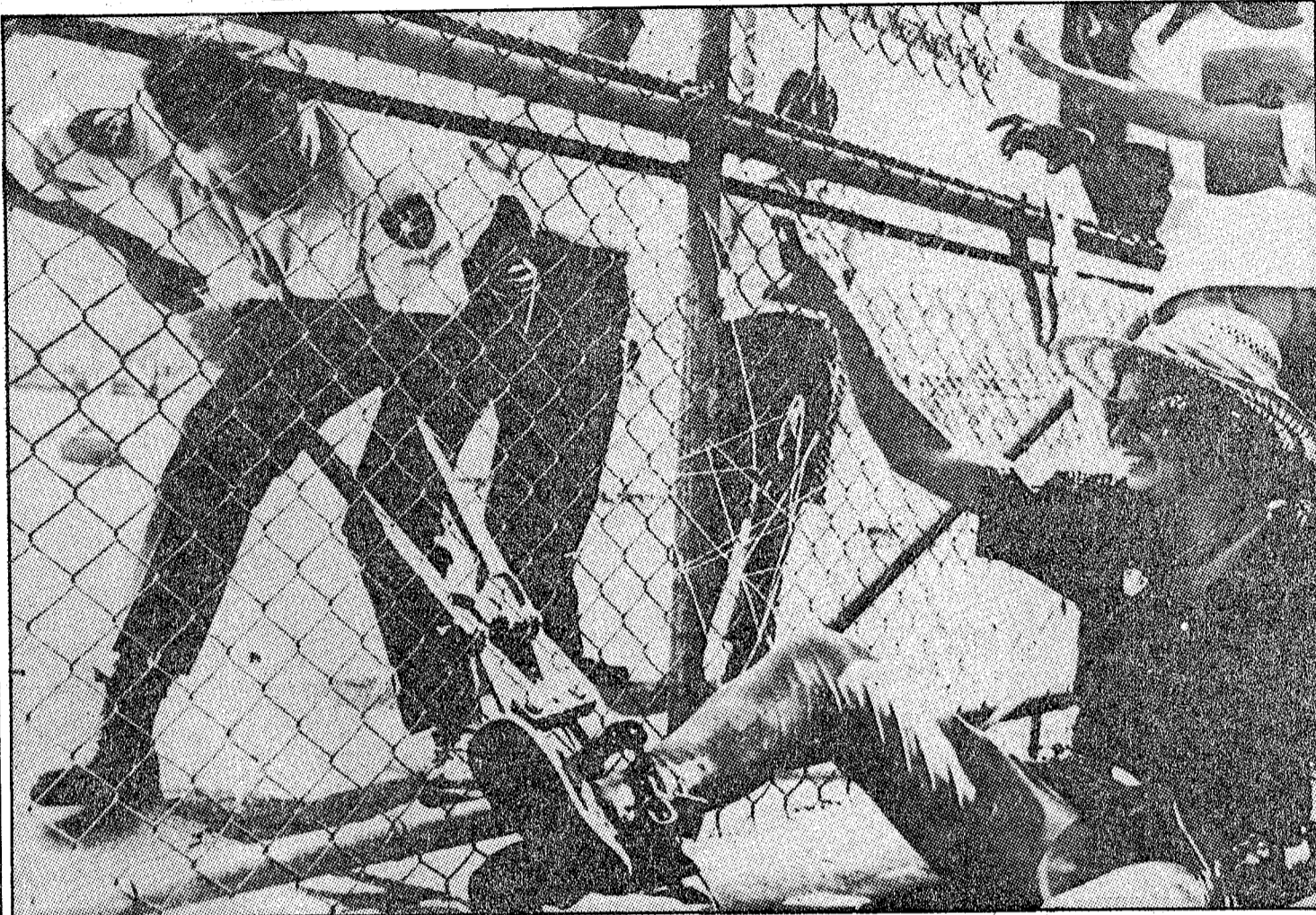


Grandparents in Pine Gap arrests



A security guard uses a large cutting tool to free a protester from her chains at the main entrance gates of the Pine Gap defence base during demonstrations yesterday — Picture: PHIL BLENKINSOP

By BERWYN LEWIS

ALMOST 100 people, including a group of grandparents and great-grandparents, were arrested yesterday in demonstrations at the joint Australian-United States defence, scientific and intelligence base at Pine Gap, in the Northern Territory.

The 13 grandparents arrested were trying to present a signed petition on behalf of grandparents and great-grandparents.

Guards at the base ignored calls for a base official to accept the petition, which has been signed by more than 1000 grandparents.

Scaling the fence, dozens of elderly demonstrators were followed by organised waves of protesters who slipped past the authorities and fanned out through the scrub and reached the distant cliffs, where they stood silhouetted against sky-waving banners and released orange smoke bombs.

Some grandparents were arrested for a second time in this week of protests, which called for the closure of all US bases in Australia and a refusal to renew the Pine Gap lease, which expired yesterday.

Extra police were called in to pursue the demonstra-

tors, who were arrested for trespassing.

"People of Australia and the Pacific islands do not want the bases. Let's keep Australia and the Pacific nuclear-free," said Mrs Shirley "Mum Shirl" Smith, who has 79 grandchildren.

"Let the grannies go," chanted protesters who closed in on the Pine Gap entrance, where one guard wearing the name tag 1177 Tait, gulped with emotion behind the security fence.

Several people on crutches, with legs in plaster, featured among the demonstrators and needed help to get to police vans following their arrests.

Vigil

One woman bolted herself to the gates, where she remained until special equipment arrived to cut through her chains.

Police at the Alice Springs watch-house were yesterday processing all the arrested people, who are expected to be bailed on their own recognisance and appear at Alice Springs Magistrates Court next week.

It is expected that Independent Senator Jo Vallen-

tine will appear in court this morning following her arrest on Sunday.

A security fence that was damaged after demonstrators had broken through it late on Sunday was repaired overnight as an all-night vigil for men took place at the base's entrance.

A spokesman for the demonstration organiser, the Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition, Mr Brian Doolan, said the week-long activities had been "imaginative, and they attracted terrific local support".

"The call for an inquiry and public debate by the federal Labor politicians — Robert Tickner (Hughes, NSW), Peter Milton (La Trobe, Vic) and John Scott (Hindmarsh, SA) — will be followed up," Mr Doolan said.

He invited other organisations, including Greenpeace, to join the 137 member groups of the Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition.

Police and security authorities watched from their mobile fortress parked beside the highway as protesters packed up their camps after this week's protests.

US 'spies on Australia from base'

THE US probably used the Pine Gap base to monitor internal communications in Australia, a leading British peace activist said in Sydney yesterday.

Mr Bruce Kent, president of the International Peace Bureau in Geneva, said he would be "absolutely astonished" if the Americans were not keeping a watch on Australia through the base. He said he would also be astonished if the Americans were not "infiltrating every organisation and movement there is in this country to know what is going on".

Mr Kent, former head of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Britain, was invited to tour Australia by Australian peace groups.

"As far as I can research and understand, Pine Gap is both a means of surveillance of the USSR and probably a surveillance of you too," Mr Kent said.

A Pine Gap surveillance of Australia's internal communications would be very probable and desirable from an American military point of view, he said.