

Earth First! Action Update

No.29 JULY 96

30p

'A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees' – William Blake.

BATHEASTON BYPASS OPENING

Solsbury Hill is located just off the A46 near Bath and The 'Batheaston Bypass' dual carriageway, that cuts through the side of Solsbury Hill, will be opened on Thursday 11th July. People are urged to head down there to mark the event in true style. It is recommended that you head down on the Wednesday and stay overnight to be ready for the next morning. There is also a procession planned for the 13th July as well as a Street Party in Bath on 17th August. For more details on both of these events call Avon Gorge Earth First! on: 01225 448556.

STREET FESTIVAL

Reclaim The Streets Parties have been happening all over the country and this is just a quick reminder to people that there is to be a HUGE Street Festival happening on July 13th in London. Meeting 12 noon at Broadgate, next to Liverpool Street Station, this is to be slightly different from previous Street Parties with workshops, trapeze artists, street theatre, poetry, info stalls and debates as well as the usual sound systems, children's area, free food, banners etc. Let your imagination run riot, come in fancy dress and enjoy a vision of the future that reclaims the streets as safe places to play, meet people, chat and have fun! Contact Reclaim The Streets on: 0171 281 4621 for more details.

BRITISH AEROSPACE ACTION

On Monday 17th June activists from across the country descended on the British Aerospace factory at Warton near Manchester. This factory is the one that manufactures military Hawk jet planes which are then sold on to countries that use them to murder people, more often than not in brutal repression of internal resistance to the government at the time.

After an elaborate misinformation campaign that not only fooled the local Welsh police into closing down the RAF base in Anglesey where the Indonesian pilots are trained, but managed to divert police from Manchester. Around eighty to one hundred people who had attended the Earth First! Gathering arrived at a site next to the base and split up into affinity groups of five to ten people. The groups then dispersed and spread out around the perimeter of the factory. Most groups entered the base either by scaling the fence or using the conveniently placed holes that happened to be there after a midnight excursion by persons unknown the night before. The people that entered the factory faced security and two vans of local riot cops who seemed even more incompetent than usual. One of the cops was so careless with his personal radio that it happened to fall into somebody's pocket and then after a most amusing listen it had the misfortune to fall into a drain!

Most people were removed from the site but there were six arrests which resulted in four activists being charged, two with criminal damage and two with breach of the peace and obstructing the police. Some activists re-entered the factory



East Timorese flag raised outside British Aerospace factory at Warton.

complex after having been thrown out once, but most retired to the camp a stones throw from the front gate. The flag of East Timor was raised on a telegraph pole at the front of the entrance to the factory in solidarity with the people in East Timor and the cops reacted with their usual community policing tactics; sending two vans of tooled up riot cops, two mounted police, two police motorcyclists, a Special Branch photographer in plain clothes and a handful of assorted local cops.

There are actions at the base the whole time and to find out more about these contact: Campaign Against the Arms Trade on: 0171 281 0297.

A die-in was also held outside parliament on Thursday 27th June as the first delivery of Hawks have been sent off to Indonesia recently. Meanwhile the trial of the four women charged with smashing up a Hawk jet is set to start on July 22nd. Call: Seeds of Hope, on 0171 923 9511 for more details and/or if you would like to attend.

BOUGAINVILLE

Bougainville Island lies just to the north of Australia. Geographically and ethnically it is part of the Solomon Islands but it was made part of Papua New Guinea (PNG) during the colonial

carve-up in the early part of this century. In 1969 CRA (the Australian subsidiary of RTZ) established a copper mine in Central Bougainville against the traditional landowners will. Over 20 years, an entire river system was killed, indigenous workers were paid half that of the migrant workers and many hectares of rainforest destroyed. After 20 years of protests, petitions, lobbying and compensation claims, the locals had had enough. Power lines to the mine were destroyed with explosives taken from the mine and in response the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) was called in. Shortly afterwards, Bougainville was declared independent, and an army was formed to defend the land (Bougainville Revolutionary Army). The landowners vowed that RTZ would never reopen the mine.

In addition to the military response, the Australian Department of Defence advised PNG to enforce a total blockade of the island, preventing entry and exit rights, as well as essential goods and services, including medical supplies. Now the BRA and Bougainvilleans are still holding out against the PNGDF despite the deaths of over 10,000 civilians (about 8% of the population) as a result of the Australian backed blockade.

RTZ/CRA want their mine back and PNG is launching its biggest offensive in what has become the Pacific's longest running war. Enabling them to do this is \$32 million in military aid from Australia. Over 2000 PNGDF have been trained in Australia since the beginning of the crisis and Australia has also supplied 4 patrol boats, 5 speedboats, 4 Iroquois helicopters and Nomad aircraft to the PNGDF. All this equipment is being used to fight a people using sling shots, bows and arrows and home made guns who are growing all their own food and using coconut oil for fuel in their vehicles.

International Actions are desperately required to highlight Bougainville's plight. Papua New Guinea's Government, the Australian Government and RTZ offices are the obvious targets. There is to be an action called by the Bougainville Freedom Movement (UK) on Monday 15th July. Meet at 12 noon at the front of Charing Cross Station, London

A30 FAIRMILE

Notice to quit has now been served on all three camps along the route of the proposed D.B.F.O. road scheme. This is the first step towards legal eviction proceedings which are expected to follow shortly.

Further clearance work along the route has also been carried out, with a barn having been demolished recently only a few hundred metres from the Fairmile site. Unfortunately there were too few people to resist it. More people are desperately needed at Allercombe, Trollheim and Fairmile to help prepare for the evictions, occupy treehouses and help in the office. Contact A30 Action: 01404 815729 or 0385 278 156/7.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

It is planned that an Earth First! Roadshow will be arriving in Ireland in October. Workshops and actions are planned for all over the country and the trip is expected to last approximately a fortnight. If funding can be obtained then costs for participants will be minimal. Perhaps the most exciting possibility of the trip is the formation of an Earth First! football team to play fund-raising games whilst over there. The management are looking for players and activists for the trip. For more details call: 01273 330485.

Dead Trees Earth First! have published a number of pamphlets including: 'Away With All Cars' by Mr. Social Control, 'Stopping The Industrial Hydra—Revolution Against The Mega—Machine', 'The Bombing Story' by Judi Bari, and 'We All Live in Bhopal' by George Bradford. They are all excellent reads and can be obtained for £2 for all four including postage from: Dead Trees Earth First! Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2GY. In addition to this the 'Direct Action Video' is available from Dead Trees for £2.60 including postage. Blank postal orders are best. As well as this if you haven't got your copy of Do or Die number 5 yet, it's available from the same address for £1.70 including postage.

Peter Melchett, the director of Greenpeace UK, has replied to the open letter from South Downs Earth First! that we published in the May issue of the Action Update. If anybody is interested in reading his reply send a SAE to SDEF! for a copy of the letter. We apologise for not printing it but we have too many actions to report on this month.

Ted Kaczynski, the suspect that the FBI have arrested in connection with the Unabomber bombings across America, has entered a not guilty plea to the crimes he has been charged with. For more information on the Unabomber and Ted's case contact: Green Anarchist, BM 1715, London WC1N 3XX.

Offers of help are needed to create an Earth First! space at the Big Green Gathering in Wiltshire from July 24th–28th. So far five groups are involved and any more are welcome to bring information, provide workshops etc. A marquee is particularly needed. Contact: 01749 812665 and leave a message if you can help. The Big Green Gathering is also an opportunity to discuss the next Earth First! Gathering, regional networks and the next National Action.

There is a new campaign starting to fight the toxics industry and the life threatening chemicals that they produce. There will be an introduction to the issue as an insert of the Action Update soon, but in the meantime contact: 01273 330485 for more details.

FASLANE PEACE CAMP

On 12th June, fourteen years since Faslane Peace Camp was first set up, a Trident Warhead convoy was delivering its cargo to the Coulport Base. The convoy was stopped by activists for approximately forty minutes at Bellsmyre roundabout and nine people were arrested for various charges including obstruction. CND held a demonstration on the 15th June and about 1,000 people attended. The demo unfortunately included a few Labour Party banners, one of the very parties responsible for keeping this country a prime nuclear target.

Later on in the day twenty people were arrested as they blockaded the south gate of the Faslane Base. Strathclyde Police reacted brutally, using quickcuffs to inflict severe pain as a way of removing the blockaders. The convoy left the base on 17th June and was stopped at the Whistlefield roundabout at Coulport. Sixteen people were arrested here, with many held overnight, only to appear in court the next day to have all their charges dropped.

In addition to these actions we hear that the Fence Liberation Front have been busy with the high security fences at the base, and in 'their' words: "...all fences are legitimate targets – let's get them down!"

As a note to these actions, Faslane Peace Camp has now decided to close. It is one of the longest running Peace Camps in Britain and many activists from all over the world have been through it at one stage or another. It has been threatened with eviction and closure recently and this was borne in mind when past and present members of the Camp met and decided to close it down on 1st August. Public apathy towards Trident has been cited as the main reason for closure. Monthly actions will continue as well as the monitoring of the convoys and activities around the base. For more information call: 01436 820901 until 1st August then call Scottish CND to find out about further activities in the area. Respect to all those who have lived or visited there over the years and kept the spirit of resistance going for so long.

THE FOURTH BATTLE OF NEWBURY?

The private security company 'Pinkertons' have won the security contract for the construction phase of the Newbury contract. An advert in The Sun on 18th June says: 'urgent requirement: starting at up to £270 a week. Ex-forces and security professionals needed for a major construction project in the south-east'. Pinkertons, whose security in this country amounts to patrolling Asda superstores, are a US company whose boast is to have pursued and captured Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Known for their Union bashing activities they have head-hunted Haydon Price from Reliance Security to lead their operations on the Newbury contract. Why not go undercover with Pinkertons? Interview is by appointment only so phone: 0181 539 4448. At the interview you'll be expected to complete a detailed application form, so prepare your references and identity prior to interview. (Example application forms are available from the Third Battle Office).

The fax and junk mail blockade of Costain and the Highways Agency has been very successful with Roger Jackson, contract director of Costain apparently receiving over one hundred calls on one day alone! Mountains of books, china figurines, lingaphone courses, sex toys, etc. are inundating them! Join in by phoning the Third Battle Office for a Costain address.

Even more intriguing are the calling cards covering Birmingham phone boxes inviting Steve (of the Highways Agency) to dominate you! A

coalition of local residents and National environmental groups including FoE, Wildlife Trust, WWF, BBONT (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire Naturalist Trust) and the Third Battle of Newbury have been unsuccessful in seeking leave for judicial review on the decision to proceed with the construction at Newbury. The case, based on the irrationality of designating the Desmoulin Whorl snail habitat a Special Area of Conservation while also building a road through it, failed.

Meanwhile Costain, the company that has been awarded the Newbury Bypass construction contract, are in dire financial straits. Unable or unwilling to present their end of year results, trading in their shares has been suspended. They are expected to have made huge losses and could be bankrupt. They need to be hit hard and as frequently as possible all round the country. Costain are also advertising for construction workers in Newbury and are expected to start work in or around the third week of July. Fencing and construction of a compound, followed by the building of bridging structures over the rivers, canal and railways, are likely to be first things built.

If you'd like to be on the Third Battle of Newbury's national phone tree call: 01635 45544. For the latest update call the information line on: 01635 550552 or visit the refurbished Web site.

MCLIBEL TRIAL

The McLibel Trial reached its Second Birthday on 28th June this year. The court is currently hearing evidence on 'Publication', in which McDonald's are trying to prove their assertion that Dave and Helen published and distributed the 'What's Wrong With McDonald's?' factsheet. Four out of the seven private investigators employed by McDonald's to infiltrate London Greenpeace (October '89 to May '91) have recently given evidence, and have admitted distributing the factsheet which is the subject of the libel action. The Defendants have formally submitted that McDonald's thereby consented to its publication.

Another of the 'enquiry agents' who "felt very uncomfortable" infiltrating London Greenpeace and who "did not think there was anything wrong with what the group was doing" testified for the Defence.

It has also been admitted by Sid Nicholson (McDonald's UK vice-president) that the company received information on anti-McDonald's protesters from Special Branch and the Economic League (a shadowy organisation which kept 'blacklists' of political and trade union activists).

For more details contact the McLibel Support Campaign on: 0171 713 1269.

MOVE

Ramona Africa, from the radical ecological group MOVE in America, has succeeded in her case against the City of Philadelphia, to win compensation for the bombing of the MOVE commune in 1985 that killed thirteen people. She was awarded \$500,000 (about £320,000). Nine members of the group are still in prison in the US and there is an ongoing campaign to get them released.

There will also be a picket outside the American Embassy on August 8th between 12 noon and 3pm to mark the 8th Anniversary of the Siege on their commune, followed by street workshops from 7–9pm the same day, the venues of which are yet to be confirmed. For more details contact: Friends of Move, PO Box 3069, London SW9 8LU. Tel: 0171 272 5368.

How to Contact the Earth First! Action Update

By Post: Earth First! Action Update, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY. By Phone: 0171 561 9146 By E-Mail: actionupdate@gn.apc.org. Please enclose a SAE for replies, and to subscribe to the free e-mail server – send us your details.

Earth First! Website address: <http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/campaigns/earthfirst.html>

PENWITH EARTH FIRST!

The mining industries' welcome collapse 100 years ago, in West Cornwall, led to Europe's first post-industrial region and the landscape is a testimony to nature's ability to reclaim the scars left by industrial human interference. However, with tin mining giving way to tourism, this potential wilderness is under continual threat. In ever more desperate attempts to entice the holidaymaker and his car, developers are burying Penwith under concrete, plastic and tarmac. Chasing the tourist pound come the transnationals; McDonalds, Burger King, together with shopping complexes and supermarkets, all wishing to steal more land from the people.

As if all this wasn't enough, Penzance has recently been announced as the site for the proposed University of Cornwall. The campus is to be on a green field site and in its wake will come all manner of destructive planning proposals and renewed calls for road building. To add insult to injury, the university is to specialise in courses on mining and engineering. We can only try our hardest to make sure the next generation of Earth rapists graduate into a world where their degrees are obsolete and their disgusting skills shunned. As a reaction to these, and other iniquities, Penzance now has an Earth First! group. Actions are planned and activists who fancy a lungful of reasonably fresh air are welcome to come down and join the fun. Contact 01736 67715 for more details.

NABURN WOODS

Naburn Woods is a disused hospital site which was demolished several years ago and has been reclaimed by wild nature. Despite the fact it is a popular dog walking area and teeming with wildlife, planning permission has been given for a huge out of town shopping centre, designed to attract people from all over Yorkshire.

The campaign against the development has taken a variety of forms: many shops in York are now collecting boycott pledges, and recently the community expressed their ideas for the future of the area in a 'planning for real' exercise. Although work (by developers BAA McArthur Glen) will not start until February, a camp has been set up and support is really needed from visitors. Contact: 0831 586938.

WEYMOUTH RELIEF ROAD

A camp has been set up in an area known locally as Teddy Bear Woods, in Weymouth, Dorset. This camp is in a valley which, although it is in the middle of a Town, contains two SSSI's

both of which would be seriously affected by the building of the proposed dual carriageway, called the Weymouth Relief Road, (known locally as The Brown Route).

The road would have a serious impact on nationally important populations of breeding birds including the Ceetis Warbler, and would see the end of an area used by generations of Weymouth's kids. The valley also contains land fill sites, which the road scheme seems to be designed to cover up the effects of, without actually addressing the very serious issues involved i.e. the unregulated toxic dumping, the alleged council corrupt involvement and leaching of very dangerous chemicals from an unsafe site. This is a very ecologically sensitive area, so people who are themselves sensitive to this sort of issue, are needed. Contact c/o Fairmile on: 01404 815729.

M66 EVICTION

Daisy Nook and Audenshaw camps were evicted on June 5th by Under-Sheriff Andrew Wilson and his band of hired thugs. One protester was taken to hospital after Wilson's men tipped him out of a barrel, which just happened to be up in an Ash tree at the time, and so resulting in him falling thirty feet to the ground. The protester received neck injuries, which luckily were not serious, but the extent of his injuries were of no concern to Mr Wilson. However Wilson did agree to hold an investigation into the incident, details of the whitewash to follow soon.

The site at Daisy Nook was completely cleared of trees, bush and even grass within two days. Burns International security are patrolling the area while Kennedy construction company, Trafford Park, Manchester, continue to build drainage pipes which will eventually take fluid from the surface of the motorway and dump them it directly into the River Medlock. AMEC have started motorway construction at Audenshaw.

Local people involved in the campaign have been disappointed at organisations like Friends of the Earth and other groups that have concentrated all their efforts on Newbury and ignored more regional campaigns like this one. However a big thanks from them goes to Road Alert! and others who did their best to get the word out about the NO M66 campaign.

Meanwhile the locally based campaign continues. Work related to the motorway is causing local disused quarries to be reopened and parts of the Beal Valley and woodland in Hyde are to be landfilled. The motorway isn't due for completion until the year 2000 and the fight will go on until then—and beyond! Contact the NO M66 campaign on: 0161 627 4862 for more details.

E D I T O R I A L

Due to the sudden change in venues on the Sunday at the Gathering in Wales we did not have the chance to have the feedback session for all Earth First! publications that we had hoped to have on the Tuesday. Due to this workshop not happening we received no comments, constructive or otherwise, about the Action Update, so if you would like to comment on any aspect of it, since it moved to London in March this year, contact us directly.

For a while now there have been (Inter)National Earth First! Gatherings twice a year. After the recent one in Wales it was decided that it is too much work to put one of that scale on twice a year so instead it is likely that there will be Regional Gatherings in August/September time, and keep the large (Inter)National Gatherings to once a year in the summer. People should start organising now for the Regional Gatherings in your area as we really need to build up some of the local groups. Doing the phone around for this month's Action Update has led to some groups being taken off the contact sheet as they were either non-existent or had not done anything for a while and had no plans to do anything in the future. If your group has been taken off, while in actual fact you are intensively organising for the imminent ecological revolution, we apologise, let us know and we will put you back on the contact sheet next month.

Lastly we come to the subject of money, the lack of it that is, in the Action Update bank account. Every issue of the Action Update costs us around £350 to produce and we have just about exhausted all of the capital on this issue, so if you are reading this and are not a subscriber – subscribe, and if you are reading this and can afford a donation, please send it to the Action Update!

The Earth First! Action Update is free to prisoners. Please send in the name and address of anybody that might like to receive it and we will send out a free copy of every issue to them.

EVENTS

July

- 11 Opening of the 'Batheaston Bypass'. For details of action call Avon Gorge EF! on 01225 448556.
- 12 – 14 International Earth Nights.
- 13 Reclaim the Streets. Street Party '96: A Festival of Resistance! Meet 12 noon at Broadgate, Liverpool Street station, London. Contact: 0171 281 4621 for more details.
- 15 Bougainville Freedom Movement Action. Meet 12 noon at Charing Cross station, London.
- 24 – 28 Big Green Gathering, Wiltshire. Contact: 01747 870667.

August

- 8 MOVE Picket outside the US Embassy from 12 noon until 3pm on the 8th anniversary of the bombing. Followed by street workshops from 7–9pm. For location and/or more details contact: 0171 272 5368.
- 17 Bath, Reclaim The Streets Party. Contact Avon Gorge Earth First! on: 01225 448556.

September

- 2 Stop The Farnborough Arms Fair. Meet 9am at the end of Reading Road/ adjoining main Farnborough Road. Contact: Campaign Against The Arms Trade 0171 281 0927.
- 7 Anti-CJA Freedom March and Party, London. Contact: 0181 450 6929 for more info or to offer help.
- 29 Mobilise Against McDonalds Day. A day to expose the oppression, exploitation and ecological damage done by McDonalds. 10.30am–8pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. Free entrance. Contact: 0171 713 1269.

October

- 12 Day of solidarity with McDonalds workers. Picket your local store. For leaflets and information contact: 0171 713 1269.

November

- 5 Stop The COPEX Arms Fair. Meet 9am at Littleworth Common, Esher, Surrey. Contact: Campaign Against The Arms Trade: 0171 281 0297.

EARTH FIRST! GATHERING

The Earth First! Gathering in Wales was an amazing success, with over three hundred people coming for all or part of the week. The feelings of solidarity that even the hardest cynics felt made the gathering worth doing for that reason alone, not to mention the skills that were passed on, discussions had and future directions and activities considered and planned.

An important part of the Gathering's success was the number of new people who turned up and became involved, which hopefully is a sign that we will break out of the 'alternative' ghetto. There were people and groups present from various European countries including Germany, Holland and the Czech Republic, as well as activists from Australia and the USA.

The weather was good all week and the site and surrounding countryside were beautiful, providing a much needed energy recharge for many people. It is hoped that the minutes from the discussion groups and workshops will be collated together at some point in the near future, for people to have access to and read, but in the mean time if you would like to know anything specific that happened at the Gathering leave a message on: 01749 812665 making it clear it is an enquiry about the Gathering or contact: 0171 561 9146. Finally, much respect to the people that got the Gathering together.

INTERNATIONAL EARTH NIGHTS

The Earth Liberation Front (ELF) has called for International Nights of Action from 12 - 14th July purely directed towards the liberation of other species of the earth, who are being regarded as non-species by the way that they are treated, either through torture or their habitats and numbers being decimated.

They call on all Animal Liberation Groups in every country to come together on these nights and to target those who are perpetuating this carnage and suffering. No matter what the target, be it vivisection labs, fur farms, hunting firms, whaling nations, live exports, etc. the ELF are calling for all people to come together and get the job done. They say that only by hitting all at once can we really send the message home that it is time for all the cages to be open, and respect for those who have no voice. As always the ELF calls for no injury to life, just to profit.

LYMINGE FOREST

At Lyminge Forest in Kent the RANK organisation are pushing ahead with their plans to build a holiday village with construction due to start in October. This large development will be

built on over one thousand acres of 'officially' protected forest, wood and farmland which is part of the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This packaging of wild nature into a leisure commodity will devastate the countryside, and introduce thousands of cars into the area every day, with the usual accompanying development of roads and pollution, into the area. South East England will also lose one of its few remaining refuges for an unusually rich diversity of wildlife, some of which is quite rare, while RANK'S 4,000 daily visitors will be free to further destroy the forest's ecology - if we let them.

The Flat Oak Society is calling on people to come to Kent and help protect the forest. Direct Action is likely to start around the 1st August and people are needed to help set up a camp and defend it from the developers. For more information contact The Flat Oak Society on: 01227 463368.

LEICESTER STREET PARTY

Leicester streets were reclaimed on Sunday 9th June. People met up in Victoria Park and were led to the scene of the crime, where four tripods had been erected (in only three minutes) blocking the main A6 London Road into the city centre. A sound system was set up, children's paddling pool filled, comfy chairs, banners, balloons, flapjacks, fire jugglers, water fights and loads more things appeared. Three hundred people joined in, dancing in the heat of the midday sun.

The party continued for three hours until police moved in and forcefully rounded up the crowd and pushed them back towards the park. Six people were arrested and charged with obstruction of the highway. Abuse was shouted at the police as they became forceful.

The day was a huge success, with everyone enjoying themselves and for many it was an introduction to the anti-car resistance. Local press covered the issue, making it headline news, with the local paper describing the party as a 'radical family affair' and bringing the issues to a wider audience.

The scene is now set for Leicester Reclaim The Streets II which will be even bigger and better - watch this space for more details or even better get involved in helping with the next one by calling LEAF on: 0116 255 3223.

YOUNG LIONS EARTH FIRST!

Young Lions Earth First! in South Africa had a roadshow which travelled all the way through the country as well as going on to visit five neighbouring countries.

With an old Kombi and a pick up truck twelve of them set out with barely enough money for,

petrol and with a small PA, an Earth First! flag and about 1,500 pamphlets (which they had taken from the internet and translated into Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho) explaining what Earth First! is about. They drove to townships and played music and displayed the flag to draw attention to themselves, and soon they had a lot of young people at the kombi enjoying the music and dancing. They then talked to them about their immediate environment - shacks, garbage, water pollution and trees cut down for firewood. Ignore all the stories about crime, rape and pillage that the papers are stuffed with, they said that people were friendly and wherever they went they were offered food and a place to stay as well as money to help fund the rest of the trip!

In Egoli (white South Africans call the city Johannesburg, they call it Egoli which means 'the place where gold is found') they split up, with one group travelling up to Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and the other to Botswana. They had to keep a pretty low profile in all the three other countries that they visited, for political reasons, but still managed to speak to many people. Contact Young Lions EF! PO Box 27491, Greenacres, 6057 South Africa. E-Mail - 101356.2535@compuserve.com.

PORLY YNYS (PEOPLE OF THE ISLAND)

The fight against Celtic Energy's destruction of the Welsh valleys continues, with work on all sites steadily progressing. Work at Selar Farm is about to commence with the removal of the old slag heap from the last opencast mine. This heap sits above the translocated watermeadows moved from the Selar site by Celtic Energy. These watermeadows are likely to be destroyed by the 'heaps' move and radical gardeners are urgently needed to replant this slag heap, as well as other 'reclaimed' land. The idea for the Selar site is to turn it into the largest art gallery in Europe. They are calling all artists, of any sort, who would like to do installations concerning ecological issues, to come down and help decorate the site.

Nanthelen has only two inhabitants now, so please come up and join them. They live next to two working sites and planning permission for an extension plan is due on the 19th July. Planning permission is also expected for the Tir Dafydd site in Ammanford in the near future. This is a brilliant site, but nobody is living there at the moment, so if you are able to, come down and start a camp.

There is also a safe site in Llannelli in the heart of Celtic Energy's ground. The site is owned by a friend and is old Forestry Commission Land and needs re-planting. The address is Bregllwyd Quarry, Court Wood, Pembray, Wales. For more information contact: 0468 32829 or 01792 475882.

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Please send me the next twelve copies of the EF! Action Update, here is my minimum contribution of £5 (£6 for International). Don't send cash, make cheques payable to Earth First! Donations above £5, for those who can afford it, enable us to reply to enquiries and give free subscriptions to prisoners, libraries, grassroots and community groups etc. Please send more if you can. Fake names are better for security, and also postal orders are more secure than cheques.

NAME: _____

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Return to: EF! AU Subscriptions, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY



GENETIC ENCLOSURE: THE ULTIMATE COMMODIFICATION OF LIFE

“Biotechnology is not neutral. It shares the propensity of modern materialistic science to desacrilize, dominate and manipulate life. It reduces all living things to a mechanism which it can manipulate according to engineering standards”– Nicanor Perias, Centre for Alternative Development Initiatives, Philippines. Third World Resurgence, Issue 38. Third World Network. Penang, Malaysia 1993.

WHAT IS GENETIC ENGINEERING?

Genetic engineering (also known as transgenics) is the process of isolating and transferring a DNA sequence (gene) from an organism, manipulating it in the laboratory and then reinjecting it into another, resulting in a modified organism. Up until recently the process of creation of a modified organism has been by selective breeding. This is the painstaking interbreeding of organisms in order to isolate a pre-selected trait to produce a new product by out breeding unwelcome traits. This can take about five years to get the desired result whereas genetic engineering through transgenics can be done more or less overnight in a test tube.

THE SUPPOSED BENEFITS OF GENETIC ENGINEERING

1) Solving of The World Food Crisis.

The argument used to justify this is that by the use of transgenics, crops can be made more resistant to factors such as disease and pests, enabling them to grow in a far wider range of environments than before.

The justification used illustrates a complete lack of understanding of all the geo-political influences on causes of world hunger, and distracts attention from the fact that the current world food crisis is caused by unequal distribution of available resources and the forced production of cash crops. Transnationals deliberately engender hunger in developing countries to force their dependence. For example: genetically engineered vanilla extract will undercut the livelihood of 100,000 ‘Third World’ farming families in Madagascar and SE. Asia.(1) Besides these arguments transgenics has no more acclaimed advantages over selective breeding as even though a new formulation of plant can be made overnight, only a handful of seeds are produced. To transform commercial farming 400,000 tonnes of seed are needed and it could take up to 7 to 10 years to produce these, which will be no quicker than traditional forms of selective breeding.(GREENLINE 1991)

2) The benefits to human health.

The obvious benefits that are often used are the increased availability of transplant organs and ridding people of inherited diseases. The transplanting of animal organs into humans (xenotransplantation) is hailed as a huge leap forward in medical science which is set to transform the way illnesses are dealt with. In a recent Panorama program (24th June 1996) it was stated that ‘40 to 50 people a day need transplants’ and as there is a shortage of human organs suitable for transplantation, it is a stated benefit of transgenics that animals will soon be able to provide some of these, thus saving lives. However these supposed gains are grossly overestimated when you take into account the possible negative consequences. For example take the case of the HIV virus that can lead to AIDS. Baboon blood is HIV resistant, and it is possible that a blood transfusion from baboons into humans could help with the treatment of people with the HIV virus. Problems arise when we consider the fact that it could also be transferring other animal diseases. Not only would animal diseases be difficult to detect, as incubation periods of disease can be as much as ten years, but viruses that they carry, could prove fatal in humans or contribute to the evolving of new strains, or even totally new diseases. The risk of this happening is articulated by Joshua Lederberg of The Rockefeller University (USA) when he says: “There are so many of them [viruses] and they are so variable in their manifestations, we don’t know where they came from and even our classification of viruses is basically quite flimsy”. In addition to this in the event that there is a mass transference of viruses across species it is not possible to develop a vaccine that will be of any use as ‘the minimum in which a vaccine could be developed and distributed today is six to nine months, and that is just not fast enough.’(2) An example of this is the introduction of the growth hormone rBGH into cows which results in increased levels of a virologically active growth factor in the milk which may affect the human immune system causing allergic reactions.(3) In judging the possible effects that this could have on a wider scale it is the public as a whole that will be the final experiment.. In addition to this all animal to human transplants have so far failed, as recipients eventually develop an anti-body against the foreign blood or organ that was artificially introduced.

THE ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF GENETIC ENGINEERING

Genetic engineering will radically change our environment, but unlike earlier technological revolutions such as the nuclear age the associated polluting risks will be even more difficult to contain. Genetic wastes multiply, migrate and mutate and once released, it will be impossible to recall. It will have effects on pest and herbicide resistance, biodiversity, toxicity and climate, two of which we will look at here, as well as looking at possible effects of gene patenting.

PEST AND HERBICIDE RESISTANCE

This process would involve inserting genetic material into crop plants, which induce the plant to produce substances that are toxic or distasteful to pests, which will enable the crop to be grown without the use of insecticides. The problem that has been overlooked is that this genetic material will eventually escape via cross-pollination to wild relatives of the original crop strain. Those plants that have the artificially introduced immunity would then be favoured by natural selection and thus the genetic material would spread through the wider population, and have the effect of depriving insects of a food source and

inevitably disrupting links in the food chain which will have unknown results.(See BBC Wildlife Nov.1991) Parallel with this is the development of crops that are tolerant to higher doses of herbicides being used to counter the effects of increasingly resistant ‘undesirable’ plants. This continuous growth in the use of herbicides to control ‘undesirable’ plants will be to the detriment of the ecology of the area. In addition to this fact it will be the herbicide companies who supply the resistant crops and then the herbicides to deal with the resultant effects opening up another sphere of economy from which to profit.(4)

LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY

When genetically engineered plants and animals are released into the environment no attention has been given as to what effect this may have ecologically. In the event that a genetically engineered organism replaces or wipes out a species the effects could be devastating, as ecological niches inhabited by a species forms a function in the wider environment and if the species is removed from the ecosystem this function can no longer take place. We have already seen some of the effects of introducing new species that are non-native, they “take over ecological niches, such as gypsy moth, and rabbits in Australia “(5), which has lead gross overpopulation of the species at the expense of the other plants and animals in the surrounding environment.

THE EFFECTS OF PATENTING GENES

Patenting will have the effect of not only undermining biological diversity, but also of commodifying the life on the planet, and handing over control to a handful of transnationals. By only slightly modifying an organism to meet the legal requirements for a patent they can claim that organism as their own property. It is possible that a gene taken from a plant variety evolved by generations of farmers through selective breeding, is then inserted into another seed, and as if by magic the seed with the good gene now belongs to a company. An example of this is the seed industry whereby it is illegal to buy seeds that are not patented and you have to purchase genetically engineered seeds from the Common Catalog. “In Europe three quarters of the traditional vegetable seeds are at risk of extinction because of the hybrid monopoly”(6) It is not difficult to see that the world’s food supply will become even more monopolised and controlled by only a handful of companies. Competition to be one of the handful of transnationals that will have this power is fierce and with stakes this high no company is going to allow any dissent to get in the way. A recent Organization for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) document stated; “could opposition of the public or minority groups working through parliamentary and other procedures, spill over into the legislative and legal process and prevent the required modifications of patent law regarding biotechnology?” (7). Considering the changes which have already taken place and those which have been initiated, this possibility seems much less likely than in the safety and regulation context, although the opposition could cause further delay particularly in Europe.” Looking at the legal situation it appears that the US and Japan have the most lax laws, with them going so far as to pass a law in the 1980’s that legitimised patents for, “anything under the sun that is made by man”.(8) Britain was going to follow the Japanese example but came up with strong opposition from European Law which, after heavy campaigning by theological and philosophical groups, introduced a law in March 1995 which rejects patenting of plant and animal genes.

CONCLUSION

When we consider the effects transgenics may have there are some fundamental points to bear in mind, such as the fact that 80% of organisms in a soil sample of a typical garden are unknown to science. Besides not knowing our environment well enough to be able to calculate the risks, there will also be the element of risk through uncertainty and surprise. The debate that surrounds genetic engineering is increasingly entering the public consciousness and it must be questioned and fought against at every opportunity. It has the potential of being an issue that unites a large number of groups including ecologists, animal rights groups and civil liberties groups, and as such, may be the most powerful voice of rebellion that we can muster against the war between ourselves and those that are destroying life itself.

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WHAT IS EARTH FIRST!?

Earth First! is not so much a cohesive group or a campaign as a convenient banner for people who share similar philosophies to work under. The general principles behind the name are non-hierarchical organisation and direct action to confront, stop, and eventually reverse the forces that are destroying this planet and it's inhabitants and we believe in using all the tactics available to enable us to do this. The contacts are autonomous groups that consider themselves to share the above principles. International contacts are entry points into that country's own network of groups. Other contacts are ones whose aims and principles are ones that we agree with fully or in part, or groups that we think may be of use or interest to people. New additions or alterations are shown in **bold**.