

Earth First! Action Update

No. 45 January 1998

30p

'There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.' Henri David Thoreau.

CLIMATE CRIMINALS

In December Londoners were treated to a radio message about the 'Climate Change Criminals'. The 2 minute pirate piece was broadcast over the airwaves of Capital Radio in areas all over Central and Greater London. In the style of a film commercial, with a low growly narrator and plenty of screaming the message drew attention to the recent Kyoto conference on Global Warming. It went something like this:

"They came from behind closed doors. Their mission; to pull off the most daring scam since the Wall Street crash. Destination; Kyoto. [*The freedom to drive is not negotiable.*] The stakes are high. Their profits or our future. [*Saving the planet costs jobs.*] They're the Climate Change Criminals. [*Hey, Mr politician if you clamp down on oil use, we'll pull the plug on your campaign funds.*] The fat cats of the oil industry and their corrupted scientists. [*Global warming is a lie.*] Working behind your back, to steal your future, to make sure that your children, are well and truly stuffed. Turning up the heat on the planet, double glazing the greenhouse effect, putting a full stop at the end of planet earth while they stuff their wallets making sure they'll be the last to suffer. You can stop the climate change madness, shop the climate change criminals, make your voice heard, make your voice heard...."

BIRMINGHAM NORTHERN RELIEF ROAD

John Prescott has gone motor-mad, approving 27 miles of road for MEL (Midland Express Limited), despite the fact that local Labour MPs were elected on the strength of a promise not to go ahead with the road.

The planned dual carriageway will devastate Birmingham's greenbelt, destroying SSSI's, archeological and ecological sites, farmland and trees. The public enquiry concluded that pollution would neither affect the 3 schools adjacent to the road nor the 6 others in the vicinity.

The local campaign against the road has been going on for 18 years and efforts to find legal loopholes to stop the project continue. Activists have been occupying the proposed site for three months now, building an info centre and treehouses. More defences are on the way.

The site is situated in Greenwood, on the A38 between Bassetts Pole and Weeford Junction, next to the ARC gravel works. Get the 110 bus from Corporation St. in Birmingham city centre to Bassetts Pole then walk 1.5 miles north along the A38 to the ARC gravel works on the left. Hitching: the A38 can be accessed from the

Spaghetti Junction on the M6. Get on the A38 heading out of Birmingham towards Lichfield, past Bassetts Pole until the ARC works (approx 1.5 miles). For more info: 0797 0301978

M65 OPENING

The new M65 motorway just outside Manchester was finally opened in mid December. The road had been resisted throughout its construction, including a year long occupation of the route during 1995.

The opening ceremony was attended by the



Don't turn your back - the M65 Christmas 97

usual array of councillors, police, security, activists, angry locals and Jack Straw the local MP. The police made two slightly enthusiastic arrests at the beginning of the event and security remained rather uptight. Although activists did not disrupt the ceremony they managed to divert all media attention from it, commenting, albeit slightly incoherently on the madness and sheer horror of this new road. The police got over their excited arresting behaviour after the ceremony had finished and so released the cheerful captives who all went home and drank tea.

PEOPLES' GLOBAL ACTION

At the end of February 600 representatives of peoples movements will meet in Geneva to establish a platform for worldwide action against trade liberalisation - the Peoples' Global Action against "Free" Trade and the WTO (PGA). This will call for nonviolent civil disobedience and the construction of local alternatives by local people as answers to the action of multilateral institutions, governments and corporations. The first big-scale action will be a wave of protests all over the world parallel to the Second Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on May 18-20, 1998.

The meeting in February is being convened by a committee formed by some of the most representative peoples' movements of all continents, including peasant movements (like the Brazilian Movimento Sem Terra, the Indian KRRS), indigenous peoples (like the Mexican Zapatistas, the Nigerian Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People), unions and women's organisations.

From Feb 18-21, there will be information and discussions on gender, food production, culture, economics, etc. On Feb 22 there will be a one-day seminar on the WTO, the MAI and trade liberalisation. On Feb 26 there will be co-ordination and planning sessions in small groups. Finally, on Feb 27 there will be a meeting to launch a Europe-wide movement of civil disobedience against "free" trade.

Contact the web page <http://www.agp.org> or send a message to playfair@asta.rwth-Aachen.de.

ASHTON COURT QUARRY

20 acres of Bristol's favourite park is still under threat from Australian multinational Pioneer Aggregates, who now have planning permission to expand their quarry. A long-standing campaign to stop the expansion has so far succeeded in only slightly reducing the proposed loss of park from the original 34 acres planning application.

Having had no joy in discussions with Pioneer's regional management, the quarry campaigners headed up to London, hung a banner off the roof of the Pioneer office, and leafleted staff. The police were called, arriving 45 minutes later in a van, from the police station next door. Security was left spluttering indignantly with the sad news that leafleting about the destruction of public parkland is not a criminal offence in this country and the police did not wish to get involved.

After 3 hours waiting to meet the UK director of Pioneer Aggregates campaigners got bored, discovered the boardroom, and occupied it. Miraculously, the man appeared, and a lively discussion ensued. The implacable face of corporate bureaucracy was however totally unmoved - as far as Pioneer are concerned, they've got their planning permission, and they don't care about the ethics of it all.

Work on the expansion is expected to start this spring, with a massive earth-moving operation to transplant the wild flower meadow from Top Park Field.

Contact 0117 939 3093 or the campaign web page; <http://www.gn.apc.org/cycling/ashtoncourt>

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Help is needed to make a street party happen in SW Hertfordshire this summer. The party will draw attention to a destructive new road scheme. Contact 01923 448131.

'McLibel: Two Worlds Collide' (directed by Ken Loach), a 52 minute documentary of the infamous case, is out. It uses interviews with witnesses and reconstructions of key moments in court to examine the main issues in the trial as well as the implications for freedom of speech. It is likely that it won't be shown in the UK. Call 0171 681 0832.

In December 100 people attended a meeting to see what support could be given to the 3 recently imprisoned editors of Green Anarchist. A support group has been established and will be meeting monthly at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London (nr. Holborn tube). The next meeting is Weds 21st January 7pm. Contact 0171 865 8100

The Land is Ours is putting together a register of 'unowned land'. Often the only sure way to tell if land is owned is to do something on it and wait for the legal system to creak into action and produce the deeds. Unclaimed land could be used for starting new allotments, eco-villages etc. Anyone wanting to help with this initiative contact TLIO c/o 10 Highwood Close, Orpington, Kent, BR6 8HT. Or phone 01865 722016

RJ Budge Mining is seeking planning permission to trash more countryside with an opencast site on the western edge of Newcastle upon Tyne. Contact Crescent Farm Opencast Action Group on 0191 2676597 or h.a.armstrong@dur.ac.uk or <http://www.dur.ac.uk/~dg10haa/neoag.htm>

What 's wrong with angels and stars? The Christmas Liberation Front, removed a Renault (car) logo which was the crowning feature of the 45ft Christmas tree in Manchester City Centre and replaced it with a more traditional star, saying they were outraged at the blatant and cynical commercialisation of Christmas.

A non-profit making video project is being set up in Bristol. This is in a very early stage and ideas include community video, Eco Documentaries and maybe even a video magazine. Contact 01941 170945 (pager) lostit@gifford.co.uk

All charges from arrests at the Department of Trade and Industry last October have been dropped. Activists had been arrested 'on suspicion of burglary' after storming the building during a solidarity action with the Liverpool Dockers.

A number of levelling stakes were rearranged at the Newbury Bypass over Xmas. The road, due for completion in Oct '98, was left a sitting duck as already patchy security was further reduced.

Inspiration, oh divine inspiration, get down your local library and get a print out of www.cafeunderground.com/cafesite/rooms/ozymandias/handbook_1.html It's errr... interesting.

"We want to create a world called Select, a world which revolves around shopping and driving" said a Shell spokesperson in Nottingham when announcing 400 new garages in 1998 and a greater collaboration with Burger King.

BREWERY ROAD IN BURY ST EDMONDS

Locals residents in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, have set up a camp to stop an access road being built through virtually untouched water meadows to reach Green King Brewery. The brewery has had its planning application granted this January to extend the depot.

There has been excellent press coverage and enormous local support for the camps, but they now need help to supplement their land occupation rota as most people have had to head back to work after the New Year. The camp has benders and tents but also needs tree dwellers should the water meadows flood. Food and firewood stores are currently well stocked, so if you can spare a week or two, or even a day or two, your help would be much appreciated. Contact 01359 240365 or 01284 760835 or The Glad Abbott, Watermeadows Defence Camp, Cullum Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33.

DOCKERS SOLIDARITY

Boosting the growing Earth First!/workers rights alliance, the Manchester Argos shop was targeted by ore Christmas in solidarity with the sacked Liverpool Dockers.

The Dockers support group and EF! activists from the north west occupied and blockaded the city centre store on one of the busiest shopping days of the year. Activists linked themselves with armtubes and circled around the store, eventually stopping just inside the doors: others lined up on the goods counter and everyone was entertained by brilliant theatre and alternative Docker-supporting Christmas carols. Police at first opted for the stalemate of keeping the store open but letting activists stay but as the tempers of a few disgruntled shoppers increased, police action seemed likely and everyone decided to leave when the fire alarm went off.

A strident picket outside turned most shoppers away but the 'impartial' police soon positioned themselves outside the doors making sure that people knew the shop was still officially open.

However, custom was massively reduced, there were few arrests and the fight to put pressure on Mersey Port Authority, through asking Argos to pull out of using the port goes on. Contact 0161 224 4846

FASLANE SOLSTICE SHENANNIGANS

On 22nd December protestors halted traffic going into Faslane Naval base for 1.5 hours during the Faslane Peace Camp 'Breach of the Peace?' action. Over 30 people took to the road, locked on, sang, fire danced and chanted. The street party led to a traffic jam several miles long which delayed Strathclyde Constabulary's arrival on the scene for some time!

The action was called to highlight the hypocrisy of New Labour who are going to cut benefits to single parents yet still see fit to spend billions on Trident, the most horrific tool of genocide yet created.

Initially the action was more a continuation of the Camp's Solstice Party, but the atmosphere was soon ruined by the police mishandling of the situation. MoD Police became violent and several protestors were hurt while locked-on as the police attempted to lift them. Only one arrest was made.

Some campaigners affected by police are making official complaints, so if anyone saw any incidents taking place, or has photos, police numbers etc, please contact the camp. Contact 01436 820901

E10 HIT AGAIN

The first trees have been cut down on the Leyton Relief Road (LRR) route in East London. As yet there is no security, although portakabins have arrived on site.

The Leyton Relief Road is potentially a major development and will point directly across Walthamstow marshes (two SSSIs and a Nature Reserve).

The scheme for the Leyton Relief Road has been floating around since the East London Assessment Survey, when it was part of a proposed route for the Mil Link Road. In the event, the Mil Link Road is being built down the Roding Valley but ever since the 1960s bits of the Lea Valley proposed route keep getting built anyway although of course these are "only little local road schemes."

The Public Inquiry into the Unitary Development Plan was won when the Inspector recommended the wholesale deletion of the Leyton Relief Road scheme as it would "release suppressed demand" for a major road right up the valley. The Labour and Tory groups on the local council voted to ignore this and John Gummer decided not to overrule them because the scheme "did not warrant the intervention of the Secretary of State for the Environment." Contact 0181 527 9857

MANCHESTER AIRPORT ACTION

Manchester airport again became the target of protests to highlight issues which weren't debated at the Kyoto climate talks. On 8th December, two actions took place. Twelve people used the latest advances in synchronised arm tube lock-on techniques to block the internal departures area. They surrounded x-ray equipment for an hour before being cordoned off by the police for another hour. They were then escorted out - whilst remaining in perfect formation.

Meanwhile 10 people dressed in the traditional white suits and gas masks climbed onto the roof of the skylink walkway and unfurled 2 giant banners reading 'Global warming the final warning' and 'stop aviation growth'. They came down after a few hours and were arrested for suspected criminal damage and contravening with two airport by-laws. Traffic was disrupted and some flights were delayed. Contact 0161 224 4846

INTERNATIONAL CALL FOR SUPPORT

On the 14th of January, Gardai (police) and about 20 men with chainsaws started cutting trees at Glen of the Downs, the first Irish road camp. At the moment they are only cutting away from the camp. People managed to slow them down and no arrests were made for obstructing the chainsaws. The forces of darkness managed to cut by driving quickly up and down the road in cars, cutting a few trees at a time.

A High Court injunction on ordered Wicklow County Council not to fell any trees until Wednesday 21st but also ordered people not to "trespass" on the site.

Anyone welcome, especially if you can bring over rope, climbing gear etc. Camp mobile +353 88 210 7471, Dublin contact +353 1 4966094 Tree 64, Glen O'The Downs, Kilmacanogue, Co. Wicklow.

How to Contact the Earth First! Action Update

Post: Earth First! Action Update, Dept 29, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW. Telephone: 0161 224 4846. E-mail: actionupdate@gn.apc.org. Enclose a SAE for replies. Send us your details if you want to subscribe to the free e-mail server. Earth First! Website address: <http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/campaigns/ef/earthfirst.html>

ORGANISE THE EARTH FIRST! SUMMER GATHERING

There will be a preliminary organising meeting for anyone interested in organising the next Earth First! Summer Gathering (ideally at least one representative from each EF! group). Meet by 12 noon on Saturday 28th February at Cornerstone, 16 Sholebroke Avenue, Chapeltown, Leeds LS6. For directions telephone: 0113 262 9365 or e-mail: cornerstones@gn.apc.org Accommodation will be provided - bring sleeping bags and some money for food. The more EF! groups that are represented the better it'll be.

KINGSTON MAKING WAVES

Making Waves, formerly known as the Sea Sabs, charted up the river Thames to appear at the camp at Kingston in West London. A railway bridge spanning the Thames was the first target - a 'Save Our Trees' banner was suspended with two abseilers dropping into a boat waiting underneath. The police arrived in a total of seven cars and started chasing the boat up the river.

Making Waves supported the Kingston camp again when four activists and Father Christmas scaled the front door of the Lib Dem HQ in Westminster to drop a 'Trees not Sleaze' banner. The trees that Making Waves were referring to are being cut to provide views of the river for a housing development. Contact the camp on 0181 287 3118 or Making Waves on 01404 81100.

EXPOSING CORPORATE EUROPE

During the EU Summit, a press conference was disrupted over EU expansion in central and eastern Europe, the MAI and patents on life. Activists also stormed the European Investment Bank, holding banners from the roof to draw attention to its exploitative nature.

For more info on EU get Europe Inc, £5 from corporate Europe Observatory, Prinseneiland 329, 1013 LP, Amsterdam Netherlands. 3130 236 44 22 Ceo@xs4all.nl

FANTASY FOOTBALL

Reclaim the Streets and Strike Oil! activists took over a pitch-sized part of City Road in London in December for an unofficial game of football. Drivers were quite patient after an initial attempt to turn the game into slalom racing but the police arrived after about 20 minutes - just as the first-half whistle went - and helped to remove the goal-posts. Meanwhile oranges were being handed out to the players. Due to police invading the pitch the 2nd half was postponed... Timed to coincide with the half-way point of the Kyoto Climate Conference in Japan, the match featured activists dressed as top political players like Tony Blair and Bill Clinton alongside numerous be-suited corporate leaders, playing with a football painted to resemble the Earth.

The 'global' football match marked the last day of the RTS/Strike Oil! occupation and rehabilitation of a disused petrol station. This had been transformed into a petrol-free garage with banners, murals and art installations as well as various activities - cycle demos, bike-powered parties, kids' days - and a daily commuter cafe. Contact 0171 281 4621 rts@gn.apc.org

POLICE SAY SORRY...

The police have apologised to local councillors for their behaviour at the Oxford street party on November 1st. The meeting was arranged after pressure from the local Green Party. The police asked them to withdraw their official complaints in return for the apology, which the Green councillors refused to do until the police made the apology publicly in a local newspaper. The police have promised to use their video tapes from the day to identify those officers who'd forgotten to put their numbers on, and those who had a "heavy attitude", which they now admit was inappropriate for what should have been a peaceful protest.

SHELL CONFERENCE DISRUPTED

Nottingham EF! activists upstaged Shell by scaling flag poles and lamp posts outside a Nottingham hotel hosting a Shell conference. Shell death heads and banners reading 'Solar not Oil' were displayed for both delegates and passers-by to see. These were ripped down by security staff but the group had already moved on to the next stage of their plan with 4 Earth First!ers getting into the conference and raising questions about Shell's involvement in Nigeria, and their contribution to global warming.

The activists had to squirm while Shell's plans for the UK were put forward, including "We want to create a world called Select, a world that revolves around shopping and driving.". Shell are also offering the reassuring tones of "What we are saying to you, is trust us".

HOT SPRING 98

In mid December activists from across Europe, Russia and Nigeria, held an ASED gathering which ran parallel to the EU summit focusing on globalisation and corporate rule. The gathering was most fruitful in creating a 'global action feeling'. The concept 'hot spring' was floated - political activities to confront the centralisation of power by TNCs in the next 6 months. This complements the fever surrounding People's Global Action (PGA), one of the events in the hot spring, as is the EU directive on life patents in March, signing of the MAI in April, G8 and WTO in May, and EU Summit in June. In the UK action planning is in full swing. Contact Corporate Watch, Reclaim The Streets and Manchester EF! (See contacts list).

GERMAN TREE DEFENCE

On the 22nd of December people hindered the felling of a mature wood in the way of the new German A20 coastal motorway (300km long!). The road is planned to link W Germany to the cheap labour and new markets in Poland. (It won't help the high unemployment in East Germany or the unspoilt landscape and significant nature reserves there). There had been a camp at the site for 2 years, which was given up last summer due to harassment by locals.

The workers on site were extremely aggressive, threatening people with chainsaws and totally ignoring all health and safety rules, eg, trees fell to the ground just a few feet away from occupied trees. One protestor was badly injured in the back of the knee with a chainsaw as people stopped work by encircling the workers and trees. More than half the trees on route were temporarily saved because they were occupied and connected with rope but against official statements that work would rest till New Year the rest of the trees were cut down early on Xmas day. Further actions are planned. Fax action against tree surgeons planned for the 22 January.

TUSEK GmbH, Fax 0049 3998 222188; MTS GmbH, Fax 0049 39771 23586 or 0049 39771 23240 Contact: No A20, c/o JAPS, Fuerstengraben 30, 07743 Jena, Germany. gl.thuer.presse@ipn-b.comlink.apc.org Fax: 00 49 3641 449304

EVENTS

JANUARY

- 18 Shut down Hillgrove Farm (nr. Witney), cat breeders for vivisection call 0121 632 6460

FEBRUARY

- 21 West Country gathering. Workshops, planning and party. For info or to offer workshops contact 01225 312688 or for lift sharing and accommodation 01225 466526
- 23-25 Meeting to establish a platform for worldwide action against trade liberalisation: the Peoples' Global Action(PGA) against "Free" Trade and the WTO, Geneva. Contact Play Fair Europe! +49-241-80 37 92 email: playfair@asta.rwth-aachen.de

MARCH

- 7-8 Zapatista Challenge Conference, a call to activists in the UK and around the world to confront neoliberalism and support the continuing struggle of the Zapatistas in Mexico. Praxis Centre, Pott St, London E2 (Bethnal Green Tube station). Contact 0114 2765675, or Mexico Support Group 0181 682 2402.
- 14 Birmingham City Centre Cycle Rally. Mass ride of the Birmingham ringway to support cycling and say no to the planned Birmingham Northern Relief Road. Meet Chamberlain Square, city centre midday. Bring music, whistles, air horns.
- 14-15 Counter Globalisation Network gathering. Learning about and planning around G8 summit, World Trade Organisation, Multilateral Agreement on Investment Contact 0161 224 4846
- 28-29 Mass Trespass in commemoration of the Diggers. Meeting Saturday, 12 midday for mass trespass to mystery site (no dogs). Food & entertainment in evening and improvements to a piece of land followed by a mid-afternoon meal on Sunday. Bring gardening tools, seedlings and saplings, food, shelter and instruments. The Land Is Ours office will have meeting point details from February and the location will be on the answerphone from the Saturday evening. Contact 01865 722016 or 0402 176410 e-mail office@tdio.demon.co.uk

APRIL

- 1 The first ever Diggers' Day commemoration - on the day The Digger colony began a group will be going to St George's Hill to commemorate the 349th anniversary of Winstanley's settlement
- 3-5 Gathering Visions, Gathering Strength II, Manchester University. A weekend gathering to bring together direct activists from different movements and generations to explore social change and how we can do it! Contact 0161 834 8301

MAY

- 9 Reclaim the Streets in Birmingham city centre.
- 9 Wolverhampton Reclaim The Streets - more details to follow. Contact c/o Wolves Eco Action (see Contact List)
- 15-17 G8 meeting, Birmingham. Shit hot actions around the summit of the 8 most powerful industrialised nations. Details soon.

CAMPS

- Alvis Factory peace camp - 01926 338805
- Ashton Court Quarry - 0117 9393093
- Bingley relief road (decision due this spring) - 01274 504626
- Birmingham Northern Relief Road - 0797 0301978
- Brewery road in Bury St Edmonds - 01359 240365 or 01284
- Faslane Peace Camp - 01436 820901
- Greenham - 01374 136728
- Huntingdon Life Science laboratories - 0589 026435
- Kebele squat - 0117 9399469
- Teddy Bear bypass camp - 0468 221454
- Menwith Hill womens peace camp - 01943 468593

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SHOTGUN MADNESS

On the 6th of December, 5 Finnish ALF activists targeted a fur farm in an attempt to spray the farmed foxes with an harmless Henna dye. This was the fourth time the farm had been visited. The alarm system woke up the farmer who ran after them with a shotgun. Three of them were shot, Elina Salonen was hit in her lower back, Joni Pumonen was hit five times on his arms and legs and Jani Seppala was hit 9 times, one of them piercing his lungs. They all escaped in a car but were arrested by the police and were consequently taken to hospital. The farmer, Markku Kuisma was arrested for 'aggravated assault' (not attempted murder). The five were charged under 'aggravated breach of the peace' and were remanded for three days. Elina hasn't been released yet after four weeks and is on hunger strike. For more info, letters of support EVR TR, PL403, 00121 Helsinki, Finland.

TURN YOURSELF IN

The first arrests at a cannabis users 'Turn Yourself In' happened at the beginning of the event on 14th December. About 100 people were joined by two vans of police who piled out to begin searching individuals. One man who had been handing out tobacco cigarettes approached a policeman and asked to be arrested for poisoning and assault, but was refused because 'tobacco is not a controlled substance'.

The crowd then went to hand themselves in for their 'crime' but the police suggested that they might have something better to do: it was suggested to the police that they might have something better to do than busting people for using cannabis, such as arresting people whose crime has a victim.

The police brought out reinforcements and said that if people really wanted to be arrested, they 'would be happy to accommodate them'. A campaigner put words to this effect to the crowd but in doing so he was arrested for Breach of The Peace and taken to a police van. A photographer was then arrested 'for not having a bath'. Further arrests took place but only one activist was charged with Possession of Cannabis, even though he didn't have any. He is charged with possessing an unspecified amount at an unspecified place in Leeds on an unspecified date in 1997! The only evidence against him is that he says it's true! Watch out Bill Clinton.

Contact Cannabis Legalisation Action Group, PO Box HP94, Leeds LS6 1YJ. E-mail clagleeds@hotmail.com

ZAPATISTA MASSACRE

On 22nd December 45 men and women in Acteal, a community in Polho in the Zapatista Autonomous Municipality, Chiapas, Mexico were gunned down by a paramilitary group. The massacre followed 7 months of state funded violence against communities supporting the Zapatistas.

In May last year paramilitary groups, armed with AK-47's and backed-up by the state police, began displacing the unarmed men, women and children of communities in the Polho municipality. There have been 14 communities displaced to date. There are currently 8,800 refugees in 3 camps in Polho.

Their possessions and land have been sold and their homes burnt. Many of those who failed to escape have been killed, others are still in hiding in the mountains without shelter or supplies. The camps are suffering from severe shortages of food, water, shelter and medicines and children are dying.

Approx 2,400 people are reported to be unable to leave their communities and attempts to rescue them have been prevented by the armed paramilitaries. Harassment of their communities continues and the Zapatistas and their supporters are requesting international aid.

See Events listing for Zapatista Challenge Conference on 7/8 March; contact Mexico Support Group on 0181 682 2402

XANADU..DU..DU...

There will be an open day for the Xanadu Campaign (70 Acres of leisure, billed as the UK's largest indoor leisure complex). If you are interested lending a hand ring 01942-513792. Experienced climbers needed, food and shelter provided.

DON'T TRUST A DUTY SOLICITOR

Activists arrested at the office occupation after the Doe Hill Opencast action in October have been charged with Aggravated Trespass (section 68 CJA) and stopping work (section 241 of the labour relations act). Unfortunately much of the case against them will probably come from the interviews and statements they made in the police station so they could get out that night, (as advised by the solicitor). He forgot to remind them that they were probably giving, "evidence that may be used against them in a court of law." Remember kids, its best to say, "No Comment."

PRISONERS

3 year prison sentences have been handed out to each of the 'GANDALF 3' for reporting on direct action: the 3 were found guilty of 'conspiracy to incite persons unknown to commit criminal damage'.

Saxon Wood (CK4322), HMP Winchester, Romsey Road, Winchester, SO22

Steve Booth (CK4323), HMP Preston, 2 Ribbleson Lane, Preston, PR1 5AB

Noel Molland (CK4321), HMP Guys Marsh, Shaftsbury, Dorset SP7 0AH

11 years for carrying out arson attacks on meat lorries, incitement and escaping from police custody during animal liberation activities.

Keith Mann (EE3588), HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, WR11

Manchester Airport EF! activists are on remand facing serious charges in relation to the Manchester airport campaign (up for trial mid January). John Davies fears that, if convicted, he might be made into a Category A prisoner.

John Davies (CH4539) **Ian Williamson** (CH5067), HMP Altcourse, Fazakerley, Liverpool, L9 7LH

Mr Free Rob Cannabis of the Cannabis Hemp Information Club (CHIC), the Free Medical Marijuana Foundation (FMMF) and proprietor of a Glastonbury Hemp shop was imprisoned early January for seven days for "wilful non-payment" of fine and costs for the possession of 1.57 grams of herbal cannabis. The Judges were not unsympathetic to Free Rob's cause. Free Rob's statement included *"Cannabis is a plant that has served humanity for thousands of years, providing us with our four basic needs of food, fibre, fuel and medicine. I cannot pay this fine as this would show my support for this physically and morally harmful law."* Contact 01458-835769. e-mail: cannabisinfo@gn.apc.org



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THE NEW DEAL

The New Deal is part of Labour's attempt to reduce unemployment and is based on the ethos that everyone must work to survive regardless of their situation. It has been criticised for its crude imposition of work discipline on claimants and has been compared to the USA workfare system in its coercion of the unemployed into working for an income which is on or below survival level

THE PROCESS

From January 1998 the New Deal will be pioneered in 12 Pathfinder areas and goes UK-wide in April 1998. Under 25's unemployed for over 6 months will be undergo a series of interviews - the Gateway - a 'job guidance and counselling' programme lasting 2 to 4 months. This will basically increase the hassle given to people signing on - they will be expected to "clearly examine their employment options" and will be subjected to several interviews. Over 25's will be subjected to the same process although they will have to have been unemployed for more than 2 years to enter Gateway. Full details of the policy for over 25's are not yet clear. The aim of the Gateway period is to put 40% into an unsubsidised job or education - all others will be forced into one of four options. Claimants who refuse or fail will be required to take up a place identified for them by the Employment Service. If they refuse or fail to take up this there will be no option of continued full benefit - sanctions will be applied.

THE OPTIONS

1. The employment option

A 6 month job with a private or public employer, with one day per week training. The employer gets a £60 per week subsidy and is supposed to pay a standard wage - suggested £90/week minimum. After the 6 months employers can replace these subsidised workers with other subsidised workers. The aim is to place 40% of scheme participants into this option.

2. The voluntary option

Working for a voluntary organisation for 6 months, paid benefits plus the equivalent of £15 per week. One day per week training. (13% target for this outcome)

3. The environmental task force option

Same conditions as voluntary sector. Similar to community' service but with a few extras to disguise this. A glimmer of light under this option is that it may be possible for local recycling co-ops, resource centres, etc to be part of the consortium running this option and thus create relatively sane placements for campaigners. (22% target)

4. The education option

On existing benefits. Only available for those lacking NVQ level 2. (25% target)

Placement length can vary, in Manchester, for example, placements will be for 12 months. The number of options available can also vary: in some places the voluntary sector and the Environmental Task Force are being combined into one option.

Throughout time spent in one of the options the focus will be on getting or maintaining a job in the regular labour market after the New Deal period. The later stages of each option will therefore include intensified monitoring by the Employment Service.

THE REALITY CHECK

Labour promises monitoring will take place to ensure that employers don't just replace jobs with New Deal workers or use them to fill naturally occurring vacancies: however this is happening in a context of falling wages and employers seeking any excuse to introduce low paid casual work. The New Deal can only intensify this process by providing cheap labour for employers, undermining wages and conditions and replacing current going rate jobs with underpaid conscripts. Sainsbury is planning to recruit up to 1000 young people on the New Deal; Tesco will guarantee interviews to all New Deal candidates; Littlewoods Home Shopping Division is working to incorporate the New Deal into all future recruitment planning.

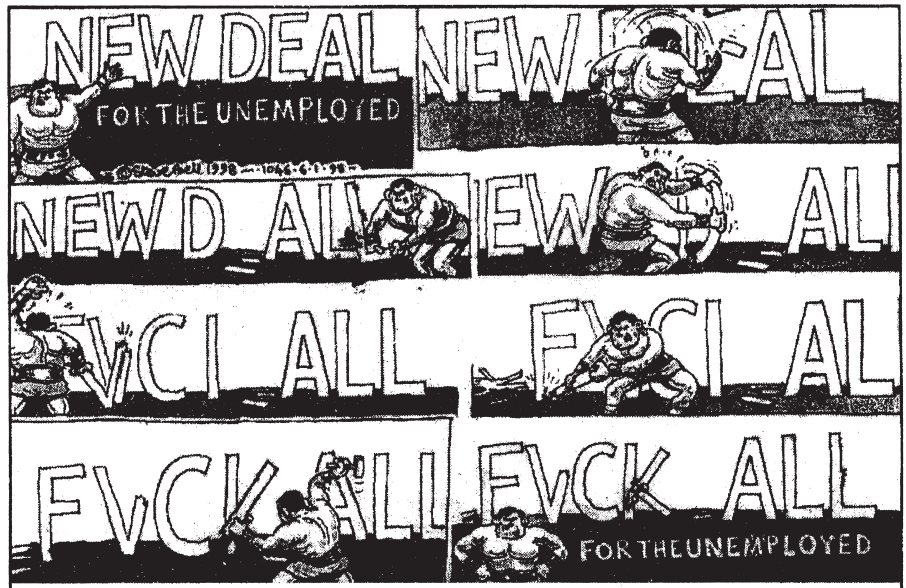
Reed and Manpower recruitment agencies will actually work in Job Centres, processing claimants through the Gateway and finding placements. This has been criticised as the thin edge of eventual Employment Service privatisation. As far as claimants are concerned this means they will be dealing, not with ES staff, but with employees of a private recruitment company with an entirely different set of priorities. The voluntary sector will also be hit - if it becomes accepted that the voluntary sector should depend on part of its workforce being unemployed people on schemes, then the case for adequate funding for sufficient staff paid decent wages is undermined.

RESIST SOCIAL CONTROL

Contact your local Groundswell group or Edinburgh Claimants, c/o Peace and Justice Centre, St Johns, Princes St, Edinburgh 0131 557 6242

SEND US YOUR NEWS!!

We can't tell you if you don't tell us. Send your news, stories, prisoners addresses, quotes, leaflets and up coming dates on the the back of an envelope, A4 sheet, computer disk or email to EF! AU. **Don't forget pictures**, (as photos or graphics files,) or drawings.



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Reclaim the Valleys
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Save Lyminge Forest
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WHAT IS EARTH FIRST!?

Earth First! is not a cohesive group or a campaign but a convenient banner for people who share similar philosophies to work under. The general principles behind the name are non-hierarchical organisation and the use of direct action to confront, stop, and eventually reverse the forces that are responsible for the destruction of the Earth and it's inhabitants. The above contacts are autonomous groups that consider themselves to share these 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.