that unless we rouse the authorities to more action than they took yesterday.<sup>322</sup>

Schoenman added to this saying, 'We want to put the Government in the position of either jailing thousands of people or abdicating'.<sup>323</sup> They intended to shift the movement up-gear in their confrontation with the powers of control. In order to maintain the

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<sup>320</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

<sup>321</sup> Russell, B. (1969) *Op. cit.* p. 113.

<sup>322</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 200. Quoting from *The Guardian*, 20 February 1961.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

pressure, another demonstration was organised for the end of April, this time at Parliament Square. Before this was to happen, however, an impromptu and unsanctioned demonstration took place immediately after the Aldermaston march. Schoenman directed some 500-600 protesters away from the rally in Trafalgar Square, to follow a 'Highland piper in full regalia' to the US Embassy.<sup>324</sup> Of those that reached Grosvenor Square six were arrested (some for threatening behaviour) and a later scuffle outside West End Central police station ended with a further twenty-five arrested (some for assault). This kind of maverick behaviour was clearly in conflict with what C100 organisers intended for their campaign. For the next official demonstration on 29 April 1961, strong guidelines were issued in the form of a handbook, in order to ensure it remained a non-violent event.

### **The Second Official Demonstration: Mass Arrests.**

By the second C100 demonstration, the police attitude had altered. Still careful to avoid violence, they were now more inclined to make arrests. Jay Ginn recalls how:

It was, we were very, very disciplined and I think that paid off, that nobody was violent and the whole thing was quite a ritual, on both sides.<sup>325</sup>

At this point, behaviour between the authorities and demonstrators remained courteous, with tempers controlled. Police moved in and picked up the protestors either to move them out of the way or into awaiting vans, and were met with little resistance other than gravity. This extraordinarily convivial exchange continued despite the high proportion of arrests; with 826 carried away from an estimated 2500 strong crowd.<sup>326</sup>

The politeness on both sides made way for the police to employ new tactics for controlling the crowds. Christopher Farley remembers a strategic approach designed to deal with a sit down that blocked traffic saying:

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<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.* p. 201.

<sup>325</sup> Interview with Jay Ginn.

<sup>326</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 202.



The police took ambulances, and pretended they were ambulances and filled them with police and ran them up and down the road all the time in order to get the demonstrators to move. And every time an ambulance came at speed ringing its bells, the demonstrators got up and moved a few yards to the side to let the ambulance through, and when they saw that they could do this, well they just did that endlessly.<sup>327</sup>

Some respondents spoke of feeling cheated by the police using ambulances for such a purpose. It was this sort of action which made a few determined to formulate methods to outwit the police in response. Here, then, originated the ongoing debate about non-violence and openness in action, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Many of those arrested adhered to the C100 non-compliance policy of refusing to pay fines, and so the authorities were soon met with a secondary problem of having to remand a large number in custody. Michael Randle recalls how at this point it was hardly an ordeal, saying:

We were charged with very trivial, you know with just obstruction. [...] You were fined a pound or two. And if you didn't pay the fine, well I didn't pay my fine, and I got sentenced to a day's imprisonment which was rather good. You'd just spend the day in the police cells 'til the court rises at half past four, and you'd done your time [laughs].<sup>328</sup>

The demonstrators were still taken with the idea of inciting mass arrests and causing prison overload. Consequences were tolerable, media interest was high, and it seemed that the legal system was beginning to struggle with the practical implications of such a campaign. For C100 the outlook was positive.

Despite C100's inflammatory agenda, it remained a peaceful and civilised campaign. The group's commitment to forcing the British Government to refrain from nuclear tests and reject US agreements over nuclear apparatus accommodation, however, was also very inward looking. This was soon to change, as over the next few months the international climate worsened, with developments in Europe coming under scrutiny

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<sup>327</sup> Interview with Christopher Farley.

<sup>328</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

from politicians and protestors alike. In late July 1961, the Berlin crisis was at breaking point and by August many agreed that the world was under serious threat of nuclear war.<sup>329</sup> In what was now considered a critical political situation, the British authorities began to lose patience with voices of dissent. At the same time the intensity of those dissenting voices was amplified. Within this climate, it seemed the powers of control finally decided to put an end to C100 demonstrations, and were determined that if the protestors were keen to meet the authorities head on, then they would receive the full force of their retaliation.

### **17 September 1961: The C100 Climax.**

In addition to these wider political tensions, two nuclear tests were planned; one on the 31 August 1961 by the Soviet Union and another on the 6 September 1961 by the Americans. In response to the former test, a small and impromptu crowd of 116 sat down outside the Russian Embassy.<sup>330</sup> The next official demonstration was organised for 17 September 1961. The plan was to coincide a major C100 sit-down in Trafalgar Square with a DAC demonstration at Holy Loch (where Polaris submarines were harboured) and with Battle of Britain Sunday. This particular event became extremely significant for the campaign, not only because a large crowd was expected due to increased interest in the international situation, but also because the authorities decided to ban it completely. Their first tactic was to employ the Public Order Act of 1936, which had been brought in to stop the British Union of Fascists (BUF) from organising demonstrations without official police consent. The government was determined to prevent the mass action and summoned just over a third of named C100 members to appear in court to be bound over to keep the peace. Of the thirty six summoned, thirty two refused.<sup>331</sup> Before his sentencing Russell made a short speech to the packed court that was met with rapturous applause and lasted for half a minute.<sup>332</sup> Due to age and health concerns for he and his wife, their sentences were reduced to seven days.

Schoenman and a George Clark were each given two months, and all of the others were

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<sup>329</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 203. Argued that even Lord Home agreed to this in his first speech as PM.

<sup>330</sup> Driver, C. (1964) *Op. cit.* p. 121.

<sup>331</sup> Duff, P. (1971) *Op cit.* p. 179.

<sup>332</sup> *The Guardian*, 13 September, 1961. p.1.

expected to serve a month unless they agreed to be bound over.

For the law enforcers, this new hard line approach was to unfold disastrously. Messages of public sympathy for the old Earl poured in from both home and abroad ensuring that the campaign could not have been better publicised in the run up to the demonstration. Russell, speaking for all those interned, sent word from prison that was designed to conjure more popular interest. In part it read:

Our ruined, lifeless planet will continue for countless ages to circle aimlessly around the sun, unredeemed by the joys and loves, the occasional wisdom and the power to create beauty which have given value to human life. It is for seeking to prevent this that we are in prison.<sup>333</sup>

A whole new wave of protestors were immediately recruited to the campaign. Diana Shelley, for example, recalls this injustice as her motivation for participation saying, 'I went on that because it had been banned, and so it was a civil liberties issue for me'.<sup>334</sup> Media curiosity was also aroused and, adding to the potential drama, the BBC planned live coverage on the day.

The demonstration was arranged for late afternoon to avoid any clashes with Battle of Britain parades. For those who had made their way to Trafalgar Square early, it seemed that other than a formidable police presence, there was little to see. The demonstrators had been advised by C100 organisers to emerge at the same time, and until then, remained hidden. John Brailey remembers:

There was nobody there. They was all in St Martins In The Field, in the National Gallery, in the underground, the square was virtually empty. So it was all the police who were lined up along Whitehall and must have thought, 'Wheres the buggers gone?'<sup>335</sup>

At five pm protestors began to emerge, crossing to the centre of the square to sit down.

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<sup>333</sup> *The Guardian*, 14 September, 1961. p 1.

<sup>334</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley.

<sup>335</sup> Interview with John Brailey.

The *Daily Mail* reported that:

Actress Vanessa Redgrave and writer Shelagh Delaney joined hands and walked nervously down the National Gallery steps into Trafalgar Square.<sup>336</sup>

As events unfolded, even CND leaders could not resist attending to witness the illegal demonstration. Peggy Duff kept walking to avoid breaking the law and recalled later how at this point she was almost drawn into direct action herself. She said:

Round and round we went, and always there was this almost irresistible impulse to join the others in the square itself, always this uncomfortable, unhappy feeling of being shut out.<sup>337</sup>

She went on to speculate as to what may have occurred had she and other CND leaders condoned NVDA; that if C100 had been bolstered by full scale CND support things may have turned out quite differently for the anti-nuclear movement.

One of the first arrests of the day was that of Peter Cadogan, who was assigned the job of reading Russell's statement to a reportedly 15,000 strong crowd.<sup>338</sup> He recalls:

So at five thirty I stood up and began to read Russell's message out to the crowd. Now, you know, I had to turn round and repeat the message because they wouldn't hear it otherwise, and it wasn't a very good loud speaker. But I did this for about five or ten minutes and then the police advanced, four of them through the crowd, arrested me, took my loud speaker and carried me [...]. I was used as a sort of battering ram as they charged through the crowd. It was rather unpleasant.<sup>339</sup>

This new confrontational policing method was a taste of what was to come for C100. Taylor sees this as a pivotal moment that was indicative of C100's growing success. He argues that:

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<sup>336</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 September 1961, p.7.

<sup>337</sup> Duff, P. (1971) *Op. cit.* p. 180.

<sup>338</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 1961. p.1.

<sup>339</sup> Interview with Peter Cadogan.

With more than 12,000 demonstrators- and over 1300 arrests- the situation was transformed. Both the Committee and the police realized that the Movement was now perhaps on the verge of achieving a mass presence.<sup>340</sup>

For a while, the conflict was minimal and discreet, and a waiting game took place between the police and protestors. Many participants sat for hours knowing that if they left the square they would not be able to return. Diana remembers this saying:

It was great to be young in terms of ones bladder (laughter). I also drank a lot less water than I do now, so I haven't a clue how I managed to sit there for that long. But we did, and the ban specifically extended until midnight and we took the view that we were going to sit there until midnight, and then we would leave.<sup>341</sup>

Before long the situation escalated and between 6pm and 1am, a total of 1,314 individuals were arrested, out of which 658 were bailed for release.<sup>342</sup> Over half of those taken into custody refused bail and were remanded into custody, which was yet another complicating factor for the authorities.

As the evening progressed arrests became increasingly violent. A National Council for Civil Liberties document entitled 'Public Order and the Police' later reported thirty-one complaints of alleged police violence from that one evening.<sup>343</sup> Even the right-wing press noted some sense of injustice over what had transpired. *The Daily Telegraph* reported:

Some of those seized were making their way quietly out of the square. When they protested they were thrown to the pavements, dragged forcibly to the vans or coaches and manhandled. These last demonstrators were outnumbered five to one by the police.<sup>344</sup>

Media reports were mostly concerned with famous names being arrested, and then some

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<sup>340</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 227.

<sup>341</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley.

<sup>342</sup> Driver, C. (1964) *Op. cit.* p. 122.

<sup>343</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 226.

<sup>344</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 September. p. 1.

attention was given to the 'violent clashes' and reports of violence on both sides.<sup>345</sup> *The Daily Express* claimed that:

There were wild rushes at barriers of police. The fighting was no-holds-barred. Policemen vanished into a flail of slush. So did demonstrators.<sup>346</sup>

Over the following months, the events of 17 -18 September were to become a debated topic in the House of Commons. The legitimacy of banning the demonstration under the Public Order Act of 1936 was contentious, as were allegations of police brutality.<sup>347</sup> Mr Anthony Greenwood, MP for Rossendale opened a parliamentary discussion on 17 October, having witnessed the events himself. He called for an independent inquiry, stating that a minority of the police were guilty of an 'abuse of power'. He argued:

In common with other observers, I watched the scene from the roof of St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church. With field glasses, I clearly saw men and women dragged along the ground by one arm and one man dragged along by his legs with his head, scraping the ground.<sup>348</sup>

It is not easy to tell whether these events encouraged further active support for C100's campaign or actually inhibited participation. Public sympathy remained strong, however, enhanced by the many accounts of brutal arrests that emerged.

Fifty years on, acquainted with the reports and debates of the time, it is interesting to be able to examine alternative recollections of individuals who both witnessed and participated in these events. Many offered only short descriptions, but all those arrested had similar views. Guy Roberts, for example, spoke of the extreme measures taken by some police, saying:

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<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> *The Daily Express*, 18 September 1961. p.1.

<sup>347</sup> Trafalgar Square (Demonstrations), House of commons debate, 9 November 1961, Vol 648. cc113943. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/nov/09/trafalgar-square-demonstrations>  
Also: Demonstration, Trafalgar Square (Police Behaviour), House of Commons debate, 17 October 1961, see vol 646 cc155-66  
[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/oct/17/demonstration-trafalgar-square-police#S5CV0646P0\\_19611017\\_HOC\\_208](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/oct/17/demonstration-trafalgar-square-police#S5CV0646P0_19611017_HOC_208),

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*

They hosed us down. It was cold, quite a chilly night and [laughs] they did some amazing things that night. They arrested an entire bus stop. Basically some of the people were just people who were waiting for a fucking bus.<sup>349</sup>

For a further flavour of this occasion I will draw on three particularly rich narratives. It is clear that, in common with my own account of the 1990 Poll Tax riot, the years have softened the protest stories in emotional terms, and yet the memories evoked remain vivid.

For some respondents, 17 September 1961 was their first experience of C100 action, and quite an eye-opener. The effect of this was that they retained a detailed memory of events. Hugh Court's narrative is a good example of this. His employment within a firm of architects was compromised by his arrest, not only because he was unable to turn up for work the following day, but also because a picture of him in a police van made the photo page in the *Daily Mail*, causing embarrassment to the company.<sup>350</sup> Hugh strives to give an honest and balanced version of events, acknowledging the civilised approach of some officers. He recalls one particular Sergeant at the station:

He said 'I have the utmost respect for you demonstrators here today and I want you to know that I have instructed all my men to treat you demonstrators with discipline and courtesy' and I was very moved by that.<sup>351</sup>

This was not his only perspective on the police that day however; he continues, saying:

Unfortunately not all policemen were like that and I witnessed a lot of really unpleasant incidents and one I shall never forget, which happened in the police station to which I was taken. It was four police officers carrying shoulder high one demonstrator, um almost as though he was on a stretcher, and when they got him inside the police station they all let go and let him drop on his back to the floor and of course he was hurt. I don't know why they did that.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Interview with Guy Roberts.

<sup>350</sup> *The Daily Mail*, 18 September 1961. p.6.

<sup>351</sup> Interview with Hugh Court.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*

Hugh was clearly greatly concerned by the violence he witnessed. He himself had experienced the inflammatory tactics used by some police, saying:

They made a point of trying to shuffle us into tighter and tighter corners and they had a very interesting technique, when you're sitting on the ground you usually have your hands on the ground to support you to sit upright and they had a very interesting habit of trying to step on your fingers all the time to make you pull your fingers in and shuffle yourself into a smaller and smaller area.<sup>353</sup>

Knowing this, he found the protestor resilience and commitment to non-violence under increasingly confrontational circumstances quite extraordinary. He recalled:

I was really impressed with the quality of the people that were present. There was a discipline about most of the demonstration. People were passive, they sat down, they supported each other. And when the police were quite brutal, they still supported each other.<sup>354</sup>

By now, it seemed the gloves were off as far as police were concerned and for some of the protestors this was regarded as being a step in the right direction; they had provoked a response from the authorities.

The discourteous and sometimes illegal treatment faced by C100 members on arrest also gave rise to acts of defiance. The respondents recalled how they would employ their knowledge of legal issues in an attempt to push the law enforcement system to its limit. Jim Radford, for example, recalls how along with many others, he had been hauled into a police station and was unwilling to be charged by any officer other than the one that had arrested him. As he recounts:

'Hang on a minute', I said [...] 'this is not the man who arrested me', so the sergeant said, 'Is that right?' And he didn't know if he'd arrested me or not, they were just dragging people in [...] I said, 'You don't know the circumstances of my arrest.' 'Oh', he said, 'Oh all right, well go and sit down again then. We'll try to find out who arrested you.' Well they'd never do that, so I sat there for a bit and then I realised the door was open so I got up and walked out. Nobody had taken

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<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*



my name or anything see, so I just got up and walked out and took another couple of people with me. 'Come on', I said, 'there's no point in hanging about here.' So I just walked out back to Trafalgar Square where they were still arresting people and pushing the crowd back, so I organised a little group to sit down on the steps of St. Martins, they arrested us, they could have left us on the steps of St. Martin's but they didn't, they arrested us, back off to Scotland Yard and this time I got charged.<sup>355</sup>

An awareness of legal rights and the ability to act upon this knowledge informed the development of C100's campaign and various written guides concerning arrest protocol were compiled and refined over the years. Whilst working against the legal system, it was important for individual C100 protestors to maintain as much pressure as possible in order to maximise the disruption caused.

Another interesting account is that of Oonagh Lahr, firstly because she experienced some significantly rough treatment on arrest; and secondly because what happened to her was witnessed by Liberal peer Lord Kilbracken, who not only discussed the events on television, but also in the House of Lords.<sup>356</sup> Oonagh's narrative is very detailed and to understand her experience, it is worth presenting a lengthy extract. Two policemen approached her, she remembers:

They picked me up and they carried me toward the fountain and one of them said to the other [...] 'Shall we bang her head on the side?' And the other said, 'No, throw her in'. [...] Then when two others came along and fished me out of this fountain. They weren't the ones who'd picked me up in the first place, and they took me over to a van and that went off to Tottenham Court Road Police Station. [...] I had to hang around waiting for someone to claim they had arrested me and charge me. In the mean time I went up to the senior policeman in this backyard and said, 'Look, why don't you just let me go because I've been thrown in the fountain and I'm wet up to here, and this is cold here, and its not a good idea, and anyway I'm menstruating', because I was. He didn't do any thing, he said, 'Go and sit down'. [...] I got put into a van with others, and they took us to Marshall Street, I think. A place in which there was these rather grubby mats to do ju jitsu or karate, or whatever it is they do. And we were all put down there for the night, and we were watched over by a couple of them and in the night I went up to them and

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<sup>355</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

<sup>356</sup> He became a Labour Peer in 1966, see <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/lord-kilbracken-412355.html>; and see House of Lords debate, 19 October 1961 discussed on following page..

said, 'Can you get me a blanket because I'm still wet'. And they said, 'Go away' [...] I didn't actually get any dry anything, blanket or anything, until seventeen hours after I'd been thrown in, which I think was worse than the throwing in actually. But, when I got to court at last, I thanked from the dock, I thanked the matron at the police station who had given me, at last, a blanket, seventeen hours after I'd been thrown in the fountain.<sup>357</sup>

Although Oonagh's narrative indicates that some officers were still willing to treat demonstrators with dignity, there were many others intent on making arrests as unpleasant as possible. To leave an individual in wet clothes without food or blankets for so long is undoubtedly cruel and is evidence of the new hard line approach. On the 19 October 1961, after speaking to Oonagh about her ordeal, Lord Kilbracken presented her case to the House of Lords. He said:

The final sight that I saw [...] was when two ladies and one man were brought by the constables at the double, unresisting and passive, to one of the fountains and thrown into the deep water round one of the fountains. One of these ladies was Miss Oonagh Lahr of London, N10. She is thirty one, and her report of the events shows her sense of humour as well as her spirit of forbearance and forgiveness. In reporting it, she says as follows: 'I would like to thank the three constables who took me out of the fountain, and in particular the one who was very concerned for me in my soaking wet condition, and who did his very best to get me as quickly as possible into a police coach. I would like to thank the police matron at Stoke-Newington Court who gave me a blanket and a hot drink fourteen hours after I was thrown into the fountain'. I have interviewed this lady, and I am convinced that she is a witness of truth. It was fourteen hours, half past two the next afternoon, before she got so much as a cup of tea. She was still in her wet clothes, she had no facilities for drying herself. She was given nothing to eat and nothing to drink, and it was not until the Tuesday morning, when she was due to come up before the Governor of Holloway, that she got any dry clothes at all. So it was very nearly forty-eight hours before this lady, a respectable woman of thirty-one and a sincere woman, was given any dry clothes to wear.<sup>358</sup>

While these two accounts differ by three hours in the time it took Oonagh to obtain a blanket, all other details of the two versions corroborate one another and are in fact, very similar. This minor discrepancy might, however, indicate the level of discomfort in

<sup>357</sup> Interview with Oonagh Lahr.

<sup>358</sup> Police Action At Trafalgar Square Demonstration, House of Lords debate, 19 October 1961 vol 234 cc627-5 [http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1961/oct/19/police-action-at-traffic-square#S5LV0234P0\\_19611019\\_HOL\\_125](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1961/oct/19/police-action-at-traffic-square#S5LV0234P0_19611019_HOL_125)

which she was held for what was a rather long time. If her more recent recollection was an exaggeration, it only emphasises the extremity of her ordeal. In his report, Lord Kilbracken's description of Oonagh as a 'respectable' and 'sincere woman' also reveals something about class attitudes around respectability and protest participation based upon conscience. His report valorises her beliefs, something we can assume that the authorities were certainly keen to avoid.

These additional accounts of what was to become known as the climax of C100's campaign not only qualify what is already known about the occasion, they also add new voices revealing the extent of its impact on many of those who took part. It becomes clear that, from 17 September 1961 onwards, the police were determined to prevent further C100 campaign escalation. In the aftermath of this largest demonstration, however, campaign members considered themselves extremely empowered. Even without the support of CND, public opinion remained in their favour. The group entered serious discussions about how they should follow such a successful action, knowing full well that a wrong decision might forfeit the whole campaign. We can assume that, in response, the authorities were eager to devise a new approach that would steer the public image of C100 away from one of protestors acting on a matter of conscience towards a less respectable image of them acting on a matter of politics. As it turns out, this was made easier for them when C100 members agreed to move their protest out of London.

### **Out to the Bases: No Holds Barred.**

To this point, all C100 demonstrations had been confined to centre of London. A new, confident mood in the campaign now inspired the idea of taking C100 protests out to military bases, in order to emphasise their objections. Michael Randle recalls:

Well we felt, God we've got all these people, you know, if we could now move them to the bases, so that it would directly obstruct the nuclear programme. Now there's a lot of controversy over that, whether that was a right move or not. The Direct Action people had always concentrated on the actual sites, either Aldermaston or the rocket bases because you could say there was a direct

connection, but if you were blocking a street in the middle of London it didn't have a direct connection.<sup>359</sup>

After some debate, a demonstration was planned for 9 December 1961 with the aim of combining the targeting of military bases with mass civil disobedience throughout the country. A leaflet entitled '*Committee of 100 Mass Resistance*' *People of Britain resist!* was circulated, containing a pledge request for 50,000 people to participate. It read:

The mass walk-on to an important operational air base and the attempt to obstruct and reclaim it marks a new phase in the development of resistance to nuclear weapons. We need many thousands there if it is to be effective.<sup>360</sup>

One could commit to joining a demonstration in either Cardiff, Bristol, York or Manchester, or venture out to 'block or immobilise' the US Air Force headquarters at Ruislip, Wethersfield Military Airbase or Brize Norton Strategic Bomber Base near Oxford.<sup>361</sup> Pledges had been used before in C100 but, considering the seriously illegal nature of this event, it was particularly important for the organisers to gauge support levels beforehand. Planning was essential, with tasks reminiscent of military intelligence assignments. Ruth Walter headed to Wethersfield with Pat Arrowsmith and Wendy Butlin on a reconnaissance mission. She was fully aware that it was 'much more risky', but realised that an advance base examination was essential to assess the needs of the protestors on the day.<sup>362</sup>

When the authorities learned what was being planned they were quick to react with intimidatory tactics. They proclaimed that any military base invasion would be considered a breach of the Official Secrets Act, and those arrested could face lengthy prison sentences.<sup>363</sup> The media reaction contributed to the scare tactics with The *Sunday Telegraph* headline on 26 November reading 'Guards might shoot'.<sup>364</sup> Marion Prince

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<sup>359</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>360</sup> '*Committee of 100 Mass Resistance*' *People of Britain resist!* (1961) C100 pamphlet.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>362</sup> Interview with Ruth Walter (2002).

<sup>363</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. Cit.* p. 231.

<sup>364</sup> *The 100 versus The State*, (1962) A Joint ILP-Solidarity Pamphlet. Second printing. April.

remembers this new level of fear that swept through the campaign saying, 'That seemed a bit more scary [...] you might be risking your life'.<sup>365</sup> Hugh Court considered the dangers as part of a game they were forced to play. Referring to the guards' shooting he said:

I mean, none of us expected them to [...] I think there is a quite an interesting thick inner crisis that goes on for you which is: you know you are exciting the opposition and in turn they are responding with threats which makes you, what's the word? You heighten your own game if you like.<sup>366</sup>

When the authorities realised that verbal intimidation was not deterring the C100 organisers they introduced physical interventions. Wethersfield, once accessible, soon had a new formidable appearance, as Christopher Driver describes:

A 12-foot wire fence was erected round the perimeter, [...] 180 specially erected boards read: 'Official Secrets Act. Prohibited Entry. Penalty of two years imprisonment'. Tents were pitched at 50-yard intervals inside the wire.<sup>367</sup>

In addition to this, an event occurred that not only seriously shocked those intending to invade into realising the reality of the threats, but also brought absolute closure to any remaining ideas that the 'fill the jails' approach was at all feasible. On 8 December, following a police raid on the C100 office, six prominent members of the Committee were arrested; Helen Allegranza, Terry Chandler, Ian Dixon, Trevor Hatton, Pat Pottle and Michael Randle. The Wethersfield Six (as they came to be known) were charged on two counts under Section One of the Official Secrets Act, and with conspiracy 'together with persons unknown' to enter a prohibited place and 'to incite others to enter the base for such a purpose'.<sup>368</sup> The arrests dealt a hefty blow to the campaign, not only because some of its leading activists were removed from action, but because it was now apparent that the powers of control intended to prevent the protests with no holds barred. A final manoeuvre from the Traffic Commissioners undermined the demonstration even further

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<sup>365</sup> Interview with Marion Prince.

<sup>366</sup> Interview with Hugh Court.

<sup>367</sup> Driver, C. (1964) *Op. cit.* p. 124.

<sup>368</sup> *On Trial*, (1963) Peace News Special Supplement, *Peace News*. p.2.

when they withdrew operating licences from the coach company which had been booked to transport demonstrators to Wethersfield.<sup>369</sup> The situation was beginning to look rather bleak for C100.

The immediate effect was that instead of the 50,000 demonstrators originally hoped for, about 7,500 or so turned out. Approximately 600 made it to Wethersfield, 800 to Brize Norton, 2,600 to Ruislip, 1,000 to Bristol, 1,250 to York, and 1,300 to Manchester, with 848 arrests in total.<sup>370</sup> Although at first glance this looks like a substantial failure, it is important to note that despite every effort of the state, over 7,000 individuals still risked arrest, many under the threat of prosecution under the Official Secrets Act. Compared to the earlier, much smaller, DAC rocket base demonstrations it was quite an improvement in number. This was little comfort, however, to those who had so recently held such high hopes. Russell himself saw the decision to move out to the bases as instrumental in the eventual decline of the campaign. He was particularly critical of the vast overestimation of support saying:

The Committee had made a mistake, however, in announcing beforehand that it would make a better showing than it could possibly hope to do and in not planning thoroughly for alternatives in foreseeable difficulties.<sup>371</sup>

Michael Randle agreed that in planning the base invasions, they had failed to anticipate the deterrent reaction from the authorities. He said:

We now know that the cabinet actually met and discussed how to disrupt that demonstration, [...] the cabinet papers that were released, not until 1993, but there was a big story in the *Independent* about it.<sup>372</sup>

For the first time C100 met with the full legal force of the authorities. The demonstrations went ahead, and yet the public support they had so recently enjoyed was now diminishing. A new element of contempt for the campaign was emerging, as Hugh

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<sup>369</sup> *The 100 versus the State* (1962) *Op. cit.* p. 10.

<sup>370</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 232.

<sup>371</sup> Russell, B. (1969) *Op. cit.* p.120.

<sup>372</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

Court recalls:

It may be that there was more sympathy for some of the demonstrations in the towns where you got a cross section of the population were cheering you on, anyway, and there was quite a lot of sympathy in society. When it came to airbases there was no one present and I think they felt they could make us seem as enemies of the state.<sup>373</sup>

The move out to the bases had clearly compromised the campaign. In employing increasingly challenging tactics, C100 members now came to understand what they were up against. For those who remained committed, a serious argument developed around what was by now increasingly seen as a meaningless commitment to openness in planning demonstrations. The subversive seed had been sewn. For Ruth Walter, who had a greater role in planning the Wethersfield invasion than any of the six arrested, this was a pivotal moment. She recalls how 'Wethersfield changed things, certainly for me, to play a more confrontational form of direct action'.<sup>374</sup> Ruth was not alone in raising concern over C100 direction from 9 December onwards. For many it seemed that perhaps the moment had passed and a major rethink was required to keep the campaign alive. Before moving on to consider the radicalising pressures which emerged in direct response to the events of early December, it is important to take a brief look at the events that unfolded during the Wethersfield Trial.

### **The Wethersfield Trial.**

This trial opened on 20 February 1962 and was soon the main campaign focus. It was an opportunity to voice the anti-nuclear argument from a very public soapbox, and for this purpose the defendants planned for one of their number to defend themselves in court. Michael Randle hoped to undertake this role, but this did not prove possible, as he explains:

I was initially gonna defend myself but, I was first on the indictment, [...] Jeremy Hutchinson [defending counsel] he said no, that wouldn't do because I would be

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<sup>373</sup> Interview with Hugh Court.

<sup>374</sup> Interview with Ruth Walter (2008).

queering his pitch by coming in with all our amateur stuff [...] But anyway, Pat did a good job and especially as he was sort of just cheeky, but to the point where the magistrate wasn't quite sure whether he was being cheeky or not you know.<sup>375</sup>

Pat Pottle represented himself very skilfully, especially considering the restrictions imposed by the judge, who had clearly preempted the defendants intention to promote their campaign. Much of what they planned was deemed inadmissible, for example, Randle recalls how their attempt to discredit the initial charge was blocked, saying:

The crucial legal issue in the first few days of the trial was whether or not we would be allowed to argue that our purpose in trying to immobilize the base was not prejudicial to the safety and interest of the State. The defence would not be allowed to call evidence that it would be beneficial to the country to give up nuclear armament, or to cross-examine the witnesses on this point.<sup>376</sup>

The fact that Pat Pottle defended himself gave him some leeway in what may have been deemed unacceptable behaviour were he a trained barrister. This is certainly apparent in his questioning of the prosecution's chief witness, Air Commodore Magill. Not only did he bring some unintended entertainment to the trial when he asked the distance from London to Wethersfield, and Magill answered 'in a fast plane, about fifty miles', but Pottle also managed to get him to answer an extremely pertinent question.<sup>377</sup> An extract from the trial transcript follows:

Pat: Is there any official order you could not accept from the government?

The Judge: (interrupting) He's an officer of the crown Mr Pottle.

Pat: Is there any decision you cannot accept?

Air Commodore Magill: It is my duty to carry out orders.

Pat: Would you press the button you know is going to annihilate millions of people?

Air Commodore Magill [after some hesitation]: If the circumstances demanded it, I would.<sup>378</sup>

At the time this statement seemed to be a partial victory for the defendants. The

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<sup>375</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>376</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>377</sup> Russell, B. (1969) *Op. cit.* p. 121.

<sup>378</sup> Bradshaw, R. *et al.* (1981) *Op. cit.* p.40.



intention was to indicate the similarities between what Magill admitted he was willing to do and a recently-concluded war crimes trial in Israel. SS officer Adolph Eichman was charged with (amongst other things) crimes against humanity for his part in the Holocaust. His main line of defence was that he was only obeying orders, and he received the death penalty.<sup>379</sup> Pottle was prevented from reading out the Judge's summing up of the Eichman case and so the full impact of his point could not be made in court.

A last ditch attempt to continue the 'fill the jails' policy was made when a leaflet headed *Regina versus The Committee of 100* was distributed outside the court. This raised the argument that it was unjust for only six individuals to be singled out when others were willing to come forward and admit to the same alleged crime. It read:

Every member of the Committee of 100 is responsible for the Committee's actions. But the Government is not prepared to apply the law impartially and has preferred to prosecute six individuals.<sup>380</sup>

Both Bertrand Russell and Vanessa Redgrave were called as witnesses in order for them to declare their part in conspiring and inciting others to invade bases.<sup>381</sup> Pat Pottle argued:

It seems to me the prosecution has tried to portray the defendants as sinister conspirators -you know, in the like of Guy Fawkes - but let us look at the conspiracy which we committed. Really sinister! We sent details of all our demonstrations to the police. We published the names of all the Committee of 100 on leaflets so as the police would know who was responsible for the demonstrations.<sup>382</sup>

This line of reasoning had no impact, and the Wethersfield Six were running out of arguments to defend themselves. Randle managed to get across the point that he would

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<sup>379</sup> It is interesting to note that on the day of Eichman's execution, Air Commodore Magill was about to receive an OBE, Randle, M, and Pottle, P (1989) *Op. cit.* p. 17.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>381</sup> *On Trial* (1963) *Op. cit.* p. 11.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.* p.1.

only accept democratically created rules if they respected basic human rights, saying, 'human rights are the first priority, majority rule the second'.<sup>383</sup> Pottle then stressed the importance of protest in British history, saying:

Let us look at some of the social advantages that we have obtained in the last century. I would say that the vast majority of these have been obtained through civil disobedience. For example, the right of women to vote and the right of a man [*sic*] to join a Trade Union.<sup>384</sup>

It was in his summing up, however, that Pottle pointed to the limitations imposed upon his defence, and he called upon the jury to make a stand against the unfair restrictions placed upon himself and the other defendants, saying:

I could not call witness as to fact; I could not call witness as to opinion; I could not call witness as to views; I could not call witness as to the justification for committing civil disobedience; and I could not call witness as to the moral implications of possessing nuclear weapons. You may well ask: 'Well, what defence was left to him as to the purpose of his actions?' If you feel that we were not allowed to bring in evidence as to our purpose, then there is only one verdict you can possibly bring in, and that is Not Guilty.<sup>385</sup>

It was just over four hours before the jury returned with a verdict - guilty with plea for leniency. Each defendant was given eighteen months, apart from Helen Allegranza (the only woman) who received twelve months. She stood up in court demanding to be treated in the same way as her co-defendants, but this was dismissed. These were heavy sentences, especially compared to the previous experience of C100 members. It was a highly publicised case, almost certainly intended to make examples of the defendants and deter further participation in C100 demonstrations.

The prospect of attracting mass appeal for NVDA by now looked bleak and there was little consensus in C100 concerning how to rectify this. Russell and Schoenman's original inspirational campaign design was in urgent need of revision, and yet there was

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<sup>383</sup> *Peace News*, 21 April, 1961.

<sup>384</sup> *On Trial* (1963) *Op. cit.* p. 12.

<sup>385</sup> Randle, M, and Pottle, P (1989) *Op. cit.* p. 16.

no agreement as to how this might take shape. Some argued for a return to city demonstrations, others were eager to press on at the bases. This era of uncertainty, referred to by Taylor as 'The Committee in Crisis', initiated an unintentional program of trial and error for C100, and this, I would argue, contributed to the group's decline.<sup>386</sup>

### **C100: Divergent Trajectories and a Slow Decline.**

The effect of the Wethersfield trial on C100 support levels and sense of direction cannot be underestimated. Despite attracting considerable publicity, the trial clearly illustrated the authorities' determination and potential ability to crush the campaign. Two significant international events followed to further diminish protest support. The Cuban crisis in October 1962 added an increased sense of hopelessness, since, it seemed, the government entirely disregarded public opinion at the potential point of war. Then the Partial Test Ban Treaty in October 1963 was a minor advance in the anti-nuclear campaign, and removed some sense of urgency. For many supporters, it became apparent that in its original form, C100's single issue campaign was no longer feasible. The crowds, who had been stirred by the civil right to demonstrate in Trafalgar Square, had now abated, and those who remained active anticipated increasingly serious consequences for NVDA than before. Throughout the next couple of years there were numerous actions, including military base invasions, embassy sit downs and public assemblies; and yet none mustered the crowds which had originally been anticipated.

C100 planned its final attempt at mass civil disobedience in the centre of London for 9 September 1963. They optimistically requested a minimum of 7,000 pledges to participate and by late August, they were still way short of this ambitious target. Russell had committed to cancel any event if it proved unsupported, and issued a press statement implying that the demonstration would not take place. For the London working group, this public acknowledgement of failure was paramount to admitting all out defeat for the campaign. After much discussion at an emergency meeting they eventually decided to cancel the 9 September demonstration, and organise an alternative

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<sup>386</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p.234.

for two weeks later, this time as a public assembly outside the Air Ministry. This, they thought, would address Russell's commitment to honouring pledges, and at the same time maintain a strong C100 presence in the city. It was a contested compromise, as their press statement demonstrated:

The demonstration on September 23rd will not be based on a minimum of pledges. Some of us feel that a minimum number demonstration is wrong in itself: others merely feel 7000 was far too high a figure. Many of us hold a number of other positions.<sup>387</sup>

Despite the working group's efforts, Russell maintained his objections. In his autobiography he recalls the occasion in strong negative terms saying:

This flouting of a given promise disgusted me, and added itself to my growing belief that the Committee was disintegrating'.<sup>388</sup>

By January he had resigned from the National Committee claiming that the 'folly' around the September demonstrations had made up his mind.<sup>389</sup> Russell was not alone in departing during 1962/63. Whether or not people officially resigned, it soon became evident that quite a proportion of the original members were no longer participating.<sup>390</sup> The failure of this event deterred future hopes for any large scale NVDA revival.

Meanwhile, demonstrations at military bases were continued to be organised. These actions had quite a different flavour; away from the public gaze, they were more threatening and often violent. It was a tougher game for these activists, and yet those who participated did so relentlessly. A new C100 tactic employed within this military environment was to convert the servicemen they encountered. At RAF Marham in early May, as protestors attempted to demobilise the base they handed out leaflets which read:

We are not saying: Go home Yank. If there were Russian bases in this country we

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<sup>387</sup> C100 Press Statement early September 1962, Dennis Gould's personal archive.

<sup>388</sup> Russell. B. (1969) *Op. cit.* p 122.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.* p. 125.

<sup>390</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

would protest at them [...] You are a vital part of the war machine. Any day you may be ordered to destroy millions of people. Are you prepared to do this? [...] We urgently appeal to you to reconsider your position [...] Do you realise that you are not even allowed to read this?<sup>391</sup>

Marion Prince was arrested at Marham and sentenced to three months in prison under Section Three of the Official Secrets Act. She remembers:

Some airforce men came over and said that we were going to get arrested cos we weren't supposed to be there, and then I can't remember what anyone else did. I know I started talking about how they were part of this whole thing. I'm sure that they were you know ordinary guys at heart, and what would it take for them to leave their jobs? And I remember one of them saying 'You must be joking lady, this is a good job'.<sup>392</sup>

On a few rare occasions servicemen were convinced to join C100, and faced Court Martial. One airman named Brian McGee, who was stationed at RAF, Henlow faced two years for refusing to obey an order.<sup>393</sup> He eventually became very active in C100 and married a fellow campaigner. This tactic of conversion was not massively effective, however, and serves as another example of C100's lack of strong direction, and of the trial and error approach that was beginning to direct the campaign. There were minor successes and many arrests and sentences, and yet it was clear that neither base invasions or city demonstrations were about to trigger a campaign revival. In this climate it was hoped that the Spies for Peace revelations would reignite popular support for C100, and for a short while, there was a flurry of public enthusiasm for the anti-nuclear cause, centring on the Aldermaston 1963 diversion and the distribution of *Danger! Official Secret*.

### **The Spies for Peace Episode.**

Although the Spies for Peace had no official C100 endorsement, the two groups have correctly been closely associated with each other. C100 narratives indicate that there was enormous support for this maverick group's actions post publication of *Danger!*

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<sup>391</sup> C100 Leaflet distributed at Marham Air base 1962, from Dennis Gould's personal archive.

<sup>392</sup> Interview with Marion Prince.

<sup>393</sup> *Peace News*, 17 August 1962, p.12.

*Official Secret*. As I have already described the delicate nature of these stories and how they came to be revealed, I will now explain the actions in more detail. The story that follows is based on the accounts of Mark, Mike, Ruth and Guy, with details common to all four.

Following a tip-off, four signatories of *Beyond Counting Arses* drove from London to Reading on 16 February 1963, to meet a contact who claimed to know the whereabouts of a nearby secret underground bunker.<sup>394</sup> Immediately following this encounter, the four men (Mark, Mike, Guy and one other) went out to search a stretch of countryside not far from the A4 and the small village of Warren Row. Knowing little of what to expect, they walked through frosty, muddy fields and before long came across a short track of tarmac with a ramp heading downwards. This turned out to be the entrance to RSG6. They could see ventilators, steel shutters and a small wooden door which was easy to break into, giving access to a boiler-house. Inside they noticed that the boiler was active and found a schedule indicating that a maintenance visit was shortly due to occur. Another door was found to be unlocked. Part of the bunker was well lit, revealing stairs down to what looked like offices. Mike described the strangeness of this experience, saying:

We were in the middle of a field, with mud on our boots up to here [indicates just below the knees], in this boiler room and there was this office block ... We were, terrified is not the word for it, I mean it was like walking into a Stanley Kubrick movie right? We were totally disoriented.<sup>395</sup>

To the trespassing activists, it appeared as if the official occupants had just gone out for a tea-break leaving their papers in disarray. Fear of imminent detection caused the men to move fast. They took photographs, copied and collected information, and then retreated rapidly back to London.

Within two weeks, another party of four set out to RSG6, only this time Nicolas Walter

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<sup>394</sup> Interview with Guy Roberts. The contact had information from a GPO engineer who had for a short time worked in the bunker.

<sup>395</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

replaced Mike in the car. When they first arrived, workmen were on the premises so they drove to a pub and waited. It was late and dark when they returned to what now seemed to be an empty bunker. Wearing gloves, they cautiously picked the locks and entered. This second raid was well planned, as Guy recalls:

We knew we were entering what was almost certainly an empty place, and although there was obviously a risk, by that time we'd calculated it more, we'd thought about it. We knew what we were gonna do. We'd come prepared as it were, I think. We had more film with us and I had drawing materials and things.<sup>396</sup>

Without leaving any obvious trace of their entry, the raiders worked quickly and methodically. Each had a designated role and within a few hours the subterranean building had been thoroughly searched. They took photographs, traced maps, transcribed documents and appropriated some duplicated documents before eventually emerging with a suitcase full of material for analysis and collation. They were determined to publicly disclose what they had learned: that in the case of nuclear war the British people were effectively to be written off.

Mark assembled the first draft of *Danger! Official Secret* which was worked up with help from two members with journalistic experience, and then presented it to the group, who endeavoured to finalize the document collaboratively. Once completed it required printing, duplication and distribution, all of which took time and money. The group met regularly in each other's homes and never took notes in meetings. They were each allocated a particular role, about which they divulged as little to the others as possible. Ruth recalls:

Well if we got arrested, the less we knew about what people were doing the better. So, I presume, I bought stamps from somewhere, or envelopes or something like that. Well I didn't tell. One of the main things I did was to get money from well known people. And I'm not going to tell you who they were.<sup>397</sup>

They always worked with gloves and destroyed or secreted any evidence connecting

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<sup>396</sup> Interview with Guy Roberts.

<sup>397</sup> Interview with Ruth Walter (2008).

them to the document and to the RSG6 raids. The typewriter they used was thrown into a river outside London. Finally 3,000 copies of *Danger! Official Secret* were mailed out from different locations around London. Each of these activists received a copy in the post along with the numerous others, so that if and when the Special Branch searched their homes they could not be distinguished from any other of the recipients. Once the cover-up was completed, all that remained was for them to stay anonymous and avoid prosecution; an undertaking which, despite some suspicions (some of them had been signatories of *Beyond Counting Arses*, after all), they have accomplished to this day. Publication of the document in the British press was delayed by an official D-notice, but after Czechoslovakian radio decided to broadcast the document in full there was nothing to restrain them.<sup>398</sup> The story was covered in all main newspapers and triggered a public outcry.

This endeavour carried great significance, beyond reviving interest in anti-nuclear issues for a short while, in that it marked a pivotal episode in the relationship between the British public and their government. Its impact was to forge a new propensity for public mistrust in Britain's political leadership, to generate parliamentary debate and, more conspicuously, a flurry of political satire.<sup>399</sup> In her retrospective account, 'How my father spied for peace', Natasha Walter describes the effects of the publication of these official secrets:

It came as a shock to ordinary people that their rulers were making detailed plans to fight a nuclear war and to ensure the survival only of the politicians and civil servants, without any democratic consent.<sup>400</sup>

Unfortunately for C100, this did not mean that new blood was attracted to the campaign, which was by now widely considered to be a dangerous and diminishing operation. Within C100, nevertheless, it still had the effect of encouraging maverick and

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<sup>398</sup> A 'D-notice' was an official request (not legally binding) issued by the government to all media to refrain from publishing specific material for the benefit of national security.

<sup>399</sup> 'That Was the Week That Was', a new satirical television programme (1962-3), focused on current events such as the Profumo affair and the RSG revelations. See also *Private Eye*, 19 April 1963.

<sup>400</sup> Walter, Natasha. (2002) *Op. cit.*



subversive actions resulting in the stunt-like endeavours, such as sustaining speeches at West End theatre intervals, described in the previous chapter. From this point onwards, C100's campaign was less likely to focus on abolishing nuclear weaponry; instead they scrutinised and challenged what they now saw to be the British nuclear state and its relationship with both its own public, and international governments.

### **The Greek Campaign.**

In April 1963 C100 attention was drawn to Greek politics, which would retain some interest throughout the campaign's duration. It began when a caravan of protestors set out in an assortment of vehicles, travelling across Europe to join a youth peace march organised by the Greek pacifist movement. They planned to walk from Marathon to Athens. As a key theme across the narratives, the Greek campaign requires some brief attention, especially as it resulted in the demonstrations against visiting Greek royalty which undoubtedly blighted public opinion of C100. Having already covered C100's proclivity for stunts in later years, the Greek campaign is the final focus of action to be considered here.

Very few of those who participated in the C100 caravan made it any further than the Austrian border. The protestors sat down and made speeches, but were prevented from moving forward together. Discussions over what should be done reached little consensus, resembling in this way discussions taking place back home within C100 working groups. Jo Foster remembers:

They said 'Austria's a neutral country and we can't have any political people driving through'. So we went to a campsite and had a meeting about what we should do, and nobody could agree because they were all anarchists and they didn't believe in voting. It was absolutely hilarious actually.<sup>401</sup>

The caravan eventually disbanded. Some returned, others went elsewhere in Europe; a few crossed into Greece on foot.<sup>402</sup> As it turned out, the demonstration had already been

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<sup>401</sup> Interview with Jo Foster.

<sup>402</sup> Interview with Barbara Smoker.

banned by the right-wing Greek government. Only one individual, Gregoris Lambrakis, a left-wing politician, completed the march as, being an MP, he had political impunity. Lambrakis, who was inspired by the Aldermaston march, was an inspirational figure for the international Peace Movement. It was not surprising then, when, a month later, his public murder by right-wing extremists (with links to the government) caused an uproar.<sup>403</sup> Without delving further into Greek politics of the time, I will briefly illustrate C100 members outrage over this incident and the developments that followed.

In early June 1963 the 'Save Greece Now' campaign was formed in the C100 London office to organise demonstrations over King Paul and Queen Frederika's UK visit. These protests against Greek royalty were unpopular and suffered adverse reports in the media. Home Secretary Brooke was quoted as saying:

People are sick and tired of communists, fascists and self-styled Committee of 100 and other extremists who interfere with the right of people to go about in peace and quiet.<sup>404</sup>

The divergence from the nuclear issue continued to cause tensions within the campaign. C100 was becoming more politically motivated, and the anarchist elements of the London working group organised actions which reflected this. In 1967, following the Greek Military Coup, C100 protesters managed to occupy the Greek Embassy in London, but it was little more than an hour before the police entered and defeated them, and forty-two were arrested.<sup>405</sup> By now the authorities appeared to have reached exasperation point with C100 and came down heavy on familiar faces. Michael Randle, now a father of two and keen to avoid prison, had decided to play a more supportive role in this action, and had informed his wife Anne that he would be home later that evening. Arrested along with the others he recalls:

There was a lot of students from LSE who'd taken part. They were all given a

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<sup>403</sup> He was hit by a club wielded from within a hit and run car. His story inspired the political novel Vassilikos, V. (1967) *Z*, Gallimard and the film *Z* (1969) by director Costas Gavras.

<sup>404</sup> See for example *The Times*, 10 July 1963. p. 10 and comments on p.14.

<sup>405</sup> *The Times*, 29 April 1967. p 1.

conditional discharge, which was a new thing to come in, this conditional discharge. And the rest of us were remanded overnight again in Brixton Prison. So we thought, well it won't be too much. If they got conditional discharge, we'll get a fine or nothing too much. And mostly the fines were about thirty pounds or fifty pounds. [...] Well Terry got fifteen months, I got twelve months.<sup>406</sup>

The final days of C100, for Michael and Terry, were spent in prison. The campaign had by now become stretched both in its protest focus and its ability to conjure public support for confronting the state. There was little to be done to maintain this flagging endeavour and prevent remaining C100 members from moving on to other causes. I will explain C100's decline and eventual end in more detail in chapter six. This final campaign draws a line under C100's main actions, and within a few months C100's presence on the political protest map was no more.

## **Conclusion.**

This examination of C100 actions and arrests has drawn together collected narratives with established resources to provide a more detailed picture of the practical aspects of the campaign. We can now make sense of C100's development over the years in terms of tactics and philosophy, and identify turning points along the way. The protestor perspective not only illustrates the dynamic activist/police relationship it also reveals the fears, frustrations and doubts that directed decisions made in C100. The internal struggles of C100's campaign around limits of NVDA which I explored in the previous chapter are now better understood. Additionally, a closer examination of what took place on C100's NVDA demonstrations clarifies the distinctions between CND's Aldermaston approach to anti-nuclear protest and C100's determination to push for change through breaking the law.

The Wethersfield trial was a pivotal point where C100 entered an age of divergence and decline. Up until then, the original 'fill the jails' approach was still considered feasible. Once the authorities demonstrated that they could make examples of a select few, however, the campaigners had to rethink their strategies. The Spies for Peace disclosure,

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<sup>406</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

and the Cuba Crisis caused people to realise the hopelessness of anti-nuclear campaigning, the effect of which was to initiate a mistrust of government policy that remains to this day. Instead the idea of challenging the nuclear state itself was promoted within C100, which both encouraged grass-root support and carried revolutionary overtones. This led to the remaining C100 campaigners becoming increasingly distracted by a range of other single issues.

C100's original 'fill the jails' policy was an inventive one. Their architects anticipated success on a Gandhian scale, but underestimated the response of the powers of control and overestimated the degree of popular support. The British Government, supported by the legal authorities and the police, had a strategic advantage. Not only could they make examples of the few to counteract C100's approach, they also maintained some command over the British press. In this postwar/Cold War climate it was not easy to convince the public that their rulers were not prioritising the safety of the nation, and even after the Spies for Peace revelations a sense of hopelessness quelled any revolutionary fervour. Public support was vital for C100's campaign, and while the protestors delivered their message in part, it was not sufficient to effect change in government policy. Despite this, through their protest example, C100 demonstrated to a nation that NVDA could at least raise public awareness. Many successful British community actions were to follow. Regarding the issue of nuclear weaponry, it is easy to be dismissive of the campaign's impact from a historical perspective. However, some of those involved still maintain to this day the possible significance of their actions; claiming that during the Cuba Crisis the peace movement may have given the world leaders an excuse to climb down without losing face. Whilst not entirely committed to this perspective, Michael Randle is keen to keep the idea alive and laughs as he says: 'maybe we saved the world from being blown up'.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Imprisonment. Gender, Class and Entitlement.**

#### **Introduction.**

C100's 'fill the jails' approach to NVDA relied on the mass imprisonment of campaigners. The originators believed that the prisons would quickly become overloaded with protestors and that the authorities would buckle under the pressure, resulting in a government U-turn on nuclear policy. They did not anticipate what actually happened, and had no realistic idea of what incarceration would mean for the inmates. By most accounts, imprisonment was undoubtedly an unpleasant ordeal, and some, having made this stand once, were inclined to avoid it in the future. Jo Foster, for example, was a young woman, from a progressive family background. For her, the confinement of prison was too much to bear. She recalls:

I swore I'd never do it again, it was a real deterrent because I just couldn't stand being kept in, I'd had such a free life. After one day I found if I stood on my bed I could look out of the little window and I could see the buses on Camden Rd and I thought 'I'll never complain about waiting for a bus any more as long as I'm free to get on one'.<sup>408</sup>

The idea of imprisonment as a deterrent was certainly what the authorities intended for C100 demonstrators, and for some it was effective enough. Others, however, had different ways of coping with their sentences. Michael Randle and celebrity poet Christopher Logue, for example, who had experienced harsh conditions at boarding school, regarded open prison as having comparable qualities.<sup>409</sup> Perhaps the formative experience of restriction, strong discipline and coercion in school made individuals better equipped to endure the demands of imprisonment than others.

Whether by chance or determination, some experienced more intense engagement with the legal authorities than their fellow protestors; the more convictions against their

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<sup>408</sup> Interview with Jo Foster.

<sup>409</sup> Interview with Michael Randle and Interview with Christopher Logue.

name, the harsher the penalties imposed upon them. Ernest Rodker emphasised the seriousness of C100 participation, saying:

However much this may seem like an escapade that one's talking about, there were serious repercussions. I mean people got sent to prison for long periods out of these demonstrations. [...] That put a huge pressure on people's lives and marriages. [...] I mean Mike Randle was sent to prison after the Greek Embassy occupation, and his two sons didn't see him for two years.<sup>410</sup>

Although the wider literature that covers the first wave anti-nuclear movement often makes reference to protestors' arrests and convictions, there is no study of C100 prison narratives which might help us to understand what it was like for them on the inside.<sup>411</sup> It is an important element of C100 experience that has been overlooked, and I will now turn to address it.

As the C100 activists were met with more severe repercussions for their actions, and attempts to engage public support were increasingly hampered, one element of C100 experience persisted over time. Differences in prison experience for the C100 inmates were not chronologically based, but rather experienced in terms of class and gender. In chapter six I will examine aspects of C100 status and demonstrate that, due to the anti-hierarchical efforts of the campaign, class and gendered divides were somewhat minimal on the outside. An analysis here of C100 members' experiences of imprisonment, however, brings out these inequities more strongly. Out of my twenty-four respondents, eighteen spent time in prison for C100 actions; some for a short while on remand and others for much longer fixed term sentences. Three compelling themes have emerged from their stories, which I will address in turn. First to consider is the extent to which C100 members continued their practice of non-cooperation even behind bars, and the consequences they faced in doing so. Second, the issue of class emerges within the prison walls, with a common sense of entitlement exhibited in these middle-

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<sup>410</sup> Interview with Ernest Rodker: Helen Allegranza took her own life on release from prison. We will consider her story a little later.

<sup>411</sup> Driver, C. (1964) *Op. cit.* pp. 170- 188, does give a very brief overview of what prisons were like for anti-nuclear protestors.

class activists' narratives. Thirdly, these C100 reflections on imprisonment reveal the most gendered accounts found anywhere within this research project, and an analysis of this is essential in order to understand the impact of such a civil disobedience campaign on its participants. The difference between the men's narratives of open prisons such as Drake Hall in Staffordshire, and even the closed prisons, Wormwood Scrubs and Brixton; compared to the women's memories of Holloway prison is striking. Certainly, descriptions of facilities and routines in each institution demonstrate some distinctions, but it is also essential to consider the attitude of prison officers to inmates, and also the contrasting ways in which men and women react to being locked up.<sup>412</sup> These prison narratives not only give us an insight into the lives and identities of some of the most committed anti-nuclear protestors of the first wave, they also further illustrate the more general prison experience of early 1960s Britain.

### **Non-Cooperation on the Inside.**

For some of the more defiant C100 prisoners their internment was yet another opportunity to carry out their commitment to non-cooperation. On the outside, personal acts of non-compliance were more openly supported by fellow protestors and easily witnessed by the wider public. Behind bars, however, such actions relied upon a deep sense of personal conviction, as away from the public gaze protestors had to rely on their own inner strength in order to remain non-cooperative. In prison, non-cooperation was seen by the officers as insolence. Michael Randle recalls how difficult it was to maintain a rigidly non-compliant approach inside. Describing his and fellow C100 member Terry Chandler's first encounter with a particular officer he says:

Terry Chandler had gone in just a bit before me and we both said well we'll be perfectly well mannered but we won't do all this sirring business [addressing the prison officers as sir]. And I was in the queue outside, and the next minute I heard a shout from inside the room and Terry Chandler staring ahead was frog marched down the corridor and, [Michael thought] oh shit I can't, I've got to go through with it now [Michael laughs].<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Walklate, S. (2004) *Gender, crime and criminal justice*, Second edition, Willan Publishing. p. 189.

<sup>413</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

Terry, one of the Wethersfield Six, was regarded as a 'militant pacifist', whose commitment to non-cooperation was thorough.<sup>414</sup> Once in prison, in addition to refusing to address officers as sir, Terry regarded it as a duty to abscond if at all possible. Open prisons were therefore especially problematic for him as his commitment to non-cooperation, impelled him to escape, irrespective of the consequences. Ernest, who was moved from Brixton to Drake Hall with Terry recalls:

There were arguments in the open prison. People like Terry Chandler said, 'We're better in a closed prison, because here they're relying on us to agree with them and why should we do that? I'm gonna take the first opportunity to leave that I can [...] If we weren't prepared to be bound over, why were we prepared to go through the process'.<sup>415</sup>

Whilst Ernest saw this as a logical argument for non-cooperation, he, along with most other C100 respondents, were not quite so comprehensively committed to the idea as Terry. Individuals tended to set their own levels of resistance within this unfamiliar environment. Christopher Logue, for example, when remanded over refusing to be bound over, recalls how he and playwright Arnold Wesker sparked a spontaneous sit-down demonstration in the corridor. Perhaps class and celebrity status played some part in enabling these particular men to get away with such provocative behaviour (he does not recall any reprimands).<sup>416</sup> Clearly, the media would have been very interested if either of these two had come to any harm whilst inside. Even so, the recounting of such events by these narrators indicate that despite the hostile conditions, some C100 members intended to maintain a NVDA stance within the prison walls by whatever means.

In Holloway, a passive position of resistance was adopted by Oonagh Lahr. She rejected the fact that Governor Joanna Kelley had reinstated vegetarianism as a privilege rather than a right for prisoners, and decided to make a stand. Her motivation was that this right had been fought for by conscientious objectors over two world wars, and some

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<sup>414</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

<sup>415</sup> Interview with Ernest Rodker.

<sup>416</sup> Interview with Christopher Logue.



prisoners had fasted to death over the issue during World War One. Oonagh recalls refusing food in order to deliver her point. She stressed:

They had gained the right, not a privilege, but a right to be vegetarian and so I never once asked Mrs Kelley, as I should do, for a privilege. I never asked if I could be a vegetarian. I just refused to eat and I always got vegetarian food to eat after two or three days but I never asked for it because I thought it was quite wrong.<sup>417</sup>

Along with the other efforts of non-cooperation by C100 inmates, this position taken by Oonagh raises the issue of prisoner class identity. Her quest to maintain already-established rights in an environment where most other rights had been removed is significant. It is important then to consider what it meant for these mostly middle-class individuals, often with radical backgrounds, to suddenly face the harsh realities of incarceration. These C100 offenders brought with them to British prisons a sense of self and entitlement that bordered on specialness.

### **Prisoner Class and Sense of Entitlement.**

The post-war emergence of identity politics undoubtedly blurred class boundaries especially in young adults. In prison, however, class distinctions remained unambiguous. Inevitably there were tensions in prisoner identity between C100 inmates who felt they were there as a result of doing something righteous, and other prisoners, who knew they were there because of their doing wrong. No standard approach was taken towards these political prisoners within any particular institution much beyond the influence of the prison governor. In a general sense, attitudes towards them would vary depending on the personal opinion of each officer. Michael Randle recalls how male C100 prisoners were mostly treated in the same way as other inmates, and yet:

Some of the screws would have had a different attitude [...] one or two would be less friendly because they didn't believe in all this.<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Interview with Oonagh Lahr.

<sup>418</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

On the other hand, due to the educated nature of the C100 respondents they were also at times treated more carefully. Pat Pottle, in *The Blake Escape*, argues that they:

...were generally treated very well by both prisoners and screws who were all convinced we would be writing about our prison experiences when we were released. Sometimes they would finish off a conversation with - 'That's another bit for your book!'<sup>419</sup>

Mostly these unlikely prisoners attempted to get their heads down and do their time without drawing much attention to themselves, although some required strong adjustment to such an unusual environment. Marion Prince recalls how another woman with whom she'd been arrested was extremely naïve about what to expect inside. She remembers:

We were put in two separate cells and then at about 6 o'clock in the morning this big bell rang and these screws all came round and opened the doors and said 'slop out and then go and get your breakfast', and Sue Price stood in the doorway and said to one of the screws, 'I say' she said about me, she said 'do you think that we could breakfast together?' [Laughter] And this prison officer looked completely like she couldn't believe her ears and then she shouted across the wing to the prison officers on the other side, she said 'Ere, listen to this. These two wanna bleeding breakfast together'.<sup>420</sup>

Marion's reflections are delivered in a lighthearted manner, although it is apparent that at the time this incident caused her great embarrassment. The issue of class in prison never left her, as is evident in a remark of hers which sums up much of what set C100 members aside from other inmates. After a month inside, her experience of release contrasted greatly with other inmates who exited the gates at the same time. She recalls:

I remember coming out and being let out the same time as I think four other prisoners, and there was a big welcome committee for me, and the others just walked off into the unknown and I remember feeling really uncomfortable about that, and wondering whether it was the right thing to do.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Pottle, P. and Randle, M. (1989) *Op. cit.* p. 25.

<sup>420</sup> Interview with Marion Prince.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

While the conditions inside each prison were often similar for the inmates, irrespective of class; the reasons behind internment, the culture and conditioning that each had drawn from their background, and the expectations met upon release were very often quite different. Diana Shelley also commented on this discrepancy, explaining that her prison experience caused her to question the relationship between middle-class protest and imprisonment. She says:

Getting to know a number of people who had been in jail made me realise, brought me to the view that in itself it's only deeply meaningful if you are very middle-class and find this very shocking. But for many people it's an unavoidable part of life, or hard to avoid part of life and it's a very class based view of things.

<sup>422</sup>

It was clearly a shock for these middle-class campaigners to find that the sense of entitlement they experienced was not shared by the other inmates. For this reason, many C100 members, like the suffragettes before them, went on to engage in prison reform after their release.

For most of the C100 activists who underwent it, imprisonment was a huge learning experience. The various incidents of injustice and humiliation faced on the inside had a radicalising effect which prompted serious debate within the campaign when protestors had been released. This resulted in the production of a C100 report that was presented to the Prison Commission in August 1962. Its aim was to draw 'attention to discrepancies between policy and practice in prison administration'.<sup>423</sup> The introduction read as follows:

The list of proposals has been drawn up by a working group of men and women who have been in prison during the last two years for their part in Direct Action or Committee of 100 demonstrations against nuclear weapons. Eight discussion group meetings were held, attended in all by twenty-three ex-prisoners, and written suggestions and comments received by ten others were discussed and incorporated in the final report. The terms of imprisonment varied in length from

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<sup>422</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley.

<sup>423</sup> *Inside Story*, written by C100 members for the Prison Reform Council, and published by Housmans. Sent to the Chairman of the Prison Commission on 27 August 1962.

one week to eight months; the average being eleven weeks. Between them the prisoners could report on conditions in twelve English prisons, but the most well reported prisons were Brixton, Drake Hall, Holloway, Stafford and Wormwood Scrubs.<sup>424</sup>

The report raised issues such as hygiene and medical reform, social and mental welfare, clothing, food, visits, letters and education. For Oonagh, contributing to this was an important component to her adjustment on release. She embarked upon various other reformist activities, and recalls that 'in fact, one of the ways I managed to get over all my complex feelings regarding prison was by talking about it'.<sup>425</sup> This C100 reaction to imprisonment was not surprising. These individuals were already campaigners, so when met with the habitual injustices faced inside they were often impelled to act. This was not only the case for middle-class C100 respondents. Jim Radford, a self-educated working-class activist, was also keen to disseminate his objection to prison conditions. Jim complained to Labour politician Lord Chalfont, in reference to his experience of HMP Brixton. He recalls saying:

'You're locked in the cell, theres one pot, 3 men, which, you know is full of liquid at the end of the day, someone needs to crap, what do they do? [...] No one is going to come and take them to the toilet, so, what they do is they crap on a piece of newspaper, they roll it up in a parcel and throw it out the window. That's why all the cell windows are broken, that's why the walls and bricks are stained, thats why warders always walk well clear of the walls.' He denied it, I said, 'The evidence is there!'<sup>426</sup>

Along with the different experiences faced by these middle-class educated prisoners, largely based on personal expectations, a common position was taken by many when discharged; that they could contribute to improving prison life from the outside. With philanthropic motivations, these C100 respondents often underestimated the extent of the obstacles that lay ahead of them. It is important to note, however, that without such interest and intervention in the prison system, conditions may not have improved since that time.

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<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2. Three of my respondents; Wendy Butlin, Dennis Gould and Oonagh Lahr contributed.

<sup>425</sup> Interview with Oonagh Lahr.

<sup>426</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

The importance of ex-inmates in prison reform campaigning cannot be overestimated. As an example, twenty years after these events, ex-offender Chris Tchaikovsky formed the campaign group Women in Prison to highlight the marginalisation of women within the judicial system. Even by 1983, there was little recognition of the impact of prisons having been designed 'by men for men'.<sup>427</sup> The gendered experience of this prison environment was certainly not widely considered in the 1960s, and so it is interesting to see how these retrospective C100 accounts support the later theory; that incarcerated women, without special regard, are likely to suffer worse consequences than their male counterparts.

## **Gendered Experience in Prison Narratives.**

### **Holloway for the Women, Something Else for the Men.**

Men in C100 outnumbered women, who made up approximately one third of the total named members.<sup>428</sup> Details of those who responded to the calls for mass action are not recorded, and yet photographic evidence supports what is indicated in the narratives; that although there was a strong female presence at demonstrations, there was greater male participation overall. However, the same narratives reveal that once actively participating, women were just as likely to be arrested as men and were often dealt with in a similar fashion.<sup>429</sup> As has already been suggested, it is only when considering C100 members' experience of imprisonment that the more gendered narratives begin to emerge. A major factor contributing to this difference is that, certainly for their first offence, male C100 protesters were more likely to be moved to an open prison within a few days of their internment. For the female respondents, their destination was always HMP Holloway, and this meant for them a rather different encounter. Even when male C100 prisoners were confined in closed prisons, there is evidence to suggest that for women C100 inmates, the experience was often harsher, more isolating, more tedious,

<sup>427</sup> See <http://www.womeninprison.org.uk/index.php>

<sup>428</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>429</sup> The most violent reported arrest involved a man, but women were also hurt on occasions. Also, the only evidence of a woman receiving a lesser sentence for the same crime was in the Wethersfield trial.

and more personally invasive. In addition to this, HMP Holloway's Governor Joanna Kelley was reported to have been prejudiced against 'ban the bombers'. A *Peace News* interview with Helen Allegranza, following her release (and shortly before she took her own life) revealed that:

The governor herself was not liked within the prison generally, and she had these things about CND people and the Irish. As far as she was concerned there was no good CND person and no good Irish person which gives an indication of the sort of woman she was.<sup>430</sup>

As argued earlier, a primary influence on prison experience for C100 inmates was the attitude of prison officials towards them. By all accounts Kelley was a force to be reckoned with, whose disfavour could make life especially difficult for those in her charge.

It is important to evaluate this suggested disparity of gendered prison experience, within the context of research which has shown how women react differently to imprisonment than men. Sandra Walklate in *Gender, crime and criminal justice* explains how the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) report of 1993 demonstrated four areas of concern for penal policy and women. She argues that:

First, being a small proportion of the prison population should mean that they are well catered for. The reality is that women are expected to handle their sentences in a system designed for, and catered for, men. Second, women react to imprisonment differently than men. Men are outwardly violent. Women turn their violence in on themselves and that can have much more long-term damaging effects. Third, being sent to prison for women often means that they lose more than men. Nearly half the women in prison, for example, have dependent children. Fourth, women face a double discrimination on release. Not only are they ex-prisoners, as ex-prisoners they face discrimination on the grounds that they have also offended accepted standards of feminine behaviour.<sup>431</sup>

These factors reflect an historical relationship between women and imprisonment which

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<sup>430</sup> 'Prisoners for Peace', *Peace News*, four page feature, 30 November 1962.

<sup>431</sup> Walklate, S. (2004) *Op. cit.* p. 189.

made very little progress between the early 1960s and the 1990s. Over these years women made up as little as 3 - 5% of the total prison population, and this minority status meant that any special needs based on sex were largely overlooked.<sup>432</sup> With this in mind, these C100 narratives demonstrate that for these women respondents, the consequences of a policy centring on NVDA and arrest provocation were in fact more detrimental to their personal lives than the consequences faced by the men.

### **Drake Hall: An Open Prison.**

A good place to begin this evaluation is the men's accounts of open prison. As we have seen, open prison was not an option for C100 women who instead were sent to Holloway. This was a major discrepancy in gendered experience of the judicial system, especially when focusing on first-time or minor offences. C100 male narratives of open prison describe an experience that was at worst endurable, and sometimes even enjoyable. Having been bound over, for example, around the time of the September 1961 demonstration, all male C100 prisoners were moved to Drake Hall following two or three days in Brixton.<sup>433</sup> This communal experience of open prison, in a relatively unconstrained environment, made the time spent inside fairly benign for these men. Famous names were interned alongside working group members and various anecdotes concerning these encounters emerged across the narratives. Ernest Rodker spent his first two weeks separated from the group in the hospital wing because of back disc problems. He recalls:

I spent this time really suffering, quite badly, while everyone else was out enjoying themselves in the open prison supposedly. I mean, I don't think they were particularly, but, you know. I mean they were together.<sup>434</sup>

While Ernest strives to point out that the experience in Drake Hall wasn't exactly fun for these inmates, a sense of comradeship comes out of the narratives which suggests that

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<sup>432</sup> A Century of Change: Trends in UK statistics since 1900, Joe Hicks & Grahame Allen Social and general statistics section House of Commons library research paper, 99/111, 21 December 1999, p.15 . See <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp99/rp99-111.pdf>

<sup>433</sup> Apart from Bertrand Russell who remained in the hospital wing of Brixton for his seven day sentence.

<sup>434</sup> Interview with Ernest Rodker.

the experience was much more bearable than may otherwise have been. These prisoners were also aware that they could be released at any point were they willing to bind themselves over to keep the peace. A sense of solidarity, however, kept most of them from doing so. There were some exceptions who were under a greater pressure to get themselves released than others, as Ernest recalls:

The experience in the prison was very amusing, with Robert Bolt being courted by, what's his name? The producer of *Spartacus* [He means *Lawrence of Arabia*], 'cos he was in with us at the beginning of it. He'd come with his fleet of Rolls Royce's, to try and argue that he should leave because there was this whole production unit waiting for him to finish the script. So he left after two or three day days. And then there was Alex Comfort the anarchist who was, spent his time in the garden pinching caterpillars off the cabbages and I think he got bored with that and he left after two or three days as well.<sup>435</sup>

This story of Robert Bolt holding the fate of a Hollywood movie to ransom was often cheerfully imparted by respondents, as were memories of the unusual fellowship between protestors and well known names. Christopher Logue was remembered for reciting poetry to an audience of both inmates and prison officers, and Michael Randle recalled a rendition of William Butler Yeats's poem *Easter 1916* as a particularly bonding and moving event.<sup>436</sup> Christopher himself explained how each of the C100 inmates contributed to this atmosphere of togetherness, saying:

When you are in prison you are part of a community and communities inevitably seek, and probably succeed in entertaining themselves. What I could do was recite verse, so when my time came I recited verse, and that was that.<sup>437</sup>

For most of these C100 members, Drake Hall was their first prison experience. Their common anti-nuclear purpose encouraged the majority of them to willingly suffer the hardships, and at the same time they were able to celebrate a mutual sense of determination and commitment. In reality, a short-term sentence in an open prison was,

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<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.* From checking with other narratives and dates of filming it is clear that Ernest just made a mistake here about film title.

<sup>436</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>437</sup> Interview with Christopher Logue.



for many of these C100 protestors, a small sacrifice compared to what their female counterparts had to face in Holloway, or indeed what was in store for them if and when they became repeat offenders.

### **Closed Prisons and Gendered Experience.**

For repeat offenders and those facing more serious charges, such as contravening the Official Secrets Act, prison experience was much more severe. They would expect to face longer fixed-term sentences within the harsher regimes of closed prisons. For C100 inmates, lasting impressions of these institutions become a significant component to the protestor narrative. Pat Pottle, in *The Blake Escape*, described the shocking hygiene levels that inmates encountered on arrival, 'No amount of floor-scrubbing and polish could get rid of the smell that hundreds of men confined in close proximity produces'.<sup>438</sup> For C100 women, this was also the case in Holloway. In *Prisoners for Peace* Helen Allegranza states:

They appalled me. I really was amazed because there are only four toilets and two taps with a sluice in the wing where you go first of all, and about sixty girls have to use these at the same time. The smell of the whole place too is pretty revolting.  
<sup>439</sup>

While conditions for both sexes in the prisons were similarly squalid, the narratives suggest that, in general, circumstances were less pleasant in Holloway than in the prisons where the men were sent. John Brailey, for example, recalls an occasion when C100 remand prisoners were reunited at the Old Bailey and men and women compared their experiences.<sup>440</sup> He says:

Of course, people who were there all swapped anecdotes: 'Oh, we had a lovely breakfast in Brixton! There was egg, bacon and toast and marmalade!' and the girls said, 'We didn't get anything like that!' <sup>441</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> Pottle, P. and Randle, M. (1989) *Op. cit.* p 20.

<sup>439</sup> 'Prisoners for Peace' (1962) *Op. cit.* p. 6.

<sup>440</sup> For the Greek Embassy Invasion.

<sup>441</sup> Interview with John Brailey.

This comparison of seemingly trivial discrepancies in detail is only a starting point. A significantly gendered prison experience that requires particular attention is the sense of isolation that women faced in Holloway. By many accounts, as I will discuss shortly, this isolation clearly contributed to the depression which resulted in Helen Allegranza taking her own life soon after her release in 1963.<sup>442</sup>

The isolation described by C100 women prisoners perhaps reflects a greater social need for companionship than that of the men. Women are known to react differently to being locked up for a large amount of time, a significant proportion of whom respond with depression and self harm.<sup>443</sup> Research from the early 1960s suggests that women in Holloway were less likely to form gangs or communities inside. Sociologist Hugh. J. Klare indicated that sometimes intense friendships were formed, but added that there were 'many rather isolated prisoners who do not form a close friendship with anyone'.<sup>444</sup> Helen Allegranza's story serves to exemplify the impact of this gender divide in C100 imprisonment experience. Following sentencing at the Old Bailey, two of the six, Pat Pottle and Trevor Hatton, were sent to Wormwood Scrubs as first-time offenders. The three repeat offenders, Michael Randle, Terry Chandler and Ian Dixon, went to Wandsworth Prison, although they were soon reclassified and transferred to join the others at Wormwood Scrubs. Helen was sent alone to Holloway. Pat Pottle recalls how:

Prison was a harsh ordeal for Helen. The rest of us were at least together, able to communicate with each other and boost one another's morale. She was entirely on her own.<sup>445</sup>

And Michael Randle remembers that:

It was a very lonely position for her because she was the only woman, and so she was taken off separately. And the very tragic thing as you probably know with Helen, [...] she left prison before the rest of us were out, and before we had

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<sup>442</sup> Pottle, P. and Randle, M. (1989) *Op. cit.* p. 44; Interview with Oonagh Lahr who suggested that Helen became dependent on tranquillisers in prison and that this added to her depression on release.

<sup>443</sup> Walklate, S. (2004) *Op. cit.* p. 189.

<sup>444</sup> Klare, H. (1960) *Anatomy of Prison*, Hutchinson of London. p.35.

<sup>445</sup> Pottle, P. and Randle, M. (1989) *Op. cit.* p. 31.

completed our sentences she'd took her own life.

Even the fact that Helen received a shorter sentence than the others furthered her sense of isolation. She did not emerge as one of the six, but alone. Despite her many supporters, she had no-one with whom she had shared the seven month ordeal, and no-one to empathise with her contradictory feelings on release. In *Prisoners for Peace*, Helen described how:

The worst feeling about being in prison is this feeling of being completely cut off, not only from the movement but from everybody, and one feels very much that you could be ill or die in Holloway and no-one would know.<sup>446</sup>

It was also later revealed that Helen had experienced some strict censorship of letters and visits in Holloway, something that was never reported by C100 male respondents. An explanation for this, she argued, was her position as an anti-nuclear activist under Governor Kelley's command. She maintained that 'There seems to have been a definite policy to cut one off from all news of the Committee of 100 and the movement really'.<sup>447</sup> This isolation would have been intense for a protestor like Helen, who without regular encouragement and obvious displays of support from her peers would no doubt at times have questioned the level of personal sacrifice she had undertaken.

Another gendered discrepancy to emerge from C100 prison narratives, compounding the sense of isolation described by Helen, concerns the levels of boredom experienced inside. For the men, an open prison sentence was a somewhat sociable affair and even the men's descriptions of closed prison indicate sufficient opportunity for mixing with others. Certainly long-term male inmates were encouraged to engage in work and learning. Pottle states that:

The theory seemed to be that as long as people were occupied they couldn't get up to mischief. Senseless and boring work was better than no work at all!<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> 'Prisoners for Peace' (1962) *Op. cit.* p. 6.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> Pottle, P. and Randle, M. (1989) *Op. cit.* p. 23.

Pottle also recalls how, in Wormwood Scrubs, if a prisoner was to serve longer than two months they could attend evening classes and weekly film show. He recalls:

I was impressed by the range and quality of the classes on offer, which varied from informal discussion groups to University Diploma courses.<sup>449</sup>

Michael Randle, for example, completed a correspondence course during his internment which eventually led on to a career in academia. He remembers:

I came out of Wormwood Scrubs with two A levels and two O levels and I sat the London University entrance exam. [...] I came out in February of 1963, and the following Autumn I went to University College London, so it was quite good from that point of view.<sup>450</sup>

On the other hand, the only mention of any courses attended by women C100 inmates was by Helen Allegranza in *Prisoners for Peace* who described occasions where fashion specialists visited prison and presented dress shows. She argues:

I think there's something a bit grotesque about having a couture house come in to Holloway prison and show the girls their latest collection of furs and evening dresses.<sup>451</sup>

Many of the C100 women respondents were only interned for short sentences, which might explain why they never reported taking educational classes. Yet, if we consider the timing of these sentences another issue emerges. The early 1960s, certainly in Britain, was not an era that encouraged women to pursue long term careers and academic advancement. Instead, cultural rhetoric persuaded them to aspire to domestic perfection, and so the example given by Helen of a course in learning how to dress in a ladylike fashion is not a surprise. Undoubtedly, for these C100 inmates, this lack of intellectual engagement would have only increased their boredom and isolation.

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<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

<sup>450</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>451</sup> 'Prisoners for Peace' (1962) *Op. cit.* p.6.

Additionally, Governor Kelley's disapproval of anti-nuclear protesters would certainly have increased this sense of solitude. Kelley, determined to run a tight ship in Holloway, was likely to have viewed any such middle-class campaigners in her charge as potential 'reformist' trouble makers, who fitted neither with the generalised assessment of female inmates nor indeed the prevailing image of womanhood in wider society. It would have served her purpose well, therefore, to keep them as closely confined as possible.

Social historian Lucia Zedner asserts that up until the mid nineteenth century women prisoners were viewed in terms of their moral failure in living up to the 'highly artificial notion of the ideal woman'.<sup>452</sup> Prison officials in female institutions therefore sought to 'restore inmates to the ideal of femininity'.<sup>453</sup> A dominant approach, seen to be both effective and appropriate was that of medical intervention, particularly psychiatric, in dealing with women criminals. It is clear from Kelley's own account of Holloway Prison *When The Gates Shut* that she considered efficient medical management in the administration and rehabilitation of inmates to be a high priority.<sup>454</sup> She supports her own reasoning with examples of inmates whose lives, she argues, were vastly improved by a term in prison and the clinical intervention available to them, which was sometimes provided under coercion. She takes a position of omniscient authority over the inmates, and pride in Holloway's medical records and statistics, stating that:

More often than not imprisonment leads to an improvement in health, which often becomes apparent after a woman has passed through the initial settling down period. Regular hours, adequate diet and a proper amount of sleep probably have much to do with this [...] In 1964 there were 600 cases of nits, 60 of scabies, 250 of gonorrhoea, 60 of syphilis and 1,000 of non-venereal vaginal discharge. About 550 prostitutes passed through the prison, of whom one quarter had gonorrhoea. £600 was spent on flagyl.<sup>455</sup>

Kelley's tone is not unusual considering the time of writing. In the mid 1960s

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<sup>452</sup> Zedner, L. (1991) 'Women, Crime and Penal Responses: A Historical Account'. *Crime and Justice*, Vol. 14, University of Chicago Press. p. 308.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>454</sup> Kelley, J. (1967) *When The Gates Shut*, Longmans. See extract online at: <http://www.mollycutpurse.com/a-fascinating-report-from-t.html>

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

discussions around the ethics of patient consultation had yet to reach mainstream hospitals, let alone prison medical wings. Her report assumes the women prisoners to be a rather homogenous group of sex workers, alcoholics and petty crooks, and she describes them as 'a body of women of whom a large proportion are warped and thwarted'.<sup>456</sup> Her objections then, to a prospective influx of willingly-incarcerated, well-educated, middle-class women are not surprising. Not only were these new inmates at odds with the patronising efforts of Kelley's regime, they were also a potential channel to the outside for an alternative evaluation of customary prison practice.

A particular procedure which became problematic in this context was the routine gynaecological inspections of new inmates. Oonagh Lahr discussed how on the second day of her internment, she was taken from her cell to wait on a bench outside a closed door. She recalls:

When I got in there was this woman in a white coat [...] She asked me my name and I gave it and then she said, 'Are you a virgin?' I said, 'None of your business.' So then she said, 'Oh, you're one of the Ban the Bombers?' I said, 'Yes' and she said, 'You can go'.<sup>457</sup>

Oonagh was shocked to discover that most inmates were unaware of their right to refuse this procedure. She was also distressed to hear first-hand accounts of how it was conducted, all of which suggested a lack of care and skill from the medical officers. She said:

A doctor said to me that there are, in the ranks of doctors, there are doctors in hospitals, there are doctors in practises and at the bottom, the very bottom, there are doctors in prisons. [...] They can be quite violent. I got quite uptight about it because they didn't always ask people if they were pregnant. [...] They would stick an instrument called a 'parrots beak' up people. I discussed this with a prostitute [...]. She said that they go, as it's an occupational hazard, to a doctor who has an instrument which is the right size; different for each one according to their sizes. Puts it up them gently to get a smear for gonorrhoea. [...] The point was, that if you use one size of instrument and stick it up anyone, what you're really doing is statutory rape.<sup>458</sup>

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.* And this was a similar regard for women prisoners taken in wider research at the time see Klare, H. (1960) *Op. cit.* p. 35

<sup>457</sup> Interview with Oonagh Lahr.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*

Strongly motivated by her own sense of entitlement and a wider belief in civil rights, Oonagh regarded this treatment of prisoners as barbarous. She decided that whenever possible, she would communicate her objections to other inmates, and set about circulating information on prisoner rights. Following her release, Oonagh also lobbied for change from the outside and contributed her concerns about this procedure to the *Inside Story* report. She was not alone; Helen Allegranza in *Peace News* also expressed her grievances over routine misinformation around the VD tests. She argued:

We find that prisoners have the right to refuse but they are not usually aware of this at the time and are frightened into submitting [...]. When a vaginal swab is necessary it should be taken in a private and gentle manner; at present this is often done in a brutal way and seems to be regarded as part of the general punishment.

<sup>459</sup>

This is an interesting notion, that similar to the routine strip searching of inmates, the gynaecological examination of Holloway inmates serves as a 'degradation ceremony'; a term coined by sociologist Harold Garfinkel in 1956 to describe the institutionalised demeaning of an individual.<sup>460</sup> This particular intervention, according to respondents, was a brutalising process, designed to intimidate and dehumanise the prisoner in order to prompt submissive and passive behaviour. There were four doctors at Holloway, and despite Kelley's assertions that their practice was in the interest of the prisoners, it is reasonable to assume that their primary allegiance would have been to the institution and management.<sup>461</sup> Angela Devlin in *Invisible Women* argues that, as far back as 1922, the first woman Inspector of Prisons, Mary Gordon, demonstrated the significance of this alliance stating:

Outside prison, [...] '... the usual doctor patient relationship is based on mutual respect and the absolute freedom of the patient to begin and end the consultation.' But in prison, the doctor was part of the punitive official regime and the prisoner

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<sup>459</sup> *Inside Story* (1962) *Op. cit.* p. 7.

<sup>460</sup> Garfinkel, H. (1956) 'Conditions of successful degradation ceremonies.' *American Journal of Sociology* 61. pp. 420-4.

<sup>461</sup> Kelley, J. (1967) *Op. cit.*

had no right to confidentiality and secrecy. Doctors, she felt, colluded with the prison regime, deciding if women were fit to work or to be sent into solitary confinement.<sup>462</sup>

Although Oonagh was able to avoid the gynaecological test and inform others of their rights to do the same, these educated, middle-class C100 women were not necessarily exempt from all clinical instrumentation of control. Looking back, we are informed by the medicalisation of deviance that Suffragettes were forced to endure; some of whom were classified as mentally deranged due to behaviour 'unbefitting' what was expected of their class and sex. Reports from released Suffragettes revealed the coercive nature of force feeding in Holloway, and remnants of these attitudes remained nearly half a century later to be faced by C100 inmates. Helen explained how, during one of her fasts, the senior medical officer threatened her with such treatment.<sup>463</sup> She says:

He tried this sort of subtle approach. He would hold this business of forcible feeding over my head. 'Now you believe in non-violence, will you struggle or will you accept it non-violently?'<sup>464</sup>

Helen accepted a sugar solution and so was left alone on this occasion, but the message had been communicated; that within the walls of Holloway, irrespective of consent, the medical management of inmates was ultimately in the hands of those in charge.

I do not want to give an exaggerated account of the gendered distinctions in prison medical administration from C100 accounts. It is important to acknowledge that the men, for example, were also met with strip searches when entering prison. This was regarded by Pat Pottle as undoubtedly part of the degradation process. He described how on entering Wormwood Scrubs:

There was a deliberate attempt to humiliate prisoners at the outset in the hope that this would crush any rebellious feelings. Being forced to take all one's clothes off and stand around while they were entered on our 'prisoner' possessions' sheet. [...]

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<sup>462</sup> Devlin, A. (1988) *Invisible women*, Waterside Press, Winchester. p. 248.

<sup>463</sup> Her longest fast coincided with American nuclear tests and lasted 14 days.

<sup>464</sup> 'Prisoners for Peace' (1962) *Op. cit.* p. 7.



It was followed by a medical examination where in full view of other prisoners you bent over and 'spread your cheeks' while the doctor looked up your bum.<sup>465</sup>

It was also suggested that men were often expected to deal with illness better than women. The report *Inside Story* took issue with a particular aspect of medical attention faced by male inmates. It advised:

The prison M.O. should visit the prisoner in his cell when he is really sick and not require the man to wait around in draughty corridors when he is ill. In Holloway the women seem to get this attention.<sup>466</sup>

Whilst this demonstrates some comparatively harsher conditions for male prisoners, it is also, perhaps, a further indication of the isolation and greater level of medical intervention met with by the women.

A final gendered factor of C100 women in Holloway that I want to address also reflects issues around class. On arrival they would routinely have their oral contraceptives confiscated. Jo Foster argues that the fact that some of these inmates were on the pill during the early 1960s, clashed further with the prison officers' perception of how they should behave according to their class. She recalls:

We all said 'Give us our pills back' and they said 'you won't need them in here. What are you, prostitutes?'<sup>467</sup>

Jay Ginn also remembers the uncomfortable physical consequences of this for them saying:

Of course we said that we didn't want to get breakthrough bleeding and they weren't at all interested in that, or any of the medical reasons that women were taking the pill. And they said that we'd have to see the doctor on Monday which was two or three days away and so everybody was bleeding.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> Pottle, P. and Randle, M. (1989) *Op. cit.* p. 20.

<sup>466</sup> *Inside Story* (1962) *Op. cit.* p 6.

<sup>467</sup> Interview with Jo Foster.

<sup>468</sup> Interview with Jay Ginn.

First impressions of prison were an eye-opener for these middle-class women. Their narratives often suggest a sense of shock over the lack of what they saw to be basic rights, especially over their own bodies. Governor Kelley's own account indicates that the focus of prison induction was that of medical assessment.<sup>469</sup> It seems likely that she adopted a policy of contempt to challenge the sense of entitlement that these middle-class women demonstrated. There is evidence to suggest that while this was the case for C100 women, the C100 men were treated much more like their fellow inmates. The imprisonment of educated middle-class men (as opposed to middle-class women) was not such an anomaly in British institutions. Such a departure from societal norms was viewed in much less negative terms for male inmates, even with regard to their position as political activists. C100 women in prison were clearly trebly deviant; as female criminals, as political activists, and as middle-class inmates.

## **Conclusion.**

When Bertrand Russell called for C100's mass campaign to 'fill the jails', those sufficiently motivated to participate had very little idea of what imprisonment actually meant. These narratives reveal that many were surprised to encounter what they regarded as the appalling conditions inside. Some protestors fully embraced C100's campaign and consequently endured multiple terms in prison. Others, however, drew the line at one prison sentence and, feeling that they had done their bit, hoped to avoid further convictions. Some purposefully eluded prison altogether. This was especially the case after the Wethersfield Trial, when consequences became considerably harsher for protestors.

When inside, C100 prisoners often kept their heads down, but there were some who continued their stance of non-cooperation. Most of C100 prisoners I spoke to applauded this resistance in prison, but did not indicate that they had engaged in it themselves. There are levels of commitment to principle here that might be viewed on one hand as

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<sup>469</sup> Kelley. J. (1967) *Op. cit.*

brave and selfless, or on the other as overly heroic. Class issues become apparent, with these mostly middle-class political prisoners feeling able to take such risks. The narratives reveal that the C100 protestors could not help but consider themselves separate from other prisoners, especially as they were aware that they were regarded as different by the other inmates and officers. The more typical inmates were often aware that most personal rights were left at the gate. This was a hard lesson for these middle-class prisoners to learn and they maintained some sense of entitlement. Throughout the campaign, eyes were opened and class tensions often caused the C100 inmates to feel both exasperated and responsible; the perfect combination for embracing prison reformism when released.

The greatest discrepancy to emerge from this analysis is to be found in the C100 gendered accounts of imprisonment. This hinges on the fact that even for first offences, C100 women were sent to high security HMP Holloway, while many of the men went, often in groups, to open prisons. Whilst it is acknowledged that most of the longer term sentences were served by male protestors, and this will impact on the collected accounts, Holloway prison was certainly distinct in nature from the men's prisons. This disparity was largely a result of prevailing attitudes towards the female inmates, who were housed in what was essentially an environment designed for men. In general the official prison approach was intent on keeping male prisoners busy and disciplined, and female prisoners bored, medicalised and normalised, according to expectations of femininity. This over-management and isolation of women prisoners reflects a wider mainstream perception of women in the early 1960s as being vulnerable and even child-like. The male inmates were much more expected to look after themselves and were given more opportunity for career development.

Recent research has revealed the dangerous inaccuracies that informed such a gendered prison policy.<sup>470</sup> That these women were often confined alone, and then administered drugs for depression that frequently followed, exposed them to potentially serious

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<sup>470</sup> Walklate, S. (2004) *Op. cit.* p. 189.

repercussions on their mental health. Sadly, Helen Allegranza paid the full price for her participation in C100 action. My findings partly reflect informed contemporary understandings of how women react to confinement but they also reveal that Holloway was a particularly hostile environment for these activists to find themselves in. Whilst it seems these gendered discrepancies were clearly apparent at the time, the Women's Liberation Movement was yet to emerge, bringing with it a new focus on women's personal and political experiences. It takes a retrospective analysis to pull together enough evidence to demonstrate what now makes sense; that engagement in C100's NVDA campaign was more dangerous for women than for men.

## Chapter Six

### A Libertarian Spirit? Organisation and Values.

#### Introduction.

In an effort to ensure that they were each equally accountable for their call for mass NVDA against nuclear weapons, C100 published a list of 100 named signatories.<sup>471</sup> Bertrand Russell and seven office workers were not included, which brings the total of original members to 108. Despite the tactical intention to ensure equal liability, group membership was clearly disparate in terms of active participation and organisational authority. Having a president and other official posts hardly displays structural equity, and C100's celebrities clearly enjoyed some status within the original 100. A working group of mostly lesser known individuals was established to do the groundwork. As Richard Taylor explains:

The organizational structure of the Committee of 100 reflected its genesis, and the purpose of its creators. The publicity and propaganda impact would be ensured by the presence of prestigious figures, but the *work* of the Committee could be undertaken by a much smaller group, subject only to the most basic of safeguards. In this sense it was an unashamedly elitist body concerned, not with popular involvement in a democratic mass movement, but rather with the creation of the necessary mechanism for triggering off mass protests.<sup>472</sup>

Taylor is correct to perceive C100 as having an elitist structure from the outset. There is some clear contradiction between the actual organisation of C100 and its presentation of itself as an anti-hierarchical campaign. The C100 narratives, however, certainly support the idea that C100 was based on egalitarian values, and frequently employ the word 'spirit' to describe the nature of their collective ethos. Dennis Gould, reflecting on C100's atmosphere says, 'I guess the greatest legacy is just the openness, the libertarian spirit of it'.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> 'From Protest to Resistance' (1981) *Op. cit.* p. 62.

<sup>472</sup> Taylor. R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 198.

<sup>473</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

The term libertarianism requires some brief interrogation. Ultimately, it is the belief in and pursuit of freedom especially from state interference. It is often used synonymously with the word anarchism but not all libertarians consider themselves anarchist. There is a right-wing, pro-capitalist libertarianism and a leftist/anarchist libertarianism that is anti-capitalist. For a thorough historical analysis of libertarianism, one would need to revisit the early Nineteenth Century and the original political use of the word by French anarcho-communist writer Joseph DeJaques. Some evaluation of the writing of libertarian revolutionaries such as Russian Mikhail Bakunin and his Italian comrade Errico Malatesta would also be in order. Such an endeavour is beyond the scope of this research, however. So, for the purpose of this research, I shall use the term libertarianism in the sense in which it was adopted by the British libertarian socialist group Solidarity, who as we have seen, had increasing influence on C100 over the years. This kind of libertarianism is anti-hierarchical, anti-state and anti-property in the same vein as the position taken by the likes of British anarchist writer Colin Ward (founding editor of *Anarchy*) and American philosopher Noam Chomsky.<sup>474</sup> Over the course of C100, members were reading and sharing anarchist literature to inform their own anti-hierarchical practice.<sup>475</sup> Prolific anarchist writer Nick Walter had profound leverage in the campaign's development, and used the term libertarianism to explain what C100 should hope to achieve.<sup>476</sup> For C100, the word was undoubtedly important in the language of the day.

In this final chapter I will examine the extent to which C100 can be viewed as an egalitarian and libertarian campaign; in particular the tensions between its early elitist structure and its increasingly 'libertarian spirit'. Again, by setting already-established representations of C100 alongside newly-collected accounts I am able to reevaluate the hierarchical/anti-hierarchical nature of the group and consider how this impacted upon participant involvement and a personal sense of ownership within the campaign. I will

<sup>474</sup> For these perspectives see Chomsky, N. (1969) *Chomsky on Anarchism*, AK Press, Scotland; Ward, C. (1973) *Anarchy in Action*, Freedom Press; Ward, C. and Goodway, D. (2003) *Talking Anarchy*, Five Leaves.

<sup>475</sup> A close relationship existed between Freedom Press, *Peace News* and C100 in both publication and distribution.

<sup>476</sup> See for example Walter, N. (1963) *Op. cit.* p.7

consider the roles of C100 officials, celebrities, and working group members with particular reference to their experience of meetings. I will assess the extent to which the more anarchist elements of the campaign came to influence C100 ethos, and evaluate the revised position of the leftist pacifist group members. Finally, I will examine the progressive libertarian socialist and subversive nature of C100's campaign in order to understand whether the influence of this, or the national and regional restructuring contributed to its decline.

## **Organisational Structure.**

### **Campaign Celebrities: C100 Figureheads or Determined Activists?**

To ensure media attention, Schoenman and Russell invited an assortment of well known writers, actors, and artists to join C100; Britain's celebrity left. This contingent has sometimes been regarded, rather misguidedly, as the mainstay of the campaign. Certainly media focus contributed to this idea, and even historical references have maintained such a perspective. Historian Dominic Sandbrook, for example, in *Never Had It So Good* described C100 as:

...young celebrities from the worlds of literature and theatre rather than the veteran socialists and journalists prominent in CND. [...] A harsh verdict might therefore be that the point of the Committee of 100 was really to arrange outings and day-trips for the stars of the British New Wave.<sup>477</sup>

Clearly in focusing on these public figures, Sandbrook has overlooked the work of the working group members who, over time, came to significantly exceed the celebrity element in numbers and importance. The C100 narratives indicate that while the celebrity members were useful for propaganda purposes, they were not the movers and shakers of the campaign. The working group was often excessively busy, organising and promoting demonstrations. Despite this, the narratives reveal a common perspective that regards the C100 big names in a positive light. Marion for example recalls how:

There were all sorts of famous people that signed up like Bertrand Russell, Arnold

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<sup>477</sup> Sandbrook, D. (2005) *Op. cit.* p. 257.

Wesker, you know, Sheila Delaney who'd written 'Taste of Honey'. Anyway, lots of people like that, Vanessa Redgrave of course, how could I forget her! They were the people who were catching the headlines which I suppose was good.<sup>478</sup>

Jay Ginn adopts a similarly goodnatured position saying:

I think they played their roles the best way they could for the movement and I've no reason to believe they weren't completely genuine. I don't think they were out for just getting the limelight, they didn't need to be.<sup>479</sup>

Such an attitude is further evidence of the sense of mutual support revealed in these narratives, resulting in a general avoidance of speaking badly about other C100 members or supporters. While these well-known individuals were undoubtedly important for attracting public attention, there was a good deal more work required within the campaign.

It seems that the celebrities rarely attended C100 meetings and did not maintain interest for long. Christopher Logue, for example discussed his own limits of involvement saying, 'I'm not very keen on Committee meetings. I quickly get bored'.<sup>480</sup> He did attend some early C100 demonstrations, and was imprisoned for a month for refusing to be bound over, but did not participate any further in the campaign. His was not an unusual case amongst the original big names. Whilst many of them were happy to respond to Russell's initial request, their enthusiasm waned following the 17 September 1961 demonstration. The inaugural C100 meeting had attracted fifty-three of the original 100 individuals, and yet following this largest sit-down in Trafalgar Square, only eighteen remained active.<sup>481</sup> Myers claimed that:

Some of the Committee's most distinguished members – such as Augustus John, Sir Herbert Read, John Braine, Lord Boyd Orr and John Berger - never attended any meetings at all.<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Interview with Marion Prince.

<sup>479</sup> Interview with Jay Ginn.

<sup>480</sup> Interview with Christopher Logue.

<sup>481</sup> 22 October, 1960 at The Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London.

<sup>482</sup> Myers, F. (1971) *Op. cit.* p. 173



C100 respondents support the idea that celebrity participation was short-lived. Jim Radford, for example, reported that even those who did attend after the 17 September contributed very little in way of discussion:

They still used their names, but we didn't see them at meetings. [...] Vanessa Redgrave [who did remain involved] never said a word for seven years, she used to sit quietly, learning, she didn't say much.<sup>483</sup>

Schoenman and Russell's original C100 design aimed to employ these famous names in order to kick-start the campaign. Clearly this purpose was fulfilled; media attention was immediately captured and demonstrations were quickly well-supported. Sustaining the this impact, however, was a further challenge which had been given little attention in the original plan.

### **Official Posts.**

C100's original design also incorporated some official organisational roles and, given the level of NVDA experience in DAC, it made sense to recruit here. Michael Randle was considered by all who knew him to be the perfect individual to take on the job of co-ordinating the new C100. He was well regarded within the anti-nuclear movement (as an original Aldermaston organiser) and could be counted on to attract further support from within the ranks. In the early Autumn he was summoned to London to take on the role of secretary. He remembers:

I got a letter from the Direct Action people in London, April and Pat [Arrowsmith ...] and probably from Michael Scott as well, saying there are moves to set up this new Committee. [...] So I came back that would be about October 1960, in time for [...] the inaugural meeting.<sup>484</sup>

Other official roles were soon established as paid posts, at a minimal administrative wage, raised through campaign contributions. Certainly in the early days, the Goodwin

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<sup>483</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

<sup>484</sup> Interview with Michael Randle. He had been in Ghana.

Street office in Islington had clear DAC crossovers, with Pat Arrowsmith and her partner Wendy Butlin working alongside Michael. The workload was heavy, and by October 1961 further voluntary posts were established in order to co-ordinate eleven newly devised groups. These included:

... welfare, international, publicity, schools, treasury, speakers, present action, future action, trade unions, and the working group (i.e. management or executive committee). At least one person from each group was to be on the working group.<sup>485</sup>

The implementation of these posts created a new framework that Taylor viewed as the first step away from the original elitist structure.<sup>486</sup> A wider proportion of C100 membership now had greater clout in raising their particular interests. Barbara Smoker became legal secretary, and recalls how she 'had to look after the young people who had to go to court, observe in court to make sure they weren't discriminated against'.<sup>487</sup> Helen Allegranza was welfare secretary until her imprisonment, and others had roles that were essential for ensuring demonstrations ran smoothly. Ernest Rodker, for example, was a marshall and recalls a particular demonstration saying:

The banner went out of Trafalgar Square down Whitehall, and I stopped, we got the police to stop the traffic , [...] I said ' No you're not getting the traffic through. This is our day and we're letting everybody out'. We had the argument and actually they all went out in one go. They didn't split them and I thought, well that's a nice sense of power really, [...] I always regret in one sense doing that, cos I was never at the front in seeing what was happening, I was always at the back.<sup>488</sup>

Ernest's use of the word power here not only refers to his position between the march and the authorities, but also his position in comparison to the other marchers. His role as a marshall gave him a degree of authority within the campaign. As an active working group member he volunteered an enormous amount of his time, and his endeavours certainly benefitted him in terms of personal respect from the wider group. As more

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<sup>485</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 229.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>487</sup> Interview with Barbara Smoker.

<sup>488</sup> Interview with Ernest Rodker.

individuals began to attain greater status through active involvement in C100, Russell, Schoenman and the small contingent in the office were forced to attend to a variety of perspectives and ideas for campaign progression.

In the following year this decentralisation was enhanced by the C100's regionalisation. By early 1962, C100 meetings had revealed a growing frustration in what was seen to be a very London-based campaign. Calls for representation across the UK eventually resulted in thirteen smaller regional C100 groups, each with its own convenor.

Additionally, a National C100 was assembled to hold monthly meetings around the country. Peter Cadogan, a major proponent of decentralisation, with strong libertarian socialist views, argued that, 'The only way to prevent power corrupting is to prevent its accumulation in the first place'.<sup>489</sup> When regionalisation was agreed he was asked to head the East Anglian C100, and soon after became the secretary of the National C100 Committee.

Official posts, voluntary or paid, were repeatedly vacated due to imprisonment. These vacancies were often filled, without any form of election, by those who were considered by the working groups to have proved themselves committed and active in the campaign. This aspect of C100 was not unusual and reflects the group's increasing aversion to bureaucracy. Within two years C100 had transformed from a centralised and London-based campaign, to a regionalised and geographically broader organisation. Status and authority had shifted from the well known and long-term experienced activists to include some fresh and eager members.

### **The Working Groups: Movers and Shakers.**

Working group meetings would generally be held at members' houses and were much smaller than C100 public meetings. They served as a channel through which ideas eventually reached the open meetings that took place in public halls. It was in this close-knit environment that proposals were made, and those present would strive to reach

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<sup>489</sup> Cadogan, P (1962) *Memo on the Problem of Initiative*, unpublished circular to C100 supporters, 13 December.

consensus. Voting was deemed unnecessary and was a source of irritation to those with stronger anarchist allegiances. It was also here that libertarian socialist ideas were propagated. Following regionalisation in 1962, each region had its own small working group and the impact of these on the campaign cannot be underestimated. C100 was by now structured to include numerous small collectives of authority. The impact was that those active and eager enough were soon able to play their part in organizing and shaping the campaign. One way of getting to grips with how C100 members felt about their own levels of authority is to consider how both public and working group meetings were run. The 'libertarian spirit' of the group can be assessed by examining the extent to which those who attended them felt able to fully participate.

As we have seen, there were two types of C100 meeting. Mike Lesser illustrates the differences between the two, saying:

The main Committee meetings would be more formal. There would be votes there [...] so it wasn't as consensual as you could have in the smaller group. In the working groups I don't ever remember having a vote as such. I mean usually we argued it out until somebody got tired of resisting a particular line or, anyway, we usually managed to reach an agreement. [...] The real work of getting the demonstrations together and a lot of the theoretical discussions took place in the working groups, and anyone who was keen could come along to the work groups, usually that's how new people came on to the Committee. If they showed themselves keen and got involved, did the work and then, somebody would say 'this is an obvious person to come on the Committee'. [...] There was definitely quite an anarchist spirit to those meetings, um very little formality about them.<sup>490</sup>

It was not unusual for decisions to be made at working group meetings without any wider consultation. These decisions might involve details of demonstrations and sub-group requirements, ideas for campaign progression and proposals for new C100 membership. Myers argued that new members were often young with fewer personal responsibilities and were attracted to C100's increasingly anti-hierarchical organisation. He discussed the method of membership replacement saying that they:

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<sup>490</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

.... were replaced in what would seem to be a fairly random way from other names of potential substitutes taken off a list more or less in rotation. Thus people on the Committee and its working group were chosen for their availability rather than for the representativeness of their supporters or for their own skills.<sup>491</sup>

The new C100 was increasingly egalitarian and with these fresh recruits more radical in flavour.

The C100 narratives indicate that working group meetings were also a platform for theoretical, political and philosophical discussions, often concerning campaign method, structure and ethos, and this stimulated an increasing inclination for libertarian socialist values. A legacy of Quaker influence on C100 added to this anti-hierarchical atmosphere, thus, if possible, meetings were circular and each member had the same authority to speak. This was mostly manageable in the smaller group meetings, and even though it would have been more difficult to attain in the larger open meetings, the narratives reveal that it was certainly attempted. Christopher Farley (who took over as C100 secretary when Michael Randle was imprisoned) recalls chairing his first public meeting, saying:

We went into this small hall that had been hired and [...] the owners of the place had this platform at the end of the room and they had put the chairman's desk on this platform. [...] Then they'd arranged various chairs down below in front of us all and I looked in and I thought, 'This is shocking!' and I picked up the desk and I planted it down on the floor with everybody else and said, 'Right, meetings started' and, it rather reflected the, sort of, spirit of the place, that this was not an authoritarian, hierarchical, sort of, institution, that it was a collaborative effort to see the way forward.<sup>492</sup>

Even when chairs could not be arranged in a circular fashion, an underlying code of conduct was encouraged in meetings that strove for equanimity. This 'libertarian spirit' developed over time, and became increasingly accepted as, through discussion and circulated literature, more and more individuals began to understand its meaning and share its purpose. Whether or not C100 ever managed to adopt a fully anti-hierarchical

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<sup>491</sup> Myers, F. (1971) *Op. cit.* p. 99.

<sup>492</sup> Interview with Christopher Farley.

organisational structure, it is very clear from the collected narratives that those involved believed in the pursuit of equality within the campaign. This reflects C100's fresh collaborative thinking and is even more evident when one examines reports of experience within contemporary campaigns.

### **How Anti-Hierarchical was C100? A Comparative Study.**

In order to compare C100 with contemporary campaigns in terms of its organisational structure and the impact of this on membership authority, one would ideally consult similar research conducted on those other groups. Unfortunately, there are limited resources to be found. The scant evidence available, explores such issues within CND and the Old and New Left, and this will be explored shortly; but for other groups of the time such as the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) or Anti-Apartheid Movement, there is little to be found to shed any light on the effect of campaign structure on participant authority.<sup>493</sup> An interesting aspect of C100, is that, in addition to subscribing to C100, many members were also involved in other campaigns, or had been in the recent past. Many had come from the Old Left, but rejected communism following the Hungarian uprising of 1956. Some maintained involvement with the New Left, and of course there were cross-overs with CND, MCF, Anti-Apartheid and the Anarchist Federation. Drawing on these narratives, and other political accounts from the early 1960s, I will show how C100 was quite innovative in terms of structure, ethos and approach in terms of campaign ownership and authority.

### **CND and the Old Left: The Old Hierarchies.**

CND is the most obvious candidate for comparison with C100 due to its common anti-nuclear focus. As we have seen, a significant proportion of these C100 narratives indicate some clear rejection of CND, especially in terms of its leadership figures who had few qualms about pulling rank. Dennis Gould was not alone in contrasting the atmosphere of a CND meeting to that of C100 when he recalled:

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<sup>493</sup> Lissoni, A (2000) Ph.D. thesis 'The Anti-Apartheid Movement, Britain and South Africa: Anti-Apartheid Protest vs Real Politik'.

If you went to a CND meeting, yeah, they [...] wouldn't allow you to speak and you thought, 'Oh, fucking hell, who are these people?' But you went to a Committee of 100 meeting and, like, it was all open. Well, of course, it was, like, libertarian. [...] there was this openness, you know, and these diverse people, with all sorts of strange views, I suppose, and ideas.<sup>494</sup>

CND's robust leadership was convinced of the correctness of its approach to nuclear disarmament, and despite some inclination for NVDA within the ranks, was unshifting on this matter.<sup>495</sup> CND's hierarchical structure was not unusual at the time, in resembling mainstream politics. The founders had clearly opted for a strong commanding body which made the decisions and expected the wider campaign to follow.

In contrast, C100 members took pride in their pursuit of equality and the freedom to formulate and express their own ideas. This was a breath of fresh air, especially for those that had come from an Old Left background. John Brailey reports:

I would say, there was no compulsion, you know, its not like the Communist Party: You toe the party line, or like Labour now, you know. So-called rebels.<sup>496</sup>

The narratives suggest that the Communist Party was renowned for its rigid direction of members to be compliant and party-faithful. Peter Cadogan, a member of the Communist Party between the end of the war and 1956, recalls the time when he spoke out against the events in Hungary and was promptly branded a traitor. He states:

I found out, over this crisis, that not only was I opposed to party leadership, I had broken the sacred dogma which was the central feature of the Soviet Union as the project of socialism in the world. And the Communist Party was not really a political party at all, it was a church and I was one of the faithful and I was a heretic. That's why I'd been expelled you see.<sup>497</sup>

Peter's analogy is a colourful illustration of how most C100 members felt about the

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<sup>494</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

<sup>495</sup> As we have seen, Taylor, R. and Pritchard, C (1980) found that around half of CND sympathised with C100 policy.

<sup>496</sup> Interview with John Brailey.

<sup>497</sup> Interview with Peter Cadogan.

effects of top-down decision making. A resilient individual, he moved on with ease to search out a new political direction through CND and the Labour Party, and came to rest in C100 for the duration of its campaign. For others, leaving the Communist Party was often more complicated. Writer Jean McCrindle discussed the difficulties she faced in withdrawing her membership, explaining that friends and even close family were quick to categorise her as part of the 'weak and neurotic bourgeois'.<sup>498</sup> Prevented from expressing her own opinion and eager to move on politically, she recalls:

Everything was political. Personal private life was of no consequence compared to the collective comradeship of the fight for the future world revolution.<sup>499</sup>

While CND and the Old Left were determined to maintain a hegemonic structure within their campaigns, C100 members delighted in the fact that participation in their group allowed them freedom of opinion and the apparatus to put that opinion forward. These collected narratives indicate a common belief that, certainly in Britain, this 'libertarian spirit' not only emerged for the first time in C100 on a politically significant scale; it also had a precursory effect on many later campaigns.

### **C100, the New Left and Issues of Gender.**

To illuminate the libertarian nature of C100 a useful comparison can be made with the New Left groups. The New Left certainly demonstrated some libertarian intentions in rejecting the Old Left. The core of the group, however, who were predominantly well-educated, middle-class men, made some serious oversights concerning shared group authority. Whilst the personal is political became its slogan, there is reason to suspect that this new personal politics did not take into account gender concerns. Feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham explained how involvement at this time in left-wing student groups was extremely frustrating for women.<sup>500</sup> Issues around class and race were widely debated, and yet there was definite resistance to any serious consideration

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<sup>498</sup> McCrindle, J. 'The Hungarian Uprising and a Young British Communist', *History Workshop Journal*, Autumn 2006; 62. pp. 194 – 199.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>500</sup> Rowbotham, S. (1999) *Threads Through Time. Writings on History and Autobiography*, Penguin. pp. 75- 77.



of women's issues. Rowbotham argues that this was the key factor which caused women to step aside and form their own political group which was to lead to the Women's Liberation Movement.<sup>501</sup> Cultural theorist Stuart Hall, who was extremely active in the New Left, reflects back on this omission saying:

We were totally unconscious of questions of gender, totally entombed on that issue, even though we were beginning to think about personal life, even though we realised the boundaries of politics had to be ruptured to bring in those aspects of life seen as important to people.<sup>502</sup>

Those with greatest influence within the New Left were intellectuals who could both skilfully steer group discussion and write with academic brilliance. The *New Left Review* reflected the ideas generated by these individuals and consequently maintained for them their positions of authority. In this way, the movement was certainly elitist. I will shortly go on to consider the authority that was often secured by the most erudite of C100, but for now I will continue to evaluate the gendered experience within this particular example of British post war protest politics. Whilst it is becoming increasingly apparent that C100's 'libertarian spirit' was rather distinctive when compared to other political groups of the time, it is useful to assess the extent of this with a focus on gendered experience within the group.

To examine gender division in C100 it is important to consider the wider context of postwar Britain. The position of women at this time was ambiguous. Not long after women were encouraged back into the home as men returned home from war, they were to be targeted by a fresh recruitment campaign prompted by labour shortages.<sup>503</sup> The return to the cosy domestic sphere of the companionate marriage is now contested.<sup>504</sup> The 1950s 'golden age' of the family, with the loving breadwinner, father and husband

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<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>502</sup> Chapman, R. and Rutherford, J. (eds), (1989) *Male Order - Unwrapping Masculinity*, Lawrence and Wishart Limited. p. 91.

<sup>503</sup> Holloway, G. (2005) *Women and Work in Britain since 1840*, Routledge. p. 183.

<sup>504</sup> Francis, M. (2002) 'The Domestication of the Male? Recent research on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Masculinity', *The Historical Journal*, 45, pp 637-652.

and the domestic paragon of the supportive wife, is now considered a myth.<sup>505</sup> In the late 1940s and the 1950s, expectations of the companionate marriage compounded issues around emotional and sexual intimacy and are now understood to have been a contributory cause of marital disfunction rather than agents to avoid it.<sup>506</sup> Strains resulted in often uncomfortable domestic relations, significantly so within the homes of the more educated 'angry young men' who were actively engaged in developing alternative politics at the time.<sup>507</sup> Here, men's attitudes towards the women's opinions were often dismissive and sometimes openly misogynistic.<sup>508</sup>

I have argued elsewhere that C100's anti-hierarchical ethos created a much less gendered experience than was typical at the time.<sup>509</sup> My findings, in their focus on women's narratives, also indicate that although some gendered discrepancies remained within the group; the most influential factor to impact on an equal sense of authority was that of education. There were some extremely vibrant and powerful women who, often with the benefit of a privileged schooling, would frequently dominate debates. For now I will focus on the newly-collected male perspective concerning these issues. It is relevant that these C100 men's narratives mostly agree with what was earlier reported by the women.<sup>510</sup> Jim Radford's opinion is echoed across them when he says:

I'm not saying we were totally anti-sexist. We were being educated too, alerted to things we didn't know about. But, for that time, we were anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti- ... We were egalitarian. We believed in equal rights, equal participation, everybody had the same rights and duty to begin with, the same opportunities. And, as I said, the only difference noticed were the ones you couldn't do anything about. If someone was better-informed or more articulate then that was their, that was an observable factor, but all you could do was say, 'Well I'm going to be better-informed and more articulate'.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Thomas, N (2008) *Op. cit.*

<sup>506</sup> Langhamer, C. (2006) 'Sexual Politics in Mid Twentieth-century Britain: Adultery in Post-war England', *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 62, pp. 88 – 97.

<sup>507</sup> Which would include writers Kingsley Amis and John Osborne (author of *Look Back in Anger*) see Segal, L. (1988) "'Look Back in Anger': Men in the Fifties", in Chapman, R. and Rutherford, J.(eds), *Male Order: unwrapping masculinity*, Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 68-97.

<sup>508</sup> Interview with Diana Shelley.

<sup>509</sup> See Carroll, S. (2004) *Op. cit.*

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>511</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

The language used here fits best in a post Women's Liberation position; the term 'anti-sexist', for example, was not likely to have been heard at the time. Jim's evaluation, however, suggests that the 'libertarian spirit' encouraged within C100 did have a positive effect on gendered experience without addressing it directly.

It is essential to note that many C100 women were front line activists and organisers, who repeatedly and fully engaged in the most physically challenging and dangerous roles. When discussing powerful influences within C100, the respondents agree that some of the most respected, eloquent and actively engaged C100 members were women. Jim Huggan argued that:

If you were articulate and loud-mouthed, whether you were male or female, gay or straight it didn't come into it, there were some people that were more assertive than others, that was all. [...] Pat Arrowsmith, for Christ's sake. I mean Pat would never yield to anybody, male or female or dog in the street, I mean. So, when you've got women like that who are very self-assertive they did not need to be encouraged. I mean, whoever got involved with The Committee were radical and active, [...]. You know, once you've graduated to that degree of radicalism you wouldn't be prepared to take a back seat.<sup>512</sup>

The suggestion here is that, within C100, the more coherent and confident individuals had a greater influence on policy regardless of gender. Pat Arrowsmith was often mentioned as being extremely powerful. Educated at Cheltenham and Cambridge, her oratorical skills were perfected and supported by a wealth of historical knowledge.<sup>513</sup> She was openly lesbian and had no qualms about meeting controversy head on. Any obvious misogyny in C100 would almost certainly have been confronted by her. Peter Cadogan remembers:

We never had to put the feminist cause because we began that way you see. I mean, Pat and Wendy were fundamental in the beginning of the campaign. [...] You know, were key people in the campaign, and Ruth Walter. [...] So, we never had a problem about, we just took it for granted that members who were women

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<sup>512</sup> Interview with Jim Huggan.

<sup>513</sup> Pat Arrowsmith read history at Cambridge University.

were equal.<sup>514</sup>

The narratives suggest that, during these years before the second wave of feminism, certainly in terms of group identity, the C100 women were in an exceptional situation. The younger, less-experienced female activists were able to learn from and respond to the core of strong female role models within a mixed, but less gendered environment. The young women in the New Left, on the other hand, did not have this, and therefore struggled to get their views heard. John Brailey suggests, that within C100, one could even recognise a lingering sense of first wave feminism, saying:

Women who were involved [...] their parents were probably suffragettes or were for women's equal rights and this kind. So you had this sort of connection, you could identify with them, that they were liberated.<sup>515</sup>

It becomes clear that due to a combination of factors, the experience for C100 women was less gendered than that faced by women across contemporary campaigns. The conditions were fitting; the women were more politically confident, and the overall group ethos strove for egalitarianism. Some of C100's values, such as its anti-hierarchical inclination and approach to decision making, were later adopted by the Women's Liberation Movement. And, as Sasha Roseneil suggests, C100's ethos and method were precursory to many other campaigns; significantly Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp.<sup>516</sup> C100's 'libertarian spirit' then, along with the organisational structure that came to encourage that spirit, made for a particularly innovative and influential campaign. It is no wonder that in a historical context, those who took part now wish to set it apart in its own right.

### **Education, Class and Status.**

The respondents indicate that, rather than gender, a significant factor determining who came to wield within C100 is that of education; that is, who was knowledgeable and

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<sup>514</sup> Interview with Peter Cadogan.

<sup>515</sup> Interview with John Brailey.

<sup>516</sup> Roseneil, S. (1995) *Op. cit.*

who had the ability to impart that knowledge. Whether from having a privileged schooling or a commitment to self-tuition, those who were better-educated and could carry an argument in an articulate manner were those with greatest agency. Jim Radford explains how learning was often intrinsic to meetings, saying:

There were good meetings, you came away thinking that you had, even if you hadn't, contributed a lot, that you had been involved in the democratic process. And you always came away with knowledge and information you didn't have before, because there were some well-informed people there, and people were doing their homework, and were producing good research and producing the facts.

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Meetings were frequently pedagogic in nature and contributing to this were a common respect for knowledge and the idea that libertarian socialism could only achieve political success with the broad intellectualisation of society. Mike Lesser explained how C100 was the perfect arena in which to test out this transmission of ideas, and reported:

The people involved on the whole were very, very intelligent. They believed that they were struggling for the future of the human race, and that tends to make for a desire for consensus.<sup>518</sup>

Mike not only suggests here that avoiding nuclear disaster was C100's intention, but in an undertone to this statement also implies that if C100 were successfully libertarian in practice and purpose, then there was hope for an anarchist vision in wider politics. We have seen that these ideas were progressively embraced and disseminated by the campaign, and that a strong respect for education was key.

Clearly, there are class issues here, with the better-educated having an advantage in such an intellectual environment. Certainly in the early campaign years debates were often dominated by individuals with a more advantaged schooling. Respondents frequently mentioned Ralph Schoenman as a potent example of this, especially as he had the

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<sup>517</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

<sup>518</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

'trump card' of being Russell's representative.<sup>519</sup> He had a BA from Princeton University and had come to the UK as a postgraduate political philosophy student at LSE. Another notable speaker was Nicolas Walter who had graduated in history at Oxford. Others presented in a similar light included Pat Arrowsmith and Peter Cadogan. The often commanding attitude of these individuals was sometimes a source of irritation to others, and yet power struggles between them could also be very informative. The respondents indicate that regular attendance of C100 meetings could be very enlightening. Individuals would often go home, read up on debated ideas and suggested literature, and return to the next meeting better informed.

Whether or not this meant that they returned with a greater sense of authority to speak in meetings, however, is debatable. A public school or university background would almost certainly have encouraged public speaking skills, making those with that experience better equipped to participate in C100 debates. For a self-taught working-class man like Jim Radford, this presented a challenge. Recalling his attempts to confront issues raised by Nicolas Walter he says:

We became great friends later on because we were in prison together. But, initially, Nick used to get up my nose, I don't think he meant to be patronising, but because he was well-educated and well-informed and a very good speaker he made you feel you were being patronised. He wasn't trying to patronise, and you were frustrated that you were, you didn't feel er, you came off well in an argument with him.<sup>520</sup>

Even within this egalitarian inclined, intellectually encouraging group, working-class members found it more difficult to get their views across persuasively. Jim explains this further, saying:

It was new to me this structure. [...] It made me realise that it was important to be articulate and to know your stuff, because although we were very anti-hierarchical it was very clear that the people who were articulate, persuasive and informed had

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<sup>519</sup> Interview with Ernest Rodker.

<sup>520</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

more influence over those of us who weren't.<sup>521</sup>

This was reinforced by another self-taught working-class member Dennis Gould, who also suggested that a sense of authority would have been even more of a challenge for working-class women. He says:

I didn't find it that easy in meetings simply because of the people that were articulate, and their personalities. So I'm sure, it was then a bit harder for many women. But, I think it was easier for the articulate men and women. I think that's what I'm trying to say, you know, that the university educated tended to dominate because they were more articulate, you know, and I found it very intimidating.<sup>522</sup>

Whether or not an active involvement in C100 debates was a double challenge for less-educated women, it is clear that the factors influencing hierarchy within C100 were those of background and education. Irrespective of, and contrary to C100's 'libertarian spirit', the result of this was that class divisions persisted in the campaign.

Class tensions such as this would eventually decrease over time, not only because individuals got to know each other better and became more knowledgeable in general, but also because of changes in group membership. The original big names invited by Russell and Schoenman were a largely middle-class, erudite group of individuals. As we have seen, however, a significant proportion of these did not attend meetings and left the campaign within two years. Others were still mostly middle-class, and yet they were less educated; often deferring higher education until later in life. This is important, as it emerges that protest politics dominated much of their time, and for them, an alternative education was found in C100. Whilst some individuals are more naturally gifted orators, public speaking is also a skill that can be learned and refined. Over time, Jim's active participation in meetings increased. By C100's later years he had found his voice and was instrumental in organising a variety of protest stunts and imaginative methods for courting the media. Dennis began to work for the anarchist publishing house Freedom Press and found a way of broadcasting his opinions through the written word. It took

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<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>522</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

longer for these working-class men to have any commanding influence on the campaign, and in many ways they had to be more wily, certainly more determined. As we have seen, prison was a leveller for campaign relationships, but these men also had to do their time within the group in order eventually to graduate, so to speak, from C100's academy.

### **Conflicts in Reaching Consensus: Bullheads and Windbags.**

An important factor, emerging from these narratives, was the difficulty of reaching consensus and maintaining an egalitarian pursuit. The respondents are often romantic in their reflections on C100 ethos, and very keen to explain its originality, inspiration and successes. At the same time, however, frustrations sometimes seep out, and tales of internal tensions permeate the barrier of mutual protection and regard. Wendy Butlin explains how political minds have a tendency to be stubborn, and in-house struggles were unavoidable. She says:

One thing, I think, I learned about people in political movements; worthwhile people, very worthwhile people, can be bloody difficult. You have to remember that when they are being bloody difficult you have to remember; this is a very important, worthwhile person.<sup>523</sup>

Wendy, is reflecting upon her language of the day. The statement, 'You have to remember; this is a very important, worthwhile person,' is clearly how she would have convinced herself to approach conflict situations back then. It is also an example of C100's 'libertarian spirit' that purposefully encouraged tolerance within the group. Clearly there would have been some people who understood this code of conduct better and embraced it more than others. A problem with attempting consensus, especially in the larger meetings, was the fact that an equal and open platform was available for all, and this included those with little awareness of when to stop talking. John Brailey recalled how de-energising this could often be, saying:

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<sup>523</sup> Interview with Wendy Butlin.



We had people who, [...] they're these natural orators and once they start talking, they're talking and they are talking, you just [...] never really settled anything, you know, it became, sort of, talking shop and wind-bagging. After a while I faded away from it, a lot of people did.<sup>524</sup>

The tension here, is between the sense of mutual tolerance promoted in C100's ethos, and the ignorance or unwillingness of some members to engage respectfully when applying this code to themselves. Sometimes individuals were so eager to be heard, that they didn't listen carefully enough and ideas could be repeated over and over, albeit in slightly different ways. Jim Huggan remembers:

They'd go on forever, you know, people would, someone would get up and say something, and then somebody else would get up and say exactly the same, but they had to say it. And then someone else would get up and say, 'Yes, I agree with that, blah, blah,' and then they would go on for hours. Everybody just had to have their say, and their say had to be interminable and they couldn't, you know, to them a spade was an 'agricultural entrenching implement'.<sup>525</sup>

This type of behaviour would undoubtedly have soon become tedious and frustrating, and increasingly so over time, especially for those who were more likely to sit and listen. When chairing public meetings Christopher Farley had the job of managing these difficult situations and found it hard at times to avoid offending people. He remembers:

The people whose noses I put out of joint tended to be the people who loved the sound of their own voice and had no self discipline in meetings and their heads were, often, surprisingly empty and they really became quite a problem. It was a tolerant organisation and we weathered that one somehow.<sup>526</sup>

It seems inevitable, that in any organisation some form of struggle for pecking order will take place. A group such as C100 would certainly have included a variety of personality types, backgrounds and inequalities, with individuals bringing along their own emotional baggage and opinions on how to move forward. Clearly an enormous commitment to mutual respect, tolerance and egalitarian ideals was required to harness

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<sup>524</sup> Interview with John Brailey.

<sup>525</sup> Interview with Jim Huggan.

<sup>526</sup> Interview with Christopher Farley.

a 'libertarian spirit', and whether or not C100 achieved this is open to question. It is important, however, that they attempted it, and maintained this attempt at various levels of success for the best part of a decade.

### **The Libertarian Socialist Incline.**

Having established the extent to which C100's structure reflected their anti-hierarchical values, I will now turn to more fully examine how this changed over time and whether or not an increasingly libertarian socialist nature contributed to the campaign's decline. As we have seen in chapter three, a libertarian socialist group of individuals certainly became increasingly powerful in C100. A closer look at their influence on the campaign is helpful in assessing the impact of the decisions made over C100 direction. Anarchist writer Stuart Christie describes this development in terms of the wider movement, saying:

In the space of just over three years the anti-nuclear movement had shifted from being an orderly, police-friendly, peace movement controlled by an alliance of middle-class liberals and party leaders into a powerful anti-state movement galvanised by anarchists, libertarian and non-aligned socialists.<sup>527</sup>

And Taylor, looking specifically at C100, identifies campaign radicalisation saying:

It would be mistaken to assume, however, that there was a clear division between the radical newcomers into the Committee of 100 and the cautious 'old timers' of the DAC attempting to hold back militancy. Randle was certainly correct when he argued that the whole experience of the Committee of 100 was an experience of radicalisation for all those who took a central, activist part. Thus the DAC activists were themselves radicalised by their Committee of 100 experience, as were many others.<sup>528</sup>

For many, the experience of imprisonment was reason enough to consider an even more dissident politics, as Dennis Gould explains:

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<sup>527</sup> Christie, S. (2005) *Granny made me an anarchist. General Franco, the Angry Brigade and Me*, Scribner. p. 78.

<sup>528</sup> Taylor, R. (1988) *Op. cit.* p. 216.

It wasn't until I'd been in prison that I found out about anarchism, you know, and about this libertarian politics philosophy, because I saw this copy of *Anarchy on Prisons*, and, of course, I'd just been in prison. [...] So I bought this copy and I realised I probably was an anarchist.<sup>529</sup>

The combined effect of the Wethersfield trial, which demonstrated the coercive nature of the authorities, and the internal dissemination of libertarian socialist ideas and literature, added to an anarchist atmosphere within the campaign. Michael Randle, who originally had firm Gandhian-style DAC principals, soon became interested in these emerging concepts, and recalls:

In the 1960s of course there was a very good magazine called *Anarchy*. [...] You know all those ideas which have come into vogue, of ecology and various kind of alternatives. A lot of those were pioneered there in *Anarchy*. And I used to get *Freedom* which was the anarchist weekly, so I think I quickly moved over to an anarchist position from a pacifist position and it's a fairly logical progression in a way. If you say you're not going to use violence, and the state is organised to have police and army and everything else, it's a fairly natural progression towards some kind of philosophical anarchism anyway.<sup>530</sup>

As these principles came to increasingly penetrate C100, their proponents emerged as a new driving force behind C100 which, as we have seen, justified a more subversive campaign direction. Certainly after Russell left in 1962, taking with him many of the original named members, debates became more seditious in flavour.

Along with unaligned anarchists like Nicolas Walter and Jim Radford, the predominant source of this increasingly radical influence was from the Solidarity group. Mike argues that, 'the motor of the radical edge of the Committee of 100 was Solidarity'.<sup>531</sup> Stuart Christie, who at one time was connected to Scottish C100, had encountered Solidarity himself when in London, not long before he set off for Spain to assist an attempted assassination of Franco.<sup>532</sup> He clearly regarded them as inspirational, stating:

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<sup>529</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

<sup>530</sup> Interview with Michael Randle.

<sup>531</sup> Interview with Mike Lesser (2006).

<sup>532</sup> Christie, S. (2005) *Op. cit.*

What did catch my imagination, however, were the shit-stirring, disruptive, action-oriented libertarian socialist or 'anarcho-Marxist' ideas of the Solidarity group. Founded in 1960, *Solidarity* was started by a few disenchanted veterans of other parties of the left. [...] Essentially, they advocated action and minimised meetings and bureaucracy. While everyone else was deeply involved in party building and internecine warfare for the hearts and minds of the Labour Party, Solidarity was organising community action campaigns against homelessness, leading the fight against nuclear weapons and publishing investigative exposés of conditions within all sorts of industries. They were attempting to build a revolutionary do-it-yourself consciousness and practise, independent of any party.

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Considering then what Solidarity stood for, and that some of those most actively involved were also C100 members, it is understandable that their ideas impacted on the later years of C100. A growing interest of C100 members in other civil liberty campaigns, especially around housing and industrial struggles, can certainly be attributed to Solidarity.

Advocates of a new libertarian socialist C100 were openly disgruntled by what they saw as the limitations of focusing solely on nuclear disarmament. At the same time, campaign atmosphere was becoming increasingly revolutionary. Christie argues that:

Something had happened. Almost no-one persisted under the comfortable illusion that the governments of the world would 'ban the bomb'. More and more people were realizing that the state was the enemy.<sup>534</sup>

The anarchists argued the need to confront the 'warfare state' in order to revive C100 from a lethargy that threatened its survival. Nicolas Walter, writing in *Nonviolent Resistance. Men Against War* (The title of which clearly shows how overlooked gendered issues were at the time) pushed for fresh energy saying:

Revolution simply overturns the State, rebellion or insurrection overthrow it. The libertarian revolution is permanent protest, permanent disobedience, refusing assent to superiors without demanding it from inferiors, the utopia without any

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<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.* p. 69.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.

topia.<sup>535</sup>

While elements of this anarchist body certainly caused a bubble of excitement around the Spies for Peace and RSG 6 revelations, a problem here was that a vast proportion of C100 were not motivated by revolutionary ideals. They had been attracted by C100's anti-nuclear position which was now increasingly neglected as attention shifted to other campaigns. Guy Roberts recommends caution here when considering the suggestion that radicalisation was pervasive in C100. In response to my questioning on the subject he says:

I'm sure you're right to see it as an evolving situation, um but to pose it too much in terms of as it were, what I would call a fairly elitist bunch at the beginning with a lot of pacifists elements, and then later on a much more radical, sort of much more socialist consciousness, libertarian consciousness and so on, um yes, that describes the extreme ends. It doesn't describe the muddle in the middle that is there all the time to some extent, and yes it changes a bit.<sup>536</sup>

Guy's point here represents the perspective of the most actively radical C100 members who would have desired a much more dramatic shift than what actually occurred. He does recognise a general libertarian socialist incline in the campaign, but reflects on the limits of persuasion he and his anarchist colleagues had in convincing the majority of the campaign with their more revolutionary ideas. In striving for anti-hierarchy, C100 was clearly already heading in a libertarian socialist direction, and this was enhanced by radical discussions, shared anarchist literature, and their experiences of arrest and imprisonment. This eventually resulted in a broadening of campaign interest, away from the nuclear issue, which certainly contributed to the campaigns decline.

### **Decentralisation: Too Many Cooks?**

The rise in libertarian socialist influence coincided with demands for C100's regionalisation. Even back in early Spring 1962, when the campaign remained optimistic, there were calls for structural change. Christopher Farley remembers how

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<sup>535</sup> Walter. N, (1963) *Op. cit.* p.7.

<sup>536</sup> Interview with Guy Roberts.

groups of C100 supporters around Britain were appealing for some level of authoritative autonomy, saying:

People were leaping up and down all over the country saying, 'We want to form a local Committee of 100'. And the Committee of 100 wasn't geared to do that because it was an organisation to organise mass demonstration and not: We must picket our local, you know, military installation or recruiting office or whatever. And so that produced quite a lot of problems. A fragmentation really of the central thrust of the Committees' potential.<sup>537</sup>

Whilst this dissolution of C100 into small regional assemblies fitted well with the campaign's developing libertarian nature, many now regard it as having had a seriously detrimental effect. Myers suggests:

It began as a compact, clearly-articulated structure with identifiable and responsible leadership and evolved into an amorphous collection of semi-autonomous units with no authoritative leadership at all.<sup>538</sup>

Hindsight is clearly a privileged position from which one can assess the appropriateness of organisational decisions. The problem at the time, however, was that Russell and Schoenman's original design for C100 did not factor in a contingency plan, and when their idea had run its course, a rejection of centralised decision-making followed. C100 now encouraged a more egalitarian system., but one which nonetheless suffered from the acute inexperience of C100 members in the practice of collective autonomous regulation. Nicolas Walter argued:

This decentralisation turned out to be the beginning of a ritualised disintegration, not only of the original Committee into Regional Committees, but of each Committee into its natural parts. The National Office became a tomb, the National Meetings became factious and factitious debates. The same fate later overtook the London Office and the London meetings. In the meantime the well known people who had been members and supporters of the Committee one by one withdrew their membership and sometimes even their support.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Interview with Christopher Farley.

<sup>538</sup> Myers, F. (1971) *Op. cit.* p. 104.

<sup>539</sup> Walter, N. (1963) *Op. cit.* p. 32.

Decentralisation was also problematic, as London working group members were unwilling to relinquish the supervisor roles they were accustomed to. Coming from the perspective that, along with other regional groups, they had a job to organise on their own doorstep, they continued to call out nationally for big demonstrations in London. Consequently, before long, anyone from outside of London was being asked to do too much at any one time. They had to organise and support their own local actions and were then also expected to support mass meetings in the capital. Understandably this resulted in some conflict and, for those who had pinned their hope on regionalisation, a progressively antagonistic atmosphere was disappointing. Dennis Gould recalls:

Now there is a place, occasionally, for bringing everybody together, you know, because you get that solidarity and obviously, you're a bigger force. [...] The Committee of 100, it was slowly building these roots, all over Britain, you know, Scotland, England, Wales, nothing in Ireland. And then people were calling too often for national demonstrations.<sup>540</sup>

Tensions between the absolute pacifists and tactical pacifists aside, a struggle continued within C100 between those who envisioned a centralised campaign and those who called for grass roots support from locally organised communities. With the increasingly hard line approach taken by the authorities, the extensive retreat of known names from the campaign, the general wearing down of participants through imprisonment and various developments on the international political stage (which were clearly out of range for effective protest), C100 it seemed, was heading for defeat.

### **The End of the Line.**

A combination of these factors eventually brought about an end to C100. Having quickly achieved its original aim in raising the profile of anti-nuclear issues through mass civil disobedience, the campaign was soon to falter. The initial level of support was encouraging, but from then on little other than an exponential rise in reinforcement was likely to force the government to yield. This clearly never happened. Many attempts at forging a new direction for C100 followed, but each was ad hoc, evolving

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<sup>540</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

through a system of trial and error. Jim Radford explains how this inevitably ran its course, saying:

Its like going out canvassing, you knock on a door, you wait, if you're determined you must see them you knock again and again, eventually there comes a time where you say, 'They're not in, or they're not going to answer the door, no point knocking on this door, knock on some other door.' Its the same with demonstrating. You have certain types of demonstration, we tried over and over again, you know, some of us were arrested a lot of times and I was sent to prison a few times. If that doesn't achieve, you can't keep doing that forever, you have to see results, so what happened to me and a lot of people in the Committee [...] we started using the same techniques, the same principals, promotion, publicity, motivation, etc on issues that were more likely to produce results. So I became a very prominent community activist in homeless groups and housing.<sup>541</sup>

C100 developed some sophisticated ideas and innovative ways of organising over the years, but there came a point at which those involved either changed their focus of interest or just ran out of steam. Dennis Gould reflects:

It didn't end because people weren't still as concerned, it ended because some people were exhausted and some people didn't see that we were succeeding and other people developed other concerns, you know, and I myself, I began to write more and edit, publish on a small scale, you know. [...] Partly to do with nuclear weapons but to do with other issues, libertarian issues. But, I think life moves on and it doesn't really lose the involvement or belief but, you know, lives change.<sup>542</sup>

The narratives indicate that for many, C100 involvement was life-consuming. It was an extremely stressful engagement which could only be maintained for a limited time. It also had significant impact upon some people's health. Oonagh Lahr recalls:

Certainly, by the time we were near the end, I, for my part, was really on the point of a nervous breakdown from going into jail so much.<sup>543</sup>

By the summer of 1968 there was little left holding C100 together. The majority had moved on to other protest campaigns, some had new responsibilities in life and were no

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<sup>541</sup> Interview with Jim Radford.

<sup>542</sup> Interview with Dennis Gould.

<sup>543</sup> Interview with Oonagh Lahr.



longer willing or able to go to jail, and others just lost interest. The regional groups had folded and pressing issues around the Vietnam War had pushed aside any focus on anti-nuclear demands. C100 had long lost its public appeal and was by now widely considered to be outdated. Despite numerous efforts at revival there was now little point in continuing. Peter Cadogan, who was still the National Secretary, recalls the moment of his realisation that the time had come to call it a day. He explains:

It was too spontaneous in a way. [...] Bertrand Russell should have provided a theory for us but he didn't, you see. He provided an action plan which was the demonstrations, which are fair enough. But, if your life is determined by the next demonstration and there is no next demonstration there's no movement. So, by the time we'd flogged demonstrations to death there was nothing left. [...] I had the sad job of winding up the Committee in the autumn of '68 because I was the only surviving officer. The London Committee packed up first. you see. The International Committee died, all the other Committees were dying. The regional committees ceased to exist. What was left was simply a truncated body of supporters who didn't agree anyway and Howard said, 'That's the end' and I agreed with him. Unfortunately it was the end.<sup>544</sup>

## **Conclusion.**

These collected narratives support what is suggested across secondary literature, that a distinctive feature of C100 was its increasingly egalitarian libertarian nature. C100 ethos is regarded as a common code of conduct transmitted through discussion and shared literature. This code encouraged tolerance, equality, a personal sense of responsibility and the pursuit of consensus in group decisions. The respondents regard this as their 'libertarian spirit', and suggest that it sets C100 aside from other campaigns of the time, and was precursory to the value systems of later forms of protest.

The wider context of how the 1960s developed cannot be ignored here. In Nick Thomas' article 'Will the Real 1950's Please Stand Up?' we see that the foundations for an increasingly permissive British society were established before the 1960s.<sup>545</sup> By the time C100 adopted its anti-hierarchical libertarian ethos, wider politics were also beginning

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<sup>544</sup> Interview with Peter Cadogan.

<sup>545</sup> Thomas, N. (2008) *Op. cit.*

to reflect greater political freedoms with new progressive legislation.<sup>546</sup> The personal was becoming political in the context of a new global interest in civil rights. Whilst, of course, the domain of British party politics at the time represented a very different political position to that found within C100, a general trend away from conservatism was still clearly evident. In 1964, after fifteen years in opposition, the Labour Party was elected to government.

C100 set out as an anti-hierarchical campaign in the hope that each member would be treated in the same way by the legal authorities, and yet, it took three years for its elitist structure to shift and reflect its more egalitarian ethos. A significant factor to impact upon C100 authority was that of education; those with broader knowledge and oratorical skills could best hold the floor in meetings and therefore affect greater personal impact on campaign development. This, unsurprisingly, was often related to class, but such boundaries blurred over time as members grew in confidence. Issues around sexual equality were not regarded, let alone addressed in C100 and yet the 'libertarian spirit' made way for a less gendered experience than was prevalent at the time. Consensus and anti-hierarchy were difficult to achieve, as some individuals often like the sound of their own voice and a campaign commitment to tolerance did little to deter this. There were, however, many inspirational participants, who were not only committed campaigners but also skilful communicators, and who raised and nurtured some stimulating and effective ideas to take the campaign forward.

A rise in anarchist anti-state values inevitably caused some internal tensions, but this was not the only factor to prompt a campaign decline. C100 eventually came to an end due to a combination of factors including fragmentation because of regionalisation, a crackdown from the authorities, a waning public and media interest and people moving on to other endeavours or simply becoming burnt out. It is remarkable that C100 lasted as long as it did, especially considering the limits of its original design. Tensions around personal identity and conflicting agendas typically come to sabotage British counter

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<sup>546</sup> The Lady Chatterley Trial of 1960, for example.

cultural and politically oppositional campaigns. Whether we look to the less than democratically structured Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) or the anti-hierarchical efforts of the Women's Movement or Gay Liberation Front (GLF), we find that eventual fragmentation through such conflict often occurs.<sup>547</sup> Perhaps C100's 'libertarian spirit' kept the campaign together longer than it might otherwise have managed, especially once it was apparent that their 'fill the jails' approach was seriously flawed. It was a sense of exhaustion, of both tactics and energy, rather than in-fighting which eventually convinced the remaining members that it was time to surrender the campaign in 1968.

In a very short time, C100's campaign certainly did develop an anti-hierarchical libertarian ethos, which came to override many of the limitations of its original architecture. It was an attempt at a new way of organising, and whether or not those involved achieved what they initially set out to do, a notable legacy of C100, is that both the participants and the organisers of later campaigns are better informed about the highlights and pitfalls of a cooperative and egalitarian approach to protest and politics.

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<sup>547</sup> Segal, L. (1987) *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*, Virago. p. 57. and Robinson, L. (2006) 'Three Revolutionary Years: The Impact of the Counter Culture on the Development of the Gay Liberation Movement in Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, Volume 3. p. 471.

## **Conclusion.**

This thesis has responded to a need to disentangle C100's campaign identity from that of CND and the wider anti-nuclear movement of the first wave. Earlier work in the field has delivered either well-documented accounts of C100 activity attending to C100 as a subgroup within the movement, or taken an analytical approach, focusing on some aspects of C100 other than the lived experience of those involved and the factors which inspired them to participate. The biographical research method I have employed reveals new insights about these C100 activists, which not only demonstrate their peculiar characteristics as a distinct group of individuals, but also distinguish the innovative nature and historical legacies of their campaign.

The Spies for Peace disclosure is testament to the value of oral history, especially in an academic setting, as without such an approach this story might never have emerged. Timing is significant here, as nearly fifty years on from the original C100 protests, those involved are now entering their later years and some have started to reminisce about and evaluate their pasts. The fact that, when I approached them, C100 members were beginning to archive their own history suggests that they recognised a need to bring their stories together. By the time I arrived on the scene a group of them had already embarked upon collecting C100 documentation from across campaign members' attics, intending to establish a common historical resource for posterity. Since I successfully permeated their mutually protective boundaries, the C100 archivists have considered my work to be part of the process they initiated. They planned on a website, and ended up with an oral historian (of course the two are not mutually exclusive). We share a common purpose; to illuminate the historical significance of C100's campaign and the life stories of those who played a role in it. This thesis is an attempt to situate C100 within its cultural and historical context as an independent protest group, and define its position and influence.

After the Second World War, something changed on a global scale. The horrors of the

Holocaust emerged in rhetoric-filled reports, concerned with the value of human life. These were often designed to demonstrate the wickedness of Nazi Germany, but also, ironically, to justify the means employed in bringing an end to the war. The suffering faced in Hiroshima and Nagasaki took a little longer to surface. Around the same time, in 1947, Gandhi's campaign for Indian Independence demonstrated success through civil disobedience and inspired all sorts of ideas for new campaigns throughout the world. Through wider access to travel and television, the world was progressively appearing smaller, and a new international sense of community gave rise to a humanitarian perspective that favoured civil rights. News of NVDA campaigns across the globe was soon reported, often with a sympathetic tone depending on place of broadcast. By 1955, Rosa Parks' example of NVDA and the subsequent Montgomery bus boycotts sparked worldwide interest in the US civil rights campaign. The anti-apartheid efforts of the ANC and others in South Africa also gathered international support, especially after the Sharpeville shootings in March 1960. Other national peace movements followed Aldermaston's lead, with similar marches springing up in cities around the world. An international sense of hope in people power was bubbling up on an unprecedented scale, giving way to what is commonly recognised as a phenomenon of the 1960s. We can see now that this rise in dissent was actually rooted a decade before.

In Britain, during the second half of the 1950s, the potentially devastating effects of atomic weaponry began to permeate the consciousness of both postwar youth, and the more questioning elements among their parents' generation. They learned through Suez that their leaders were dishonest, through media propaganda that the Cold War was a burgeoning threat, and through early anti-nuclear proponents that atomic weapon testing was poisoning the planet. A new sense of selfhood had emerged, especially in young adults. They began to identify themselves as separate from their elders, and increasingly rejected the notion of state deference which had lingered since the war. They wanted new freedoms; the right to health and survival and the right to demand change in other aspects of their lives. The Aldermaston marches became a platform from which they

could express this feeling of difference and defiance of government policy. The annual events were also a fresh and exciting popular cultural experience which they considered both necessary and worthwhile. CND was cool, especially for the middle-classes who were first to be inspired; the beatniks, the student New Left, the jazz and skiffle fans and folk revivalists. The protest efforts of this increasingly popular campaign, however, were not viewed so favourably by all involved in the anti-nuclear movement. This was because, despite the efforts made by CND organisers to affect Labour Party decisions, it was becoming clear that a long and possibly futile road of protest lay ahead. After three years of Aldermaston marches a more radical approach was proposed by some to be essential for prompting change. They considered that, with the masses aroused by CND, it was time to employ a Gandhian approach in Britain and demand nuclear disarmament through NVDA.

C100's architects believed they had devised a way of effecting change in defence policy. Their optimism is understandable. In addition to Gandhi's example in India, they were also able to draw on a legacy of NVDA in Britain. DAC were still active, and the struggles and successes of the Suffragettes were still echoing from a couple of generations before. The anti-nuclear cause was regarded by its supporters to be pressing, noble, and deserving of their investment of time and energy to protect their own futures. The CND fervour promoted a fresh spirit of dissent and the Aldermaston crowds provided recruitment grounds for C100. In addition to this, Bertrand Russell was a respected individual and an accomplished public orator. Known not only for his anti-war position, but also as one of the world's greatest philosophers and mathematicians, he was the perfect figure to kick start C100's campaign. The idea of inviting other public figures to join from across the celebrity left was also very well conceived. It played on media, popular and counterculture appeal, and was designed to attract those who wanted involvement in a fresh cultural experience. What the C100 campaign designers lacked, however, was any real idea of how the authorities might respond, or any contingency plan should they meet barriers along the way.

In order to 'fill the jails', Russell and Schoenman needed to muster mass support for C100 from across the ranks of CND. An issue arises here, however, about who might be relied upon to go to prison for the campaign. Clearly, the 100 signed-up members had deliberated on this possibility before making their decision. For the thousands who turned up on C100's first demonstration, however, we can assume that there was a proportion who intended to avoid taking it all the way. Perhaps some turned up solely to have a look, and then felt safe enough to participate. Throughout C100's campaign, a distinction can be made, between two types of protestor. There were those who were willing to participate in NVDA as long as it remained peaceful, risking a fine at most. These I would argue, were largely CND supporters who flirted with NVDA before the Wethersfield Trial and didn't participate further. Then there were those who fully engaged in C100's campaign. If they were not included in the 100 named signatories to begin with, through determination and enthusiasm they were eventually achieved full membership. It is these individuals, alongside the original members, on whom this thesis is focused: C100's pioneers, and the movers and shakers of the campaign.

These individuals differ in both identity and motivation from the campaigners who have hitherto been regarded as characteristic of the first wave anti-nuclear movement.<sup>548</sup> This thesis reveals new insights into C100 members' identity, which have emerged from their oral history narratives and could not have been gleaned elsewhere. Contrary to what Parkin regarded as CND supporters' 'deviance syndrome', these C100 members were actually embracing much of what they had learned in their childhoods, at home or at school. A closer look at these mostly middle-class respondents' backgrounds indicates a high prevalence of radical influence. Their parents or carers tended to be leftist, communist, anarchist, peace activist or progressive and often a combination of these. A high prevalence of secularism also emerges from their life stories, both in terms of C100 protestor background and later life. It is clear then that these individuals were radical beyond their engagement in C100. What they all share is an active engagement in progressive thought, either learned from childhood or throughout their politicising

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<sup>548</sup> Parkin's Aldermaston marchers and Taylor and Pritchard, or Mattausch's CND members.

years. The exchange of libertarian ideas and anarchist literature which was common between C100 respondents built upon their radical identities. As a group, C100 embraced the development of these ideas, and increasingly applied them to their campaign. Radical thought was part of C100 group identity and, alongside preventing global destruction, it was largely what motivated them.

Earlier overviews of C100's campaign have suggested that group identity changed over time, from what was originally an absolute pacifist Gandhian style campaign to an increasingly radical, protest group with strong libertarian socialist influences. To some extent, an investigation of the C100 narratives supports this idea, and yet we should be cautious here. While the extreme ends of the campaign may have shifted in the suggested direction, the middle ground did so only in marginal terms. This thesis suggests a combination of five main factors which contributed to this radicalisation of C100, all of which are mutually influential and inextricably linked.

Firstly, tensions within C100 between the absolute pacifists and the tactical pacifists over definitions of NVDA were impacted over time by changes in policing methods. As the authorities became more heavy handed and willing to employ maximum punitive powers, the tactical pacifists gained ground on issues such as campaign openness and violence against property. C100 actions therefore became progressively more radical in approach. A second factor was the fact that as C100 members gradually left the campaign, or were absent for a time due to imprisonment, they needed to be replaced. More often than not, their replacements came from amongst the C100 supporters who had proved themselves to be committed and enthusiastic. These individuals tended to be young anarchists who had few responsibilities other than their activism, and were attracted to the radical aspects of the campaign. A third impacting factor was that the repeated arrests and imprisonment of C100 protestors, for the many that experienced it, was radicalising in itself. Often feelings of injustice, disdain for police inadequacies, and distress over prison conditions, progressed into feelings of contention with the state. They began to challenge much more than the single issue of nuclear weapons. The



fourth factor to influence C100's radical development was the formation of regional groups and a national committee in 1962. The aim was to decentralise the campaign; and the effect was that the members with greater agency at the beginning of C100, who were more likely to be pacifist inclined, now came under pressure to attend to the radicals. This leads to the fifth and final impacting factor, that C100 was becoming a platform for the anarchists to disseminate their libertarian socialist ideas, calling for revised forms of action with more diverse focus.

From the outset, C100 had an anarchist element. Regular discussion amongst a group of individuals, with often radical leftist backgrounds, actively encouraged radical thought. In addition to this, some particular members had personal designs on campaign radicalisation, especially after Wethersfield. Anarchist writer Nicolas Walter and his wife Ruth were amongst them, as were the group of individuals linked to Solidarity. Some of these libertarian socialists went on to write *Beyond Counting Arses* or form the Spies for Peace. Considering all of the other changes happening in C100, this group were increasingly able to get their ideas across in meetings. Whether or not their opinions were taken on board by the majority of middle ground C100 members, and accepted as campaign policy, there were some individuals who began to accept and embrace the libertarian socialist ideas. The effect of all five of these factors working together effectively radicalised C100 over time. The result was the appearance of more subversive and maverick stunt-like actions and a broadening of focus of interests towards other, often grass-roots campaigns. These involved challenging the state over a variety of issues such as homelessness and the Vietnam War.

It was not long into C100's campaign that these changes occurred. Regionalisation began in 1962, for example, and the Spies for Peace episode was in April 1963. An examination of C100 narrative perspectives on C100's structural organisation indicate that although the campaign's original architecture was elitist in shape, this radicalisation was evidence of an underlying anti-hierarchical ethos that worked towards promoting an egalitarian campaign. This thesis reveals what the respondents describe as a 'libertarian

spirit' in C100, that encouraged tolerance, equality and consensus in making decisions. An investigation into the extent to which this was achieved reveals more about these campaigners. By looking at the extent to which C100 narrators felt able to participate in meetings a good indication of individual campaign ownership and authority emerges. We find that the more knowledgeable C100 members, with better skills to impart that knowledge, had greater agency in meetings.

This raises issues of class in C100; those with university educations, at least at first, were better equipped to hold court. Another significant factor here, however, is that many of the respondents did not yet have university degrees, having postponed mainstream study to fully engage in C100's 'fill the jails' policy. Some had been busy at war for the years during which they might have studied. Others, due to their class or gender, may not even have considered such an education. What this thesis does reveal is that this regard for knowledge certainly impacted on these campaigners, in that it often encouraged self-education from alternative sources, such as lectures at the Conway Hall or reading up for themselves. The majority went on in later life to pursue academic study, some to postgraduate level. There is evidence that this class discrepancy in C100 authority declined as time went on, and there are two contributory factors here: firstly, through self-tuition, the less-educated campaigners gradually became more erudite and gained confidence by practice; and secondly, the campaign's 'libertarian spirit' increasingly encouraged wider participation from all those who were involved. This is an important point, and one which featured in the narratives to explain that even gendered discrepancies were not much of an issue in C100. Irrespective of the fact that a consideration of gendered discrepancies was off the campaigners' radar at the time, C100's attempt at egalitarianism and libertarianism created an environment that, compared to other contemporary political groups, was favourable to women. An anti-hierarchical ethos, therefore, ultimately prevailed in C100.

To move then, from an environment with a 'libertarian spirit' such as has been described in the C100 narratives, to that of imprisonment was often quite a shock for these

protestors. This thesis demonstrates that it was in prison that the strongest examples of gendered experience and class divide occurred. For a campaign that relied upon 'filling the jails', this was its Achilles' heel. The authorities quickly realised that they could pick and choose whom they sent down and for how long. Once inside, the C100 inmates learned the harsh realities of what they had to face for their endeavours. For these mostly middle-class protestor prisoners it was a hard lesson to learn, what the more typical inmates already knew; that on entering prison, most of what might be considered their personal rights were left at the gate. Many retained a sense of entitlement that divided them from other inmates, which on the one hand made them feel furious, and on the other guilty. This tension frequently inspired them to engage in prison reform campaign on release. Often the extremities of the ordeal depended upon which institution they were sent to, as different governors and prison officials regarded and treated C100 prisoners in different ways.

Looking at gendered experience, this thesis reveals that whilst the men often went together to open prison for their first offence, the women were immediately sent to Holloway prison. Even the C100 men's stories of closed prisons paint a benign picture compared to that experienced by C100 women. While most narratives indicate the levels of degradation and hardship that one might expect to find inside, the gendered discrepancies that surface are significant. In prison, C100 men were more likely to be put in cells together, were better occupied (with work or education), and were often treated in a similar fashion to other inmates. The women, on the other hand were more isolated, medicalised and had little to occupy their time. When taking into account what is now known about how women react to imprisonment in comparison to men, especially in a prison system that is designed by men for men, we see that C100 women were risking more by participating in NVDA than were their male colleagues.

C100 introduced a new method of protest to Britain, not only because of their mass NVDA sit-down demonstrations, but also because their campaign efforts were creatively developed over time in response to policing methods. The relationship

between C100 and the authorities sparked a campaign era of trial and error, from which much was learned about the potential and limitations of NVDA. In striving to be inclusive and egalitarian C100 also created an atmosphere which encouraged input from all members for decisions made over campaign direction. The combination of this ethos and method defines C100 as a distinct and innovative protest group, the likes of which had not yet been seen in Britain. They emerged in time to harness the fresh cultural and political mood of the late 1950s. C100 was precursory to many subsequent protest campaigns in Britain and a conduit both to the era that later came to be regarded as the rebellious 1960s, and to the eventual rise of identity politics that was to follow.

Questions have been raised during this study which, due to the limited scope of this particular undertaking, have not been pursued here. Further exploration of, for example, the types of masculinity to be found within C100 due to its pacifist orientation and libertarian atmosphere, would be an interesting pursuit. Another area of research that should be both fruitful and revealing of the historical development of protest, would be to consider further global links between C100 and other NVDA campaigns which climaxed in the postwar years. This thesis reveals links between C100, the US Civil Rights movement and NVDA campaigns across Europe and Africa. Now that the place of C100 in the history of British protest is more established, an investigation into the campaign's historical position on an international scale would reveal even more about the interconnectedness and evolution of NVDA in the postwar world. In order to develop such a comparative study of NVDA, further close studies of individual campaigns are necessary. My investigation serves to illustrate the particular nature of C100's campaign, and as such is my own contribution to such an endeavour. This thesis historically situates C100, and for the first time, frames it within its influences and legacies as a campaign in its own right.

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## **Appendices.**

Appendix 1.  
Letter inviting C100 Members to be Interviewed.

Appendix 2.  
Committee of 100 Research Questionnaire. (Background and Biographical Data).

Appendix 3.  
Letter from Jay Ginn inviting C100 Members to be Interviewed.

Appendix 4.  
Statistical Breakdown of C100 Members on Archive Database.

Appendix 5.  
Recording Consent Form.

Appendix 6.  
Interview Guide.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Letter inviting C100 Members to be Interviewed.**

Dear

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to take part in an oral history interview concerning your experiences within the non-violent direct action group the Committee of 100 in the early 1960s. My name is Sam Carroll and I am researching this innovative campaign as the focus of my doctoral thesis here at Sussex University. I am hoping to interview between twenty and thirty men and women over the next two terms.

I am extremely interested in the Committee of 100, having already successfully completed a Masters Degree in which I investigated the stories of six women within the campaign, the results of which were very enlightening, raising many more questions that I have now developed into my current thesis. I am determined to record as much as I can about the Committee of 100, effectively bringing to light the originality of its structure, ethos and actions, and I intend to set it aside, in its own right from where it is normally found; subsumed within the history of CND.

My article '*I was arrested at Greenham in 1962': Investigating the Oral Narratives of Women in the Committee of 100*' was published in the academic journal *Oral History*, Spring 2004, Vol 32. If you do not have access to the internet then on request I will send you a photocopy, if you do have access then you can view the article on my research website. You will also find more information about who I am and what I am hoping to find: <http://www.samcarroll.org>

I am enclosing a short questionnaire and a stamped addressed envelope for you to respond. The questionnaire is to cover some basic background information relevant to the interview, and so that we don't have to waste time or tapes on the day. Please complete whatever you are happy to and ignore questions that you do not wish to answer. When I hear back from you I will get in touch to arrange when and how I will get to meet you.

On the actual day, the interview should take about two hours. I will record it with a mini disc recorder and I will also provide a consent form so that you can stipulate your conditions of use, such as using a pseudonym or any other restrictions you might request. My supervisor Dr Gerry Holloway has advised me to include her contact details, in case you wish to check my authenticity: Tel 01273 877257, email [G.Holloway@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:G.Holloway@sussex.ac.uk)

I sincerely hope that you will consider assisting me in this project, and that you share with me the desire to help record the remarkable experiences and efforts of those involved in this very distinct and inspirational anti-nuclear campaign.

I very much look forward to hearing from you,  
Sam Carroll.



## Appendix 2

### **Committee of 100 Research Questionnaire. Background and Biographical Data.**

Please answer as much or as little of this questionnaire as you want. All of the information included will remain strictly confidential (between myself and my supervisor) without your fully informed written consent. These forms will be filed securely at my house in Brighton and used only for contact purposes until we meet and/or you grant me permission to use them.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Biographical details.

Please write a very brief overview of your background. For example you could tell me about your parents and childhood, your education, your working life and any important factors that you think might be relevant to my research.

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Now could you please give a very brief overview of your involvement in the Committee of 100. You could inform me of the extent of your involvement in the group e.g. Joining, meetings, actions and arrests. (Please keep this as a summary as I would like

your story to be fresh to me at interview).

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Have you any other sources that might be relevant and useful for research purposes? These might be photos, diaries, letters, minutes from meetings, hand-outs, posters.... If so what have you got? And would you be willing for me to see it/them?

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Finally, do you know of anyone else from the Committee of 100 who might be willing to be interviewed. If so, please give them my contact details, including web address. Otherwise, please ask their permission first and then write their contact details here.

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Many thanks for your generous assistance. Please return this to me in the envelope provided and I will be in touch very soon.

## Appendix 3

### Letter from Jay Ginn inviting C100 Members to be Interviewed.

Dear

Would you be willing to help record, through an interview, your experiences of Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) in the Committee of 100?

As you know, we planned to mount an archive of documentary materials on a NVDA Archive website\*. We also discussed recording oral evidence from C100 members like yourself, but shelved this task until we could find someone willing and competent to do it.

Fortunately, Ms Sam Carroll who is researching for her PhD at Sussex University, would like to conduct interviews with C100 members over the next few months. The enclosed pack provides more details about her research on the events and people involved with NVDA. Sam, who shares our values, has previously interviewed some C100 women and we are very happy with the way she conducted her research.

We promise to keep the names and addresses of C100 members confidential and have therefore *not* given your contact details to sam or to anyone outside of the C100 Archive group. However, I do hope that you will respond positively to Sam's request for an interview, by contacting her when you have read her material.

Your participation in the research will help to provide valuable information about the experiences and motivations of C100 members. This 'history of resistance' is relevant to protest movements today as they seek forms of action to promote peace, combat poverty and end injustice.

Please help to record this vital piece of history, in which you played a part.

Best wishes

Jay Ginn (Nightingale)

\*Plans for the Archive website have had to be abandoned due to a variety of circumstances, especially lack of funding. The NVDA Archive Trust has been formally dissolved and the documents that were donated have been transferred to Bradford University, where there is a possibility that they may be put on a suitable website at a future date.

## Appendix 4

### Statistical Breakdown of C100 Members on NVDA Archive Database.

C100 Database Dec 29 2001 SUMMARY

|                     |            |                 |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| DETAILS ON DATABASE | 136        | 34 women        |
| DEAD                | 65         | 9 women         |
| NO CONTACT DETAILS  | <u>112</u> | <u>33 women</u> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>313</b> | <b>76 women</b> |

## Appendix 5

### Recording Consent Form (and optional Copyright Form).

#### Recording consent form.

Date(s) and location(s) of

recording: .....

Details of

contribution: .....

I hereby consent to the recording of my contribution. It may be used, in whole or in part, in any or all of the following ways (*NB please delete and initial any uses which you wish to exclude*):

1 for purposes of education and research

2 in an edited, or abridged form

3 for public use or playback to an audience

4 broadcasting

5 publication

Please indicate any additional restriction which you wish to place on the use of your contribution:.....

.....

.....

Signed: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

Address: .....

#### Copyright assignment form.

I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution

to .....

for public use in research, publication, education, lectures, local or national sound archives, or broadcasting.

If you wish to restrict access to your contribution for a period (up to 30 years), please specify here:

.....

.....

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Address: .....

## **Appendix 6**

### **Interview Guide**

#### **Background.**

Where and when were you born?

What did your parents do for a living?

Did your parents belong to any religious, political or ideological groups? Did they have any obvious moral or political convictions?

Did you have any siblings? Expand.

When did you leave full time education?

#### **First Wave; late 50's early 60's.**

How did you first get involved with the peace / anti-nuclear movement?

Were you involved in CND? What did you think of their campaign? Method?

What were your motivations? Was it a moral or a political crusade?

Were you religious or spiritual in any way?

How did you first become involved in the Committee of 100? DAC?

How did your friends/ family feel about your campaign? Did this affect relationships?

Were you willing to break the law and face arrest? Prosecution? Imprisonment?

Can you describe the activities you took part in? Were you arrested? Expand

Can you tell me a bit about C100 meetings? Structure? Consensus? Hierarchical?

Were you able to enter the discussions on an equal basis? Can you give any examples?

Did you feel your contributions were valid? Any examples of this?

What sort of people were involved in C100? Any obvious differences from elsewhere?

Were there any groups or individuals that clearly dominated the campaign? Expand.

Were you involved with any other groups (Socialist? Trotskyist?) Expand.

Were there any latent or obvious inequalities within the C100? Gender? Class? Ed?

Were any such inequalities addressed, formally or informally?

Did you consider yourself to be an absolute pacifist? Committed to NVDA?

Why did the first wave of CND lose it's following? What about the C100?

How effective were they? Why did it end?

#### **Second wave; 1980's.**

What were the links with what happened later? Women's Movement? Greenham?...?

Were you involved with the second wave of interest in CND? How?

Had you been active in the intermittent years? With what campaigns?

#### **Retrospection and now.**

Are you still active in the peace movement? Any other?

What would you say have been the legacies of the C100 today? How should the group be remembered historically?

What issues do you think are important today? Is the nuclear threat less post cold war?

What forms of protest would be the most effective today?

Would you still be willing to sacrifice your liberty in protest? For what causes?

How important has the peace movement been in your life?

How have your political ideas changed over your life course?

How did they fit in with or shape your life?

What did you learn from your experiences?

Have you anything that you would like to add? What have I missed?