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SCHOOL KIDS ISSUE

THE RETURN OF KING KONG

Guerrilla Babes Wipeout!

Battle No.1 – ST. MARYLEBONE C. OF E. SECONDARY MODERN

The decision to go to this school was the result of conversations with school pupils the previous day. We had no idea at all what would happen but when it did it was unbelievable and provided the stimulus and tempo which kept things rolling for the rest of the week. There we were – six motley dressed, long(ish) haired youths, armed with mortar boards, whistles, school caps, leaflets and other assorted props, charging completely unexpected into a playground packed with 300 bored and frustrated school kids. The situation was potentially explosive – we might have been stoned and trampled on – but instead, the complete opposite occurred. We rush into the playground shouting and beating a drum. "Roll up, roll up for the education play." The school students immediately gather round in a tight body, noisy but obviously interested. Almost immediately, after starting the play, Authority steps in, in the form of a group of teachers. Incredibly the kids tighten the circle so as to prevent the teachers from getting near us. Nevertheless they do eventually get to us. "Get out! Have you got permission? You've got to ask for permission first. But anyway we wouldn't have given it to you."("Please sir, may I have permission to bash you on the head, sir?") After arguments and distribution of leaflets, we leave the playground but continue the play on a path just outside. The children gather on the other side of the fence to watch and an incredible scene follows where a number of teachers attempt to push the kids away from the fence to prevent our poisoned words reaching their ears. Despite serious threats from the authorities, the kids take little notice and continue to listen and watch the play. Suddenly some of the pupils shout, "The cops are coming." The cops arrive together with a school teacher and they attempt to drag one of us away. We pull him free to the cheers of the school kids. The teachers say we are disturbing "their" pupils (because they were enjoying themselves they were naturally being "disturbed"). "Do you want us to stay?", we shout. "YES", they yell in unison. The Fuzz make it clear that unless we leave we'll be busted. After leaving 4 boys escape from the school and say that we should come again and they'll protect us from the Fuzz and beat them up if necessary. We learn later that after we'd left there had been a semi-riot when the pupils in the playground (about 250) refused the HM's orders to get inside or be expelled. Not all the teachers were on the side of the authorities either. A sympathetic art teacher helped produce anti-authoritarian posters which were put up round the school and teaching virtually came to a standstill. Three boys were accused of inviting us into the school and were threatened with expulsion.

No. 2 – ST. MARYLEBONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

We manage to perform the play on the pavement as the boys leave for home. A sizeable crowd gathers and apart from the predictable puerile comments and antics (some of the boys, old and young, pinch our props, throw things at us) most of the boys give us an audience and we get a good discussion going afterwards, centring around exams and comprehensive education. We argue for an organised schools movement to fight external grading through exams and to work for control of all assessment by school students and teachers. We learn that two first formers have been caned for not praying in assembly. How's that for hypocrisy!

Midday Wednesday – Confrontation No. 3: ACKLAND BURGHLEY MIXED COMPREHENSIVE

We enter the playground and make for a corner of the yard in front of a wall and away from the football game. A large crowd run to our rallying cries – "Don't miss this incredible spectacle – fresh from its 100 year run in the backstreets of darkest England. It's the education farce!" About half way through the play several members of staff appear in the playground, approach us and tell us to get out. We ignore them and continue the play – "Sir, I don't think that . . . " "You don't think? Capital! – just the lad I've been looking for."

Teachers dispatch henchmen prefects to keep the kids away from us. The HM threatens to break guerilla Nicks' jaw. One teacher says that he'd like to pummel guerilla Steve into the ground, but satisfies himself with such intelligent remarks as "Why don't you get a wash – we don't like unclean people here." Another teacher is sent to call the Fuzz.

Finishing the play we start talking to the school students. In front of the other kids we ask the prefects why they blindly accept the teachers orders to stop the kids talking to us – why they let themselves be used as unquestioning tools of the HM. They don't answer but just push the pupils back. We talk to the kids and suggest they get together and refuse to obey the prefects (who aren't even elected by the kids.) We say that pupils and teachers should decide collectively on their own code of discipline. The staff are now out in force and we decide to leave. As we leave the Fuzz arrive. One Fuzz takes down some of our names and gives us a warning about trespass. We split, and as we are doing so we see kids pushed away from the windows as they wave to us.

No. 4 – CAMDEN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Noted liberal "progressive" Grammar school. We start the play under the impression that it's all been fixed up by friends at the school (they think so too), and that permission has been granted for the performance. Thus the idea is to put on an uninterrupted performance and get comments from the audience not only on whay the play says but how it says it.

As it happens the only male teacher in the school, who must have thought we were encroaching on his male monopoly, is sent down by the Headmistress to get rid of us. He becomes almost hysterical when we try to explain the situation to him, screams "DON'T ARGUE!", (a line straight out of the play) and says he's been instructed to 'phone the police. We eventually leave in the interests of our friends at the school who might get victimised if we stay. It just showed the students there that perhaps their "tolerant, liberal" school was not quite as tolerant as they thought.

Thursday 9 a.m. – Guerilla Steve at the gates of Ackland Burghley once again – this time not to perform a play, but to get a discussion going about the previous days' events. He learns that after we left on Wednesday the HM–Abbey had put out a "well-done-my-army-it's-all-over-now-so-calm-down" speech on the tannoy. Some of the more progressive teachers, however, had apparently taken copies of the leaflet into their classes and tried to get discussions going on the topics raised. Many of the kids show interest in what we were saying and complain themselves about how little say they have in the running of the school (the school councils' decisions are continually vetoed by the HM). Again the need to get together, work out what they want and communicate with students at other schools is apparent. Steve says we'll try to come back again and help to get some more positive form of action going. It's important to note that since our visit to Ackland Burghley SAU member Trevor Williams was suspended for "insubordination" af-