

Film tape 23.8.74 allowed in court

By our own Reporter

A videotape recording of squatters being evicted from a London house will be admissible as defence evidence in a case of alleged assault—provided that Scotland Yard forensic scientists are satisfied that the tape is authentic.

The Lambeth magistrate, Mr K. J. H. Nichols, said yesterday that it was a novel situation but videotape could be allowed as evidence on the same terms as sound recordings.

Mr Peter Darcy and Dr John Pollard, who are accused of assaulting a police constable during their eviction from a house in Prince of Wales Crescent, Chalk Farm, North London, by bailiffs and police earlier this year, believe the film is crucial defence evidence.

The case, which was in its fourth day yesterday, originally involved 15 people but some have had their charges dismissed. Yesterday six men were bound over to keep the peace and the charges against them were dismissed.

Mr Benedict Birnberg, counsel for Mr Darcy, and Dr Pollard, who is conducting his own defence, applied yesterday for the screening of the film. Mr Birnberg said he thought that it would be the first time a videotape had been used as defence evidence.

But the application was adjourned until November 5 while Scotland Yard makes a duplicate and tests it thoroughly for defects and tampering. Mr Trevor Pogson, prosecuting, did not oppose the use of videotape as defence evidence but claimed the right to have it tested by specialists. He had been advised that Scotland Yard's forensic division would take 10 weeks to give a considered view.

Mr Birnberg argued that there was no difference in principle between the recording of a human voice and a videotape.

Mr Nichols yesterday accepted this precedent as applying equally to the videotape. The film was made by two members of Graft-On, a community development agency based in Prince of Wales Crescent.

But, Mr Nichols said, the film must be strictly established as the best evidence possible, and although he was not suggesting that the tape had been tampered with he presumed that interference was possible.

The Guardian

A medium for the people

Community uses of video are now almost commonplace in London and are spreading rapidly throughout the U.K. The majority of this pioneering work has been carried out by independent groups, like Inter-Action, Graft-On!, the Basement Group and others. The model for this work has always been a provocative programme set up in 1967 by the National Film Board of Canada, called "Challenge for Change." Its purpose was "to improve communications, create greater understanding, promote new ideas and provoke social change," and it was established with an annual budget of \$1.8m. In this country the groups struggle to exist and are all inadequately equipped, and financed on an ad hoc basis by various arts agencies.

Financial Times

Communications breakdown: At least one councillor in the London Borough of Camden has found a new way of meeting his constituents. Councillor Neil McIntosh was afraid to meet squatters in a block near Prince of Wales Road for fear of being verbally maligned. (They had asked him, as deputy-chairman of the Council's housing committee, how long before the Council evicted them; he didn't have a clear answer). So a local 'community development agency', 'Graft-On', run by a couple of video-freaks recorded the squatters discussing their plight and are now preparing to screen the epic for the timorous councillor.

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Time Out

People's Tube

A powerful check against misuse of police power is the presence of a television camera. One of the most memorable pieces of television footage this year was shot by an amateur crew at the scene of a squatters' eviction. The swaying and confusion of the hand-held camera mirrored the chaos and anxiety at the scene. When a cop threatened the cameraman, he seemed to be threatening the viewer as well.

Community groups, as well as schools, arts organisations and even athletic teams have been tempted by the potential of relatively inexpensive one-half inch television equipment (professional machinery uses one-inch and two-inch tape). The great difficulty has been editing.

Now, with a £1350 grant from the British Film Institute, Sue Hall of Graft-On! community agency and John Hopkins of the Centre for Advanced Television Studies has established a half-inch editing facility. It is called Fantasy Factory and is at 98 Prince of Wales Road, NW5. The rates are £6 per hour with operator and only £1.00 per hour for 'bona-fide non-profit-making community groups'.

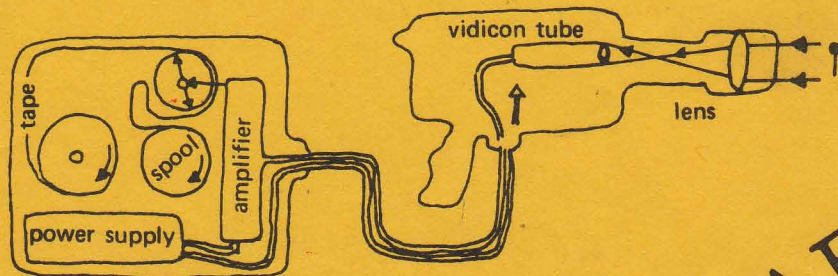
Information available from Fantasy Factory, c/o The Institute for Research in Art and Technology, 15 Prince of Wales Crescent, NW1 8HA, telephone 834 6524, ext. 758.

VIDEO AS AN ANALYTIC TOOL

SUE HALL AND JOHN HOPKINS OF GRAFT-ON! ARE WORKING AT THE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT THIS YEAR. MOST OF OUR WORK IS OUTSIDE THE A.A. WITH VARIOUS COMMUNITY GROUPS AROUND KENTISH TOWN (WHERE WE LIVE).

INFORMATION GATHERING, DOCUMENTATION, EVIDENCE, ETC., ARE MORE USEFUL IF SUBJECTED TO ANALYSIS. ONE OF THE CHIEF BENEFITS OF SUCH AN APPROACH IS THAT COMMUNICATION PATTERNS CAN BE STUDIED AND OPTIMISED OVER A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO WORK WITH US, OR FEEL THAT OUR EXPERTISE COULD ASSIST YOU IN YOUR WORK, CONTACT US THROUGH THE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT OR DROP A NOTE IN OUR PIGEONHOLE AT THE INFORMATION CENTRE.



GRAFT-ON!
Remember the Name