

Earth First! Action Update

No.30 AUGUST 96

30p

'Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.'

REPAIR THE STREETS - THE TAKING OF THE M41

We are not going to demand anything. We are not going to ask for anything. We are going to take. We are going to occupy.

Billed as a "Festival Of Resistance" and "the only 'party' worth having", London Reclaim The Streets third street party lived up to its promises. At its height upwards of eight thousand people occupied the M41 near Shepherd's Bush transforming the country's smallest motorway into the "biggest, freest, most spectacular street party yet!"

Thousands of partygoers had gathered at Broadgate near Liverpool Street only minutes past the 12 noon meeting time on Saturday 13th July. Leaflets were distributed asking people to "follow those with pink armbands" and to "expect the unexpected". At 12.30pm word spread that it was time to go and a three hundred strong Critical Mass set off, while the main group, aided by undercover organisers, moved underground to the westbound Central Line. Fourteen stops and six packed tube trains later the crowd emerged at Shepherd's Bush, where the police, until this point content with surveillance, blocked off the entrance to the M41 roundabout. Some people, unsure if this was the actual site, began partying here.

At the opposite end of the motorway the blockade crew, aware that people had arrived, decided to go for it. Outmanoeuvring police spotters they made it onto the road. Two cars were theatrically crashed to block the road and three tripods were erected across the southbound carriageway. At the foot of the convoy two sound system vehicles drove on, chased by dozens of police on foot. In what was possibly the scariest moment of the day, the vehicles were surrounded on an empty motorway. The drivers were pulled out and arrested by smug police officers, certain that they had stopped the party.

But the police had under-estimated the creativity of the crowd. Hearing that the road had been taken people began finding alternative ways onto it. Like a river breaking through a dam, the trickle grew into a flood. One large group walked far around the police line, coming up from behind and simply running past it onto the street! Others found ways through back streets and climbed onto the road further up.

At the blockade, those not already arrested had clambered onto the sound system trucks and witnessed the amazing sight of thousands of people running up the motorway towards them. Police faces dropped quickly and as the crowd neared they began backing off. The arm-twisted, quick-cuffed arrestees, on a nod from a sergeant were swiftly de-arrested (de-arrest of the year perhaps?)



and the vehicles were soon swarmed with partygoers. The sides of the lorries were opened and the sound systems kicked off. The people roared. The party was on!

DIG FOR VICTORY!

Climbers hung enormous banners the breadth of the motorway. A huge sun, colourful murals; while others proclaimed 'Destroy Power!' 'Support the Tubeworker's and 'The society that abolishes adventure, makes its own abolition the only adventure'.

A struggle ensued when police tried to stop other decorations and equipment being brought in from a nearby estate. One van containing the p.a. rig for live bands was impounded, but once again, faced with an active crowd, the authority of the police dissolved. They retreated

and in came carpets, armchairs - a complete living room! A tonne of sand was laid on the tarmac and stalls set up on the hard shoulder. Three thirty foot 'pantomime dames' glided through the party throwing confetti. Food stalls gave away free stew and sandwiches; graffiti artists added colour to the tarmac; poets ranted from the railings; acoustic bands played and strolling players performed.

The tripod sitters, isolated by a police line from the party, negotiated their inclusion and joined the mass of people. The police retreated to the ends of the road settling for re-directing traffic and arguing amongst themselves.

Beneath the giant skirt of one panto dame de-constructionists set to work. Using a pneumatic drill in time to the techno music, the tarmac of the road was repetitively attacked, until large craters littered the fast lane (Enthusiasts were later seen comparing 'chunks' of motorway!). The lunar landscape was then 'naturalised' by the planting of sapling trees rescued from the path of the M11 link road.

As the sun set on an extraordinary day fires were lit on the road, litter was collected and the banners removed. The sound systems announced another free party elsewhere in London, then at 11pm the music went off, and the trucks drove off to the cheers of a grateful crowd.

For nearly ten hours the M41 vibrated, not to the repetitive roar of the car system, but to a human uprising; the living sound of a festival, and as one activist put it to a disgruntled copper, "Think yourself lucky, we could have gone anywhere: Buckingham Palace, Downing Street, thousands of people climbing up Parliament."

And, as another said, "Today we are only practising. Tomorrow... anything is possible!". Contact London Reclaim the Streets: 0171 281 4621.

On the morning of Friday 2nd August, the Reclaim the Streets office and one persons private home were raided by police, who seized computers as well as various personal effects. At the moment it seems as though at least one person is to be charged with conspiracy to cause criminal damage to the M41. Despite this Reclaim The Streets are still active and as we go to press there are actions planned in support of the London Underground tube strikers. Get in touch with RTS on 0171 281 4621 if you would like more details, know anybody with video footage of the Street Party or are able to donate a computer.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

After the success of the Direct Action Conference in Brighton last year there will be another one this year on 23rd November, again to take place in Brighton. It will include a wide variety of talks, workshops and discussions that will not just be the stereotypical 'alternative' or 'green' ones. Anyone wanting more details or with anything to offer in the way of help contact: 01273 685913.

A new campaign has started up called ReMeDial(Revolutionary Money Defacement League). Its stated aim is the overthrow of the techno-industrial capitalist system, but in the meantime the group intends to scrawl messages of resistance on all bank notes in circulation.

As mentioned in a recent Action Update there is to be a US Earth First! Roadshow coming over next summer to tour around talking about various subjects including forest issues, industrial culture, and wilderness defence. They want people who will help to organise venues for the roadshow to visit. Anybody who thinks that they will be able to do this get in touch with the Action Update so that a list can be collated of people who can help.

Nike has just had a television commercial made for hiking shoes that was filmed in Kenya with Samburu tribespeople. In the advert the camera closes in on one tribesman who speaks in his native language and as he speaks the slogan 'Just Do It' appears on screen. Except Lee Cornk, an anthropologist at the University of Cincinnati, says the tribesman is really saying, "I don't want these." Nike's Elizabeth Dolan says, "We thought nobody in America would know what he was saying."

On the 12th March 1996 Simon Sunderland was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment for graffiti on mostly derelict and now demolished sites in Sheffield. His plans to go to art college have been destroyed and his future employment prospects greatly diminished. Simon's art did nobody any harm and brightened up grim spots of the city, is that worth sending him to prison for? For more information about the campaign to free Simon contact: Free Simon Sunderland Campaign, 18 Wentworth Road, London SE5 8HW. Also please write to him in prison at: Simon Sunderland RR1591, HMP Everthorpe, E Wing, Brough, North Humberside, HU15 1RA.

The minutes of the workshop on 'The New Age and Conspiracy Theories' that took place at the Earth First! Gathering in Wales in June are available from: Open Eye, BM Open Eye, London, WC1N 3XX. Enclose an SAE and a donation to cover photocopying costs.

FASLANE PEACE CAMP LIVES!

Earlier this year the residents of Faslane Peace Camp decided to hold a meeting of all interested parties to decide the future of the camp. The meeting on May 25th was attended by about one hundred people and the outcome was that the camp should cease in its present form, with the twelve permanent caravans dismantled and a peace garden to be created. By the second week in July this plan was well underway with six of the caravans demolished.

On 23rd July the decision was revoked by four supporters of the camp, the reasons given for this change in plan were, the attendance of nearly one thousand people for the Trash Trident demonstration on 15th June and the infiltration of HMS Sceptre by two camp residents on 22nd July.

The action involved two women walking through the perimeter fence of the coastal base before swimming in wetsuits 300 yards across a spotlit stretch of water within the Clyde base and boarding the nuclear submarine. They spent at least ten minutes on board touring the top secret control room before being arrested on board. The later action received widespread media coverage and as a result the support for the camp has increased dramatically.

At present 6 caravans remain and numbers of residents have increased from four to eight, despite the fact that the threat of eviction by Argyll and Bute council remains. The camp will now be a Peace Garden with monthly gatherings and action, with a permanent camp for residents. The camp will continue to maintain its resistance to all forms of nuclear madness in this world, and as such, will be a source of inspiration to many. Long may it continue! Contact: 01436 820901.

DISARMING WOMEN

After 57 disarmaments, £4.5 million of damage and a collective total of 156 years spent in prison, the Ploughshares Movement finally clocked up it's first acquittal.

Amid extraordinary scenes of jubilation, Lotta Kronlid, Andrea Needham, Joe Wilson and Angie Zelta were last week cleared of causing £1.5 million of damage to an Indonesian-bound Hawk fighter, on a Ploughshares action named 'Seeds of Hope'. Despite disallowing hearsay evidence, Judge "Wicked" Wickham recognised the womens' defence, and permitted a video containing shocking footage of the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre to be shown to the jury. Defence witnesses included Jose Ramos Horta, East Timor's exiled Foreign Minister, Carmel Budiardjo, who had spent three years in an Indonesian jail, and John Pilger, who had entered East Timor in 1993 to secretly film the documentary "Death of a Nation". After four hours of deliberation, the judge accepted a 10-2 majority on the three counts of criminal damage and four of conspiracy. "When the foreman stood up I was thinking: well, I've prepared myself for several years in jail and here it comes," recalls Andrea Needham, who, like Lotta and Angie, defended herself. "When he said "not guilty" there was this huge gasp around the courtroom. We didn't dare breathe until he'd read out each of the seven verdicts, and then the whole courtroom erupted."

Outside the court, the women were instantly served with injunction notices, which were immediately torn up by supporters. "We were overwhelmed by the courage of the jury in accepting what had been said," says Joe Wilson. "That verdict was an indictment of British Government policy and British Aerospace's actions in selling weapons to Indonesia. It was a

day for justice, and a day for East Timor." Also undoubtedly a day that will have made the whole 'arms industry' very nervous. As one of the women said "Outside, people were saying that we couldn't go around smashing up other people's property. But people in prison don't have hang ups about that. They accepted that if planes are going to kill people, then you stop them."

The women now intend to bring out a private prosecution against BAe for contravening The Genocide Act.

To contact Seeds of Hope call 0171 923 9511. To get involved in upcoming actions against the arms trade contact CAAT on 0171 281 0297 or Stop the Hawks on 0161 834 0295.

A30 UPDATE

The contract has now been awarded for the A30 road near Exeter. The group that has won it is the CONNECT consortium, who consist of: W.S. Atkins (consulting engineers), Bank of America (Finance), BICC (Balfour Beatty) subsidiary BBTA, Philip Holzmann AG (owners of Tilbury Douglas), Halcrow Fox (traffic advisors) and Linklaters & Paines (legal advisors).

About forty people recently went to visit W.S. Atkins in their King's Wharf, Exeter quayside offices.

Work has not started yet but is expected to very soon. In readiness for the long eviction all three sites are being barricaded with treehouses, scaffolding towers, pill boxes, underground bunkers and tunnels and more lock-ons than you can shake a side-handled baton at.

As ever more people are needed to help with the preparations. They also really need someone with a vehicle to help move stuff around, scaffolding, nails, wheelbarrow, vegan food, enthusiasm, more garden gnomes (cos the Trolls have beheaded all ours), as well as the usual wish list of things. Much thanks to the dozen or so people from the Czech Republic who came over and helped out loads and really got stuck into it. Thanks also to Exeter FoE, it is just a shame we can't say the same about National Friends of the Earth. For more details contact A30 Action on: 01404 815729 or 0385 278156/7.

BATHEASTON BYPASS OPENING DISRUPTED

Around sixty people disrupted the opening of the Batheaston Bypass through Solsbury Hill on 11th July. Banners were hung from bridges along the route from 7am, including a twenty five foot banner reading 'DESTRUCTION'. The roads minister John Watts was due to open the road at 9.30am, but his executive coach was blocked as it travelled down the new dual carriageway (three arrests for aggravated trespass). He made his speech an hour late, and then cut the ribbon, accompanied by the usual shouting and heckling from the protesters who had been cordoned off by police horses. The road was blocked for nearly two hours until most people had been arrested for obstruction of the highway. There were about twenty three arrests altogether. The few that were remaining caused traffic jams by employing helpful pelican crossings, infuriating the police who couldn't find a reason to arrest them.

Since the opening there have been traffic jams on the old and new roads nearly every day (not caused by protests), and the villagers of Batheaston are complaining of speeding traffic.

There will be a Reclaim The Streets in Bath on Saturday 17th August. For more details contact Avon Gorge Earth First! on: 01225 448556 or 01225 314040.

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>

RECLAIM THE VALLEYS II

As Celtic Energy continues to destroy the South Wales Valleys, the direct action campaign to stop opencast quarrying goes on.

The present sites are being sustained throughout the summer and despite Celtic Energy's incompetent efforts the campaign continues to evolve. Whilst holding the sites is important it must be remembered that taking the fight directly to the enemy offers the most effective results. Celtic Energy are in trouble.

Helped by the success of the campaign, opencast mining is back on the public agenda in South Wales. Coupled with increasing public awareness of Wales' ecological crisis, their operations are meeting more resistance than ever before. The pressure being put on them is working and they may stop the Nant Helen quarry extension. To help this happen there will be an intensive three days of action starting on Wednesday 28th August. To increase its effectiveness it would be best if people arrived before the Wednesday start. Resources are scarce so it would be best if people brought what they could, especially vehicles, tents and communications equipment.

For more details contact: 01792 475 882 the week before the actions or the usual no 0385 711364.

WHATLEY TO EXPAND

Back in December '95 Whatley Quarry was the scene of one of the Earth First! movements biggest actions. One of the aims of that action was to highlight the owners AMEY Roadstone Corporation's plan to expand the quarry by a further eighty-five acres. Last month the Somerset County Council gave permission for that expansion. Local opposition to the expansion is considerable and direct action is now considered to be the only option left.

Trashing of mature trees and hedgerows could start at any time. Local campaign group Mendip Hills not Holes, are organised for building local support but need help from experienced activists for squatting, treehouses and offensive actions. Ring their information line: 01749 880144 if you are interested.

VAL D'ASPE

A Euroroute is being built through this ecologically sensitive area in southern France. The valley is home to the last nine Brown Bears in Europe, and a baby bear has been born recently as well. The campaign base 'La Goutte d'Eau' is threatened with eviction this summer and activists from all over the world are invited to come on holiday in the French Pyrenees. For more details contact: 01603 502796 (UK) or +31 20 665 0166 (Europe).

WANDSWORTH ECO-VILLAGE

On 2nd August Wandsworth Eco-Village entered the High Courts of (in)Justice. A small permaculture garden was installed just by the entrance steps by the posse of twenty-five who arrived wearing bands of leaves with their dresses! The 'Master' appeared to have made his mind up ahead of their arrival and the villagers arguments were ignored. Costs were awarded against them in an arbitrary fashion. An appeal is under consideration.

They returned home to Wandsworth only to

discover that five of the six trees along the roadside had been chopped down on behalf of the Highways Department for a road widening scheme. How convenient that they chose a morning when all but a couple of the residents from 'Pure Genius' were otherwise occupied defending their homes, in court. Fortunately the two who had stayed behind were able to climb the last tree and defend it. The tree is now being protected by a constant vigil.

The village has been alive and kicking for three months now and is still going from strength to strength. As well as the new houses and the now well established permaculture gardens, it is a much needed green space for the local community (both human and non-human). The villagers are putting a call out for positive people to join with them for gardening, building and non-violent actions.

Over the weekend of 7th/8th September there is to be a reunion for everyone who was around on the first days and anyone who has been there since. All welcome to help with preparations for Autumn and Winter. They are there to stay! For more details contact: 01865 722016.

NO M66

Actions against the construction of the M66 near Manchester continue, with a small group of people who regularly go digger diving and crane sitting.

The actions are beginning to aggravate AMEC/MacAlpine, who say they are seeking injunctions against some of the group doing them. The Highways Agency started a propaganda campaign on July 30th/31st at a local school, seeking to 'explain' to residents what the M66 construction meant to them. People arrived and picketed the session and at one point noisily occupied the 'exhibition' singing songs, chanting slogans and banging on tables.

Help is urgently required to battle this motorway. For more details phone: 0161 628 4727 or e-mail 106014.55@compuserve.com.

ANTI JSA ACTIONS

The Job Seekers Allowance, yet another attack on minorities is due to come in operation this October and will cut thousands of people off benefits and make signing on for those that still qualify far harder.

The Manchester Anti-Job Seekers Allowance Group have been holding regular pickets outside Cheetham Hill Job Centre, one of the pilot offices for the JSA. Pickets have been attended by between twenty and thirty people and in addition to this the office has been occupied on several occasions. As part of Groundswell's 'Three Strikes and You're Out' initiative, around fifteen Anti-JSA activists picketed the Regional Employment office in Salford Quays on 30th July. They took security by surprise and staged a demonstration in the reception area of the JSA Implementation Office. For more information write to Dept 99, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

For the address of your local anti-JSA group phone Brighton Claimants Action Group on: 01273 671213. There is also an anti-JSA march in Cardiff planned for Saturday 5th October, meeting at City Hall 12.30pm.

With the JSA coming in soon we thought people may be interested in this job that was recently advertised in The Glasgow Herald newspaper: A Business Development Manager for Reliance Security. Annual pay is £25,000 (not including perks) and you get a company car. Send all your applications to: Mr Peter Honnan (General Manager), Reliance Security Services Ltd. (Scotland), Rankine House, Port Dundas Business Park, 100 Borron Street, Glasgow, G4 9XG.

EVENTS

August

- 10 Prisoner Justice Day. March from Holloway Prison to Pentonville Prison, London. Meet 3pm outside Holloway Prison, Parkhurst Road, London N7. For more details contact: London Anarchist Black Cross, 121 Raiton Road, London, SE24.
- 12 Actions against the start of the Grouse shooting season. Contact Hunts Saboteurs Association on: 01273 622827.
Action outside The Ritz Hotel, London, 11.30am., against Hotels and restaurants competing to serve up freshly killed grouse. For more details call: 01902 711935.
- 17 Birmingham Reclaim the Streets. Meet at noon at Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston between the bandstand and the lake. Take the No. 1 Bus from Corporation Street in the city centre. Contact Birmingham RTS on: 0121 449 5452.
Bath Reclaim the Streets. Contact Avon Gorge Earth First! on: 01225 448556.
- 24 Brighton Reclaim The Streets. Meet 1pm Churchill Square, Brighton. For more details contact: 01273 685913.
Celebration of Anarchy Day in Glasgow with workshops etc. Contact: 0141 226 5066.
- 25-30 Newbury Flim Flam Festival - Week of events and actions. For more info call Third Battle on: 01635 45544.
- 28 Anti-Shell protest outside the Shell building at Waterloo, London from 1-3pm. For more info call: 0181 533 4533
- 28-31 Reclaim the Valleys II - The Sequel. Anti open-cast actions in Wales. For more info call: 01792 475 882 the week before the action.
- 31 Close Campsfield Refugee Detention Centre. Meet 12 noon at the camp gates. Contact: 01865 724452.

September

- 3 Stop The Arms Fair! Action Against the Royal Navy and Army equipment exhibition in Aldershot, Hampshire. Meet 12 noon at The Municipal Gardens for an invasion of the event at 2pm. For more details contact Campaign Against the Arms Trade on: 0171 281 0297.
- 7-8 Wandsworth Eco-Village reunion. Call The Land is Ours on: 01865 722016.
- 14 Cambridge Reclaim The Streets. Meet 1pm at Cambridge train station.
- 28 Stop The Clampdown! Reclaim The Future! Massive demonstration/protest/party in central London. For more details contact Freedom Network on: 0171 582 3474 or the Advance Party on: 0181 450 6929.
- 29 McLibel Gathering: Mobilise Against Big Mac. 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

- 5 Cardiff Anti-JSA March. Meet 12.30 pm at City Hall, Cardiff.
- 12 Day of solidarity with McDonalds workers. Picket your local store. For leaflets and information contact: 0171 713 1269.
- 16 Annual Worldwide Day of Action against McDonalds. Contact: 0171 713 1269.
- 19 Anarchist Bookfair at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. Stalls, talks, food, workshops. For more details contact: 0171 242 8032.
- 24 National Day of Mahogany Actions. Call: 01603 666879 for more information.

November

- 5 Stop The COPEX Arms Fair. Meet 9am Littleworth Common, Esher, Surrey. Contact: 0171 281 0297.
- 23 Direct Action Conference in Brighton. Talks, workshops, discussions, stalls, etc.. At a location to be announced nearer the time. Followed the next day by a party to celebrate the 100th issue of the Schnews. Contact Justice? on: 01273 685913.
- 30 International No Shop Day. Do your bit to overthrow capitalism by doing nothing - well buying nothing anyway!

The Action Update is now out of money so please send a donation otherwise there will be no issue next month.

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.

GREEN ANARCHISTS IN COURT... AGAIN!

Alleged editors of the UK's only primitivist paper, Green Anarchist, are appearing from 2pm Thursday 8th August at Portsmouth Magistrates court for their committal hearing. They are charged with incitement to cause criminal damage by publication and if found guilty will almost certainly be sent to jail.

This police raid of radical greens is the thin end of the wedge. The state does not draw lines between particular groups or types of actions, they want to criminalise direct action across the board. To do this the conspiracy and incitement laws are far more effective than the CJA, not least because they can try and charge anyone that writes about, or is associated with, a breach of the law as if they were the one that actually committed it.

There will be a Defendants Campaign set up, and a meeting to help form it will be at the McLibel Fair, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London on Saturday 28th September. Until then donations to help with the costs of travel and other defence costs would be appreciated. Send cash or blank postal orders to: Green Anarchist, BM 1715, London WC1N 3XX.

EARTH NIGHTS

Between 12th-14th July the Earth Liberation Front had called for International Earth Nights to target the perpetrators of all forms of animal abuse. Some of the actions that took place on these nights include the rescue of two monkeys from Shamrock Farm in East Sussex and the liberation of eight rabbits from Educational Supplies in Angmering, also in East Sussex. Abroad, one thousand foxes were released from a fur farm in Canada. For more details of these and other actions that happen read the latest issue, due out soon, of Direct Action Direct available from Chichester Earth First! at PO Box 99, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 4GL. Send a donation to cover costs.

BOUGAINVILLE SUPPORT ACTION

Bougainville is an island in the Pacific that is occupied by Papua New Guinea. The mining company RTZ/CRA had a large copper mine on the island, causing widespread ecological damage, that was opposed by the locals. This opposition moved from protest to revolution, with initially the destruction of the mine by explosives, and then the forming of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army whose aim is to get the RTZ/CRA mine to close permanently and to get the occupation forces off

Papua New Guinea to leave the island. In solidarity with the BRA, who were fighting off a newly launched PNG military offensive, on Monday 15th July seventy people aimed to occupy the Australian Embassy in London. Due to a large police presence, and the embassy already having shut



RTZ Offices, 6 St James's Square, London

down, the people moved to the RTZ offices.

The building was invaded and red paint was thrown over the reception area. Riot police arrived within a minute(!) and forcefully threw people out. There were three arrests, one released without charge, and the other two are to report back to the police in August to see if they will be charged as well. The action was the second item on Australian national TV and as well as an Australian radio station telephoned an activist here in the UK for an interview.

For more details on Bougainville and the ecological revolution going on there, as well as details of future actions planned in this country contact: Bougainville Freedom Movement (UK), c/o SDEF! Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 2GY. The offensive launched by the PNG Defence Force was initially claimed as a success by the PNG authorities, but it has now been revealed that the BRA fought the offensive off and have not lost any of the land they are holding.

TOXICS AND GENETICS FORUM

Toxics and Genetic Engineering in the context of a campaign has largely been ignored by Earth First! and a meeting held in Birmingham on Saturday 3rd August provided a forum to talk about this. As a result a national campaign against Genetic Engineering and Toxics was launched. Campaigners from across the country discussed ideas and resources in an effective campaign and many useful contacts were made.

It was decided that each group would distribute their own literature and information according to their particular skills and interest in a way that does not undermine solidarity and

common identity. This was agreed on as opposed to a national organization that could bring about problems in structure and responsibility for media. Most importantly it was agreed there would be no condemnation of each others actions.

The campaign at present will concentrate on both the toxics and genetic issues until it is large enough to split or information distribution becomes a problem.

So far as concrete plans for actions that came out of the meeting, it looks as though the National Action this year will be one that is relevant to these issues. There will also be an action in the middle of September - details will be announced. Contact numbers are: 01273 685913 or 0151 339 5473.

NEWBURY

Nine coach loads of fresh new security guards have recently arrived in Newbury, courtesy of Pinkertons (who have already had their offices visited by protestors). Work on a compound will probably start any day. Already half the Costain sites around the country have been hit, including one in London directly after their EGM on the 22nd of July. Earlier on inside Costain had already undergone a grilling from their own shareholders.

Starting on Sunday 25th August and going on until the 30th there is to be 'The Newbury Bypass Flim Flam Festival'. On the Sunday there will be a Friends of the Earth Art Bypass event. Bank Holiday Monday there is to be a Mass Route Walk and Pagan Picnic. Then the real actions will start on the Tuesday continuing on until the Friday (and hopefully way beyond). There will be something for everyone to do. As well as this there is Clobber Costain! an International Anti-Costain campaign starting up!

For an up to date list of Costain sites and offices, both UK and overseas, send an SAE to: Third Battle of Newbury, PO Box 5544, Newbury, RG14 5FB, UK, or call 01635 45544

McMURDER AT STONEHENGE?

The English Heritage chairman Sir Jocelyn Stevens has suggested that McDonald's be allowed to open a burger restaurant at the prehistoric site's new visitor centre. Sir Jocelyn said recently: "Why not McDonald's? There should be a choice of restaurants appealing to all pockets and a choice of experience. The average time a visitor spends now at Stonehenge is twenty minutes and if you have a better experience, if there is more to see and do, you will stay longer. We want the visitor centre to become a destination."

For more details of this insane plan contact the McLibel Support campaign on: 0171 713 1269.

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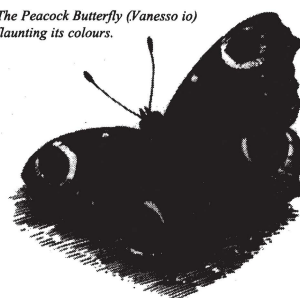
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flaunting its colours.



REPORT FROM THE EARTH FIRST! FORUM AT THE BIG GREEN GATHERING JULY 24th - 28th 1996

At the Big Green Gathering in Wiltshire there was an Earth First! space that had various workshops, activities and discussions going on over the week. On the Friday during the Gathering there was an Earth First! Forum for open discussion among activists on some aspects of the movement and the way people feel things should or could progress from the current situation. Approximately forty people from all over the country attended the forum and in this insert some of the things that were talked about will be briefly outlined for further debate in the wider Earth First! movement.

NATIONAL ACTION

After the success of the National Earth First! Action at Whatley Quarry last December the possibility of having another National Action again this year was discussed. It was generally thought that this was a good idea for a number of reasons, which, aside from the actual effectiveness of the action on the target, included the importance of the action as an outreach tool to both get new people involved and also to re-inspire the hardened cynics amongst us. No firm date or target has been decided on at the moment but it is most likely to be around October or November with the actual target one that is related to the new campaigns on Genetic Engineering and Toxics. There will be more details about this in next months Action Update.

NATIONAL GATHERING

For the past couple of years there have been two Earth First! Gatherings a year. These have been on a much smaller scale than the recent one in Wales and it is generally agreed that it would not be practical to have two a year on the scale of the one this year.

Instead of this, people suggested that we keep a large International Gathering to once a year, in the summer, and in the Autumn we try and have Regional Gatherings in every area of the country where we have an active group. This is very important to help build up regional networks of people who are already active, and it also links in to how we get more local people involved in actions and campaigns. In addition to this it will also enable people that are unable to travel far to the large gatherings, or take a whole week off from other commitments, to attend a Earth First! Gathering and find out more about Earth First! and how to become involved.

Having said this the International Gatherings are of vital importance to the development of the 'movement' and it is of great importance that the one next year builds on the huge success of this year's one in Wales. A group of people who are willing to take on the co-ordination and organisation of it need to start talking about it now. Next summer may seem like a long time away but it will be easier and more effective to plan the Gathering over a long period of time at a more relaxed pace than to have a mad last minute rush to get it done. As before, watch the Action Update for more details on this.

REGIONAL NETWORKS AND GATHERINGS

One of the strengths of Earth First! is that it operates as a network of autonomous local groups rather than a centralised organization. It was agreed by all who expressed themselves at the Forum that one of the ways we can expand the size and effectiveness of the radical ecology movement is to involve more local communities in struggles in their own area.

As mentioned in last months Action Update during the phone around it transpired that there are many groups that have ceased to exist or have no plans to do anything in the future. The Earth First! movement needs to build up the effectiveness of its local groups and the support for them. As well as this having strong Regional Networks enables us to work at a local level more effectively, both for actions and campaigns, as well as having effective support for people imprisoned or facing harassment. This is one reason why it has been decided to have Regional Gatherings in the Autumn this year, in place of an International Gathering, to help build up these networks. Active groups, or those that want to be more active, should get on the case and organise a gathering for their region. So far there is to be a South East Regional Gathering, a South West Regional Gathering and possibly a Welsh Gathering as well. Contact your local group for more details.

TACTICS

There was discussion of the effectiveness of different tactics that are used in defence of the natural world. Some people questioned the worth of having the tactical emphasis of a campaign on tree defence. The reasons for this were mainly that having the focus on this alienates many people that are unable, or unwilling, to climb trees or are not able to devote the time to building tree houses.

As well as this there is the point that the state seems to have pretty much worked out how to deal with tree evictions and because of this, we should be moving the focus of our resistance to an area where we have the largest advantage over them.

To do this some people thought that the emphasis should be shifted to actions on the ground that more people can participate in, and a possible focus on stopping them actually getting to the site of work, rather than adopting a defensive form of tactics. It was observed that the people we come up against work within a rigidly enforced hierarchy, that relies on the passage of orders and information in order to operate effectively and it was suggested that we should therefore be looking at the communication systems that they use. In addition to this, a number of people felt that there needs to be a increase in monkeywrenching. They agreed that if contemplating this, that it is not only safer but more efficient to do actions that only require one, or at the most a handful of trusted friends.

Of course Earth First! neither condemns nor condones damage to industrial machinery but we do condemn industrial machinery as well as the Industrial Machine!

The above ideas are not necessarily the views of the writers, we are merely attempting to truthfully report what was said by people at the forum.

In future issues of the Earth First! Action Update we hope to use this insert space to print articles covering various topics of interest and relevance to the radical ecology movement. If anybody would like to write an article of between 1,000 and 1,500 words including references, bibliography and a further reading list, please send to the Action Update, including a photograph or graphic if possible. Articles may be edited for length and clarity.

EF! CONTACTS AUGUST '96

A30 Action
PO BOX 6
Ottery St. Mary
Devon. EX11 1YL
01404 815729
Mobile 0385 278156/7

Avon Gorge EF!
Box 51
Greenleaf Bookshop
82 Colston Street
Bristol BS1 5BB
01225 448556
01225 314040

Beal Valley Rescue
33 Valley Rise
Rushcroft
Oldham
Lancashire
OL2 7QF
tel contact
c/o Rossendale EF

Birmingham EF!
c/o 115 Alcester Rd
Moseley
Birmingham B13
0121 449 5452

Blackburn EF!
15, Midsummer St.
Blackburn
Lancs, BB2 1HH
Tel: 01254 777079
jennie@hoole.demon.co.uk

Cambridge EF!
Box E
12 Mill Road
Cambridge.
01223 69347
tgs1001@hermes.cam.ac.uk

Cardiff EF!
PO Box 7
Cardiff, CF2 4XX

Cardigan Bay EF!
c/o Box E
Oakridge
Talesin
Machynlleth
Powys. SY20 8JW
rek3@aberystwyth.ac.uk

Cheltenham Eco-Network
c/o The Basement
1 Portland Square
Cheltenham
Glos. GL52 2HT

Chichester EF!
(& Cambourne EF!)
c/o Chichester Hunt Sabs
PO Box 99
Chichester
W. Sussex PO19 4GL

Dart Valley EF!
c/o SWAN
PO Box 4
Buckfastleigh
Devon TQ11 0YZ

Faslane Peace Camp
Shandon
Helensburgh
Dunbartonshire
Scotland. G84 8HT
01436 820901

Felixstowe EF!
'Merrrow'
Felixstowe Ferry
Suffolk IP11 9RZ

Glasgow EF!
PO Box 180,
Glasgow, G4 9AB.
0141 226 5066

Gwynedd EF!
c/o 8 Victoria Place
Bethesda
Gwynedd LL57 3AG
01248 600286

LEAF
Box Z,
13, Biddulph St
Leicester LE2 1BH
0116 255 3223
Fax: as phone

Leeds EF!
16 Sholebrock Ave
Chapelton
Leeds LS7 3HB
0113 262 9365
cornerstone@gn.apc.org

Manchester EF!
Dept 29, 1 Newton St
Manchester M1 1HW
0161 274 4665
coniberr@cs.man.ac.uk

Merseyside EF!
PO Box 187
160 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool L69 7BR
0151 794 4167

Mid-Somerset EF!
PO Box 23
5 High St
Glastonbury
Somerset BA6 9PU
01458 831545

Newcastle EF!
4, The Cloth Market
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne
NE1 1EA
0191 273 4997

No M66
14 Eaton Ave.
Oldham. OL8 4HR
0161 628 4727

Norwich EF!
The GreenHouse
48 Bethel St
Norwich, Norfolk
01603 631007
Fax: 01603 666879
nen@gn.apc.org

Notts EF!
Box EF!
180 Mansfield Rd
Nottingham
0115 958 5666

Oxford EF!
Box E
111 Magdalen Rd
Oxford, OX4 1RQ
01865 791391

Reclaim the Streets
PO BOX 9656
London N4 4JY
0171 281 4621
rts@gn.apc.org
http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/
campaigns/rts.html

Reclaim the Valleys
c/o Swansea
Environment Center
Pier Street
Swansea, SA1 1RY
0385 711364

Residents Against the M74
c/o Larkfield Centre
39 Inglefield Street
Govanhill
Glasgow G32 7AX
0141 424 1797

Rossendale EF!
8 Milner Street
Whitworth
Rossendale
Lancs
OL12 8RQ
01706 522557

Sheffield EF!
c/o Shefin
201 Crookes Valley Rd
Sheffield S10 1BA
0114 2671200
bigoss@pine.shu.ac.uk

South Downs EF!
c/o Prior House
6 Tilbury Place
Brighton BN2 2GY
savage@easynet.co.uk
http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/
campaigns/earthfirst.html

South Somerset EF!
31 Hamdon Close
Stoke-Sub-Hamdon
Somerset TA14 6QN
01935 825074

Staffs Earth Action Net.
c/o Stoke-On-Trent College S.U.
Howard Place
Stoke Road
Shelton

Stoke-On-Trent. ST1 4LY
01782 603656
Fax: 01782 260818

Swansea Freedom Collective
PO BOX 235
Mumbles
Swansea SA3 4YY
sa3thomp@swansea.ac.uk

The Flat Oak Society
c/o 3 St Alphege Lane
Canterbury
Kent. CT1 2EB
01227 463368

Toxic Alert EF!
PO Box 2600
Brighton BN2 2DY

Upper Nene EF!
Box E,
24 St. Michaels Avenue,
Northampton NN1

Wolves EF!
c/o Wolves Hunt Sabs
Box H
Wolves University Students
Union
Wulfruna St
Wolverhampton

York EF!
c/o YORK LEAF,
Uni of York Union,
Heslington,
York YO1 5DD
soes203@york.ac.uk

SUPPORT GROUPS

Corporate Watch
Box
111, Magdalen Rd
Oxford, OX4 1RQ
01865 791391

Dead Trees EF!/Do or Die
c/o South Downs EF!

DELTA
Box Z
13, Biddulph Street
Leicester LE2 1BH
Tel: 0116 255 3223

Direct Action Direct!
c/o Chichester EF!
PO BOX 99
Chichester
W. Sussex. PO19 4GL

Earth First! Action Update
PO Box 9656
London N4 4JY.
0171 561 9146
actionupdate@gn.apc.org

Earth Liberation Prisoners
c/o Mid-Somerset EF!
P.M.Blackmore@ncl.ac.uk

Mendip Hills not Holes
PO Box 2113
Shepton Mallet, BA4
01749 880144

Road Alert!
PO Box 5544
Newbury
Berkshire RG14 5FB
roadalert@gn.apc.org

Toxic Alert!
c/o Toxcat
P.O.Box 29
Ellesmere Port L66 3TX
0151 339 5473
cats@gn.apc.org

Wandsworth Eco-village
Gargyle Wharf
York Road
London SW11
0171 223 8557

INTERNATIONAL

An Talamh Glas c/o
Anne
Abbey Street
Ballinrobe
Co Mayo, Eire

Earth First! Journal
POB 1415
Eugene OR 97440
USA
00 1503 7419191
earthfirst@igc.apc.org

Australia EF!
Canopy
POB 1738Q GPO
Melbourne 3001
Victoria. Australia
(0061) 3 354 7972

EF! France
Eco-Action
2 Bis Arthur Magot
60000 Beauvois
France

Germany EF!
c/o Avalon
Friedrich-Ebert-Str. 24
45127 Essen
Germany

Anand Skiria
PB#14
Cochrin 682001
Kerala, India
(0091) 484 25435

Volunteers for Earth Defence
189 San Antonio Ext. SFDM
1105 Quezon City
Philippines

Workshop for all Beings
ul.Modrzewskiego 29/3
43-300 Bielsko Biala
Poland
Fax:(0048) 30 29496

Rainbow Keepers
POB 14
Nizhny Novgorod 603082
Russia
(007) 8312 343280
tretypu@glas.apc.org

Slovakia EF!
A.Hlinka 11
96001 Zvolen
Slovakia

Manuel A.Demandes
Taller de E.A.A CURUXA
J.B.Xelmimir J
Campus Universitario
1570 S Santiago
Spain
(0034) 81 584321

Morgan Larsson
Lagmansgaten 9C
46 37 Vanersborg
Sweden

Rainbow Keepers
c/o Nadia Shevchenko Glush-
kova 17-22
Kiev. 252187
Ukraine
(007) 044 2669310
nadia@glas.apc.org

Resistance Verte
- EF! France
BP 631
53006 LAVAL Cedex
FRANCE

Young Lions EF!
PO Box 27491
Greenacres 6057
South Africa
101356.2535@compuserve.com

OTHER CONTACTS

Advisory Service for Squatters
2, St Pauls Road
London N1 2QN
Tel: 0171 359 8814

ALF Supporters Group
BCM Box 1160
London WC1N 3XX

Anarchist Black Cross
c/o 121 Raitlon Rd
London. SE24 0LR

Anarcho-Primitivist Network
PO Box 252
Amphill, Beds
MK45 2Q2

Anti-Fascist Action
BM Box 1734
London WC1N 3XX
Tel: 0161 232 0813

Consious Cinema
PO BOX 2679
Brighton. BN2 2EF
01273 278018

Contraflow
56A Info Shop
56 Crompton St
London. SE17
Fax: 0171 326 0353
contraflow@phreak.
intermedia.co.uk

Counter Information
c/o Transmission
28 King St
Glasgow. G1 5QP

The Ecologist
Agriculture House
Bath Road
Sturminster Newton
Dorset. DT10 1DU
01258 73476
ecologist@gn.apc.org

Freedom Network
PO BOX 9384
London. SW9 7ZB
0171 582 3474
Actions: 0171 793 7343

Green Anarchist Network
BCM 1715
London. WC1N 3XX

Hunt Saboteurs Assoc.
PO BOX 2786
Brighton BN2 2AX
01273 622827
hsa@gn.apc.org
http://envirolink.org/arrs/
HSA/hsa.html

Justice?/Cothorn
c/o Larkfield Centre
39, Inglefield Street
Glasgow G42
Tel: 0141 226 5066
/424 1797

Justice?/Schnews
PO Box 2600
Brighton
E. Sussex BN2 2DX
01273 685913
http://www.cbuzz.co.uk/
SchNEWS/index.html

Legal Defence & Monitoring
Group
BM Haven
London. WC1N 3XX
0171 837 6687

McLibel Support Campaign
5 Caledonian Rd
Kings Cross
London N1 9DX
0171 713 1269

Menwith Womens Peace Camp
A59 Lay-By
Nr. Menwith Hill Spybase
Nr. Harrogate
N. Yorks
01943 468593

Squall
PO Box 8959
London N12 5HW
0171 561 1204
Fax: 0171 272 9243

Third Battle of Newbury
PO BOX 5520
Newbury. RG14 7YW
01635 45544
Fax: 01635 45545
http://www.gn.apc.org/
newbury/

The Land is Ours
Box E
111 Magdalen Road
Oxford OX4 1RQ
01865 722016

Undercurrents
16b Cherwell St
Oxford. OX4 1BJ
01865 203661
Fax: 01865 243562
underc@gn.apc.org

The Wilderness
c/o EF! Action Update
PO Box 9656
London N4 4JY

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**.



Earth First!

Action Update Bulletin Aug'96

WHATLEY

SUPER QUARRY EXPANSION



Protesters occupy Whatley Quarry in December '95

85 acre trashing to start soon

Direct Action the only option left

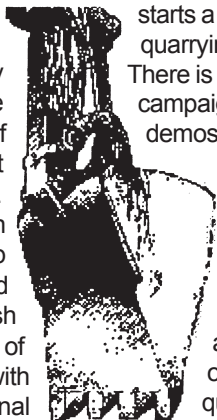
Whatley Quarry in the Mendip Hills of Somerset, is one of the biggest quarries in Europe. It produces 14 thousand tonnes of aggregate per day, of which a large proportion goes to building roads, such as those through Twyford Down and Solsbury Hill.

In December '95, the eighth Earth First! action at Whatley saw around 400 people shut the quarry down. This resulted in hundreds of thousands of pounds of lost profit to the owners Amey Roadstone Corporation (ARC), a

subsidiary of Hansons. One of the aims of that action was to highlight ARC'S proposal to expand the quarry over 85 more acres of the Mendip Hills, making it visible from the moon. Despite a wide ranging campaign, from lobbying by District Councils to tripods blocking railway lines, that **expansion has just been given the go ahead.**

The expansion of the quarry will result in the loss of ancient trees, hedges and fields. It will also destroy a lane between two small villages

thus separating the communities, threaten the water supply to the hot springs at Bath and threaten nearby Asham wood. This woodland is one of only two remaining fragments of Selwood Forest, the ancient forest that used to cover much of the Mendip Hills. Local opposition to the expansion of Whatley is considerable. Mendip District and Bath City Councils opposed it, along with the two local Parish Council's which turned down £450,000 of bribes. However, as is often the case with "democracy" when large multinational companies are involved, the expansion has been accepted (by Somerset County Council) anyway. With government forecasts for aggregate demand rising, largely to supply road building, the beautiful Mendip Hills are set to become one giant crater. **Unless, we do something about it....**



starts a sea change of opposition to large scale quarrying for road stone and building aggregate. There is a history of protest at Whatley and local campaigners are restarting local support for demos now, that the expansion plan has the go ahead. However, they need help from experienced direct activists to help get the next stage of the campaign up and running. There are buildings to squat, trees to be protected and large areas of land to be fortified. As well as defensive actions involved in reclaiming this land, offensive actions against the present quarry would easily cost ARC millions. This would require a secure camp, away from the destruction, to be established from which to disrupt work.

This is also a crucial time for Hansons who are selling off ARC, in the Autumn. A high profile campaign now could spell disaster for them in the financial markets where there is already scepticism about the sell off. Not only could we easily push the price of road stone sky high, but we could also wreck Hansons slick media machine as the sell off will have a high profile in the financial press. Hansons are involved in many horrific quarrying schemes around the world - they will not want this raised during their demerger.

If you are interested in finding out more, please ring Mendip Hills Not Holes information phone line (01749 880144) which gives a regularly updated telephone message on events at Whatley. Trashing of the land could start in a week or it could be in a year. It has not yet been made public. ARC will obviously try and destroy any defensible features on the land so people will have to move quickly and also think of ways to reclaim the land - See you on the diggers!

"It doesn't take much to stop a quarry - all you have to do is sit on the conveyor belt,"
ARC spokesman,
David Weeks.

The scope for a massive, ongoing (and hey, possibly even successful) campaign based around direct action against quarrying is immense. Local councils have been ignored, villagers have turned down bribes... Whatley is ideally placed to be the campaign that really

For updates phone the Mendip Hills Not Holes Information Line: 01749 880144

Or send for a briefing pack to: Mendip Hills Not Holes, PO Box 2113, Shepton Mallet, Somerset. BA4 4FD. Donations desperately needed, payable to: "Mendip Hills Not Holes".

This news bulletin was produced in support of Mendip Hills Not Holes.

For monthly news on Eco Protest subscribe to the Earth First! Action Update. Send £5 payable to "Earth First!" along with a name and address to: EF!AU, PO Box 9656, London. N4 4JY.