

'Prisoner' awaits trial and preaches peace

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Easter's a time to spend with family and friends. But peace activist Jean Hutchinson couldn't be with her daughter and thousands of English "sisters" Sunday as they protested nuclear armaments at 130 United States military bases.

Arrested Dec. 2 during a blockade of a Wallied Lake defense supplier's driveway, the British subject isn't allowed to go home until after her conspiracy trial in Oakland County. And no one knows when that will be.

"The right to due process under the law is being blocked somewhere by someone in Oakland County," Hutchinson told an audience at Mercy College in Detroit. "We've been having due process for five months. I'm a prisoner here."

OF MORE THAN 50 people arrested during the weeklong blockade at Williams International, Hutchinson is the only one not charged with trespassing.

The 50-year-old Cambridge, England, mother of three is accused of conspiring to obstruct the entrance to a place of employment, conspiracy to disturb the peace-outdoors and conspiracy to trespass. Her attorneys requested a special May 2 hearing on a motion to dismiss her charges so she can return home soon.

"I'm sorry, but my crimes are very intangible," the feisty woman said to those hearing her story. "They don't really exist, between you and me. But they do serve to link Greenham Commons and Williams."

WHILE OTHERS stood or sat in the driveway to keep employees from entering the firm, which makes gas turbine engines for cruise missiles, Hutchinson was behind the scenes supporting their actions.

As a worship service before the event, the Methodist lay minister brought greetings from her "sisters" at the peace camp outside England's Greenham Commons U.S. Air Force Base.

Hutchinson stayed with the group in St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Pontiac. She said her "crime" was quoting naturalist Henry David Thoreau and Thoreau monk Thomas Merton. "Merton will be laughing in heaven," Hutchinson said.

Her arrest came after the final protest as she was leaving the early morning blockade.

"We went through a funnelling charade of trying to hide me to the crowd and change my clothes," she recalled in a newsletter to the Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles.

"It was no good. There were plain clothes police in the crowd, and I don't think peace people are very good at this kind of thing."

AWAITING TRIAL, Hutchinson has been traveling around the country on a lecture tour.

While anxious to return home, she delights in telling the "women of Boise" about the activities of the

Greenham Common Women. The peace campers sleep in plastic bags under temporary shelters outside the U.S. Air Force base to protest the American military presence and the Pershing II and cruise missiles.

Hutchinson and 13 other Greenham women filed suit in New York Federal Court against President Ronald Reagan on grounds that the United States is violating international law.

"U.S. personnel are conspiring to commit genocide. We are an occupied nation, and we want our land back," said Hutchinson, who contends the Pentagon is behind the daily eviction of peace campers.

"To get rid of this camp at Greenham Common, you'll have to put us all in prison or shoot us all."

"And you can't shoot 50-40,000 women. There isn't anything they can do. We will actually reclaim the Common."

speaks, there are usually lots of questions about her "little local problems at Williams."

"I think I've done all the crimes today except shoot the film," said Hutchinson with a laugh, adding that she's puzzled that she is being detained at all.

"Why deny me permission to leave when they could easily have given me that way?"

Attacking Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson for the conspiracy charges, Hutchinson also credits him with helping her cause. She and other defendants contend their constitutional rights of freedom of speech and due process under law are being violated.

"I wish that gentle man whose name I try not to say could see my mail from all over the world. He brought about all that he's trying to stop," she said.

"That prosecutor has done quite a lot for people of Oakland County, the nation and the international peace movement."



'U.S. personnel are conspiring to commit genocide. We are an occupied nation, and we want our land back.'

Englishwoman
Jean Hutchinson,
peace activist

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