

Notes

- 1) *The Ecologist*, Vol. 2, No. 12, December 1972
- 2) *Eco-Warriors* by Rik Scarce, (ISBN 0 9622683 3 X), p. 103
- 3) *Green Rage*, Christopher Manes, p. 65
- 4) Speech by Dave Foreman, Grand Canyon, 7/7/87
- 5) *FoE Newsletter* No. 1, Jan 1972
- 6) While FoE and GP remain centrists, both groups increasingly try to engage their membership AS activists not just as supporters. This, as many of their staff admit, is due to the influence of the '90s land struggles.
- 7) A ridiculous statement I admit—but true!
- 8) *Direct Action Video*, Oxford EF!
- 9) 'Militancy', *FoE Newsletter*, No. 10, Oct 1972
- 10) *EFI Action Update*, No. 3
- 11) *Ibid.*
- 12) Noticably South Somerset EF! who organised the early Whatley Quarry actions.
- 13) This description is no joke—one described herself on more than one occasion as 'the queen of the tribe'!
- 14) Dept of Transport Affidavit concerning May 1st 1993
- 15) Welcome Back Twyford Six, *Do or Die* No. 3, p. 45
- 16) 'Car Chases, Sabotage and Arthur Dent: Twyford Diary', Pt. 2, *Do or Die*, No. 3, p. 21
- 17) *Ibid.*, p. 22
- 18) 'Skye Campaign Soaked in Sea of Anger', *Do or Die*, No. 3, p. 11
- 19) *EFI Action Update*, No. 5
- 20) 'For Flapjack and Mother Earth: Earth Warriors At Jesmond Dene', www.eco-action.org/dt/jesmond.html
- 21) *Ibid.*
- 22) 'News From The Autonomous Zones', *Do or Die* No. 4, p. 21
- 23) *Ibid.*, p. 22
- 24) *Ibid.*, p. 23
- 25) These were not police smear stories. There was only a few sentences ever mentioning them and no tabloid 'eco-terrorist' horror stories. If anything the state probably enforced a 'quieting strategy' on the situation as they did to the ALF at its height of support.
- 26) *Copse: The Cartoon Book of Tree Protesting* by Kate Evans, (ISBN 0 9532674 07), p. 32
- 27) *EFI Action Update*, No. 9
- 28) *Copse*, p. 20
- 29) 'Leadentham', *Do or Die* No. 4, p. 6
- 30) Fash threatened a number of sites through the '90s. At Jesmond they were chased off, running for their lives (which is what they do best)—mostly they didn't even turn up (with the one major exception of the M11). Far more dangerous were random individual loonies. Arson attacks on camps happened right from the beginning—both at Twyford and the M11. Of course the police paid little notice. On one occasion when some posh student arsonists were nicked at Newbury (after they had put a petrol bomb through a truck window and into a sleeping child's bedroom) they got off—the magistrates viewed them as drunken pranksters.
- 31) *Daily Post* (North Wales), 9/1/94
- 32) *Green Anarchist* was undoubtedly a great influence on this period. One big gripe though—again and again one would read GA reports of actions which said the Earth Liberation Front had done this or that. Some may have been true but most of these claimed actions were often simply done by crowds or 'camp warparties'. In fact on a number of occasions people have been arrested for criminal damage only to read later in GA that 'the ELF' had carried out their action. This is both dishonest and dangerous.
- 33) Jonathan Dimbleby at Solsbury Hill for instance.
- 34) *Construction News*
- 35) 'The Battle For Hyde Park: Ruffians, Radicals and Ravers, 1855-1994', (Practical History)
- 36) 'CJB: Business As Usual', *EFI Action Update*, No. 12
- 37) *Schnews*, No. 3
- 38) 'London Regional Report', *Do or Die*, No. 5, p. 23
- 39) *Ibid.*, p. 25
- 40) 'Meanwhile Down in the West-Country', *Do or Die*, No. 5, p. 18
- 41) 'It's (Not Really That) Grim Up North!', *Do or Die*, No. 5, p. 12
- 42) *EFI Action Update*, No. 23
- 43) Thames Valley Police Press Release 11/11/96
- 44) *Copse*, p. 105
- 45) *There's A Riot Going On* by Merrick (Godhaven Press)

- 46) 'Direct Action, Six Years Down the Line', *Do or Die*, No. 7, p. 1
- 47) *EFI Action Update*, No. 40
- 48) *Global Street Party—Birmingham and the G8*, p. 3
- 49) *EFI Summer Gathering 2003* leaflet.
- 50) This reference to Mental Asylums is no joke—over a dozen people were sectioned from Newbury alone, prompting the setting up of the 'Head State Support Group'. Land Struggles had been immensely therapeutic for many, but for some they became the catalyst for mental breakdown. On sites the intense connection to other people and the land was amazing. Feeling the land being ripped all around you and having your community broken up was unbearable for many. Some would have been broken by Industry either way, but it was the movement's duty to provide support for those who were asked to risk all. It mostly failed in that duty.
- 51) It's worth pointing out that EF! is a network of autonomous groups and individuals. Gatherings can be the place where people decide what they are going to do, but they cannot decide what others should or shouldn't do. After a number of bad experiences with people representing the movement in outside publications and stating that 'EF! has said the...' it was decided that gatherings would mostly not distribute written reports—too often the writer's own political dogma misrepresented the consensus—or lack of one. Here, I am trying to sum up some of the points the '97 gathering came up with in consensus. I have asked around to check that my memory is correct, but I may too have clouded the reality of the discussion with the fog of my own particular dogma. I apologise if this is so.
- 52) 'Autonomous Spaces', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 130
- 53) *Ibid.*
- 54) Fears that the giro checks would soon stop arriving, bringing an end to the dole autonomy that, along with student grants and crime, had been the main economic backbone of movements here for generations was also a major factor. Resistance to the introduction of the Jobseekers Allowance and the New Deal did occur—but with most claimants not joining in with collective efforts to repel the squeeze, the campaign was doomed. By individualising their problem people were collectively defeated.
- 55) *Schnews*, No. 156
- 56) *Schnews*, No. 167
- 57) *Police Review*, quoted in 'Surveillance Watch', *Schnews Survival Handbook*
- 58) *EFI Action Update*, No. 50
- 59) *Global Street Party: Birmingham and the G8* pamphlet.
- 60) The reference—me and a mate on a glorious day!
- 61) *EFI Action Update*, No. 59
- 62) 'Friday June 18th 1999: Confronting Capital and Smashing the State', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 20
- 63) 'Carry on Camping', *Do or Die* No. 8, p. 148
- 64) *EFI Action Update*, No. 57
- 65) *EFI Action Update*, No. 48
- 66) For a short while it looked like The Land Is Ours might successfully set off a wave of action around the country. However the entrenched nature of the problem and the spectacular, media-centric style of some of the main 'occupations' cut that possibility short.
- 67) There is always a danger here of merely becoming unpaid social workers. For too many in the past community organising has been a way back into the mainstream. That this is a danger should not stop people doing these bread and butter activities—but should remind us to be ever vigilant against assimilation.
- 68) One argument put forward for community organising over ecological defence, is that only the working class can defeat capitalism so 'real work' needs to be done 'in' the working class to strengthen 'it' and radicalise it. Apart from the obvious patronising missionary attitude this view ignores the fact that the Land Struggle Period saw large actions with and by working class communities across the country; a level of joint action most traditional class struggle anarchists could only dream of. While many of the places '90s land struggles happened in were 'Tory shires' others were in the old 'barracks of the labour movement'—the East End, South Wales, Glasgow, inner-city Manchester and the Yorkshire mining areas!
- 69) For a good analysis of this debacle see—'May Day Guerrilla? Gardening?', *Do or Die* No. 9, p. 69
- 70) 'Here Comes the Barny Army!', *Do or Die* No. 9, p. 12
- 71) This years EU summit in Greece is likely to be the last outside of the EU Fortress in Brussels.
- 72) *EFI Action Update*, No. 55

Down With The Empire!

After over a decade of radical ecological resistance in Britain, it's time to look back on our actions and look forward to our future.

It's time to **celebrate** our resistance: digger diving, window smashing, pleasant picnicking, office occupying, hoody wearing, GM crop trashing, squat cracking, sun lit lovin', machine burning, treeliving—total fucking anarchy. It's time to **mourn** for our moment. Over the last decade thousands of species have been wiped out of existence. Vast forests—charred stumps. Coral reefs bleached dead by warmed seas. Millions starved within the prison of civilisation. Wild peoples massacred, enslaved and pauperised. It's time to **strategise** how to make a real impact on this apocalypse. Look seriously at our strengths and weaknesses and pull together to **resist**. The empire is powerful but the spring is growing. It's a challenge like no other, but with love, luck and hard resolve we can **transcend**.

Up With The Spring!



In the Peak District, the Nine Ladies camps have weathered three winters, deterred new quarries, and kept camp culture alive.

thought better of it for a number of reasons. Firstly it seemed a neat end point; secondly much of this issue of *Do or Die* covers the next year and a half to Summer 2003; and thirdly Part Two of this article was released in January 2002 and some of what the movement has engaged in since then has been, at least partially, as a result of its suggestions. For good or bad I'll leave it to others to use hindsight to judge whether some proposals were blind alleys or blinding campaigns. To analyse them here would be definitely to put the cart before the horse.

Nevertheless, I'll say a little about where we find ourselves. Looking at the first *EF! AU* of 2002, it seems strange, slightly worrying, but also inspiring that 10 years on there is an obvious continuity of action through the decade: a new protest site, night-time sabotage actions, actions against summits, anti-war demos. The centre spread is a briefing for the campaign to defend Northern peat bogs, a struggle from right back in 1991 (and further) that re-started in 2001 and is covered elsewhere in this issue.

In a way the last year or so has reminded me of the film *Back to the Future* (now I'm showing my age); not only was the peat campaign back up and running, but also there was an anti-road gathering in Nottingham, and actions were announced to aid tribal groups in the Pacific.

There are now far fewer EF! groups listed than in the mid '90s, and the travelling culture many site activists came from has been largely destroyed by state force and drugs. Nevertheless, the radical ecological movement is in a surprisingly healthy state and has succeeded in not being assimilated into the mainstream. Ten years on and we're still more likely to be interviewed by the police than a marketing consult or academic (remember to say "No Comment" to all three!). The movement is still active and still raw. Many places continue to be saved by ecological direct action, our threat potential still puts the willies up developers, and people are still getting involved and inspired.

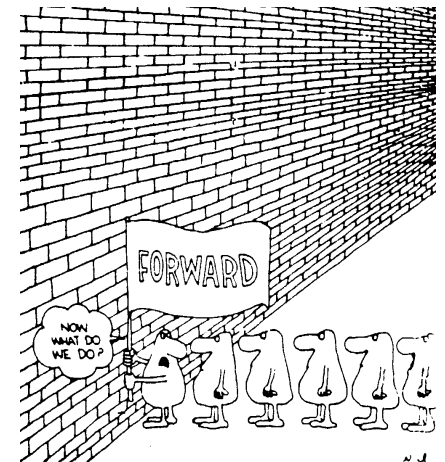
Our gathering this year will probably be attended by around 350-400 in total—the same kind of number it has been since 1996. While we don't want to build up the movement like a Leninist party—"more members, please more members"—the fact that we have stayed at this number despite catalysing situations of struggle involving thousands should give us some pause for thought.

Two prime contradictions have haunted the radical ecological resistance on this island. British EF! was born as a wilderness defence movement with no wilderness, and evolved into a network of revolutionaries in non-revolutionary times. The process of consolidation that was started in 1997 enabled radical ecological circles to survive the slowdown of domestic land struggles after the victory against national roadbuilding. This process combined with the upsurge in 'global resistance' enabled us in part to side-step the questions posed by the above contradictions.

If we want to see the wildlands defended and any chance of libertarian, ecological (r)evolution increase then practical action is needed. Much is already underway, but more is needed and without a clear strategy we are bound to fail. 'Part Two: The Four Tasks' aims to provide some pointers towards a unified strategy and attempt to resolve, or at least overcome, some of the contradictions of our movement.

On a personal note the 'Ten years of radical ecological action' documented here have been immensely inspiring to me. It's been an honour to stand on the frontlines (as well as lounge about in lounges) with some lovely, brave, insightful and amazing people.

Thank you. ★



The following year, many more from the movement would go to Genoa in Italy where an unparalleled number of people on the street would clash with the state (and sometimes each other). Many also went to the anti-summit actions in Scandinavia, Switzerland and France. Only three years after the Global Street Party and the riot in Geneva started the wave of summit actions, the global elite was having to organise massive defence operations to stay safe behind their barricades. This wave of action not only inspired thousands, and spread the wildfire of resistance worldwide, it also forced many of these meetings to cut down the length of their events, move to ever less accessible fortresses and in some cases cancel their roving showcases all together.⁷¹

Beyond the big street spectacles many British activists were increasingly spending time abroad, inspired by the often more up-for-it squatting scenes. This acted as a further drain on the movement, but it also brought new experiences into 'the collective mind', aided future action, made real human links across borders and just as importantly gave some amazing moments to those involved. The move to the territory of other nations, temporary for most, comes as no surprise in a period defined by its internationalism.

International Solidarity

Back in Britain, the radical ecological scene was increasingly involved in solidarity with (largely 'Third World') groups abroad. As the Malaysia campaign showed, this had always been a major part of the movement. Following the '95 EFi gathering, activists invaded a factory that built Hawk aircraft and hoisted the East Timorese flag. Throughout the land struggle period, office actions, AGM actions, embassy blockades, petrol station pickets and home visits to corporate directors had all been used to support the Ogoni/Ijaw struggle in Nigeria and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army in Papua New Guinea. Yet in this period solidarity with struggling communities beyond the capitalist core became a much bigger part of the movement. This was part and parcel of the shift in emphasis towards people seeing the radical ecological movement as part of a global revolutionary movement.

On the first business day of 1999, three groups barricaded themselves into two senior management

offices and the corporate library in Shell-Mex House in London.

"January 4th was Ogoni Day, celebrated since Shell was forced out of Ogoni through massive resistance. The concerned individuals seized three key locations in the building, some of which had a pleasing view of Waterloo bridge and the banner being hung across—by others—reading 'Shell: Filthy Thieving Murderers.'"⁷²

In 1999 the keynote speech at the EFi Summer gathering was made by a visiting Papuan tribesman from the OPM. His inspirational talk resulted in actions across the country that Autumn against various corporations involved. Sporadic actions would continue in solidarity with this South Pacific struggle, as well as financial support for refugees and medical aid for prisoners, both actions which literally kept people alive.

Less theory, it was more lived experience abroad that inspired solidarity work back at home. By 2001, most towns listed with EFi groups had at least one returnee from the jungles of the Mexican South West. In 2001 a steady stream of activists going to Palestine started, many doing valuable on-the-ground solidarity work in the heat of the second Intifada—and the Israeli crackdown.

Those returning from abroad wanted to 'bring the war home' with a range of actions, speaking tours and fundraising pushes. Of course GM actions are also in part solidarity actions with Third World peasants. From benefit gigs to demos at the Argentinian embassy—solidarity work was increasingly filling the gap a lack of land struggles left behind.

Then and Now

This decade-long retrospective ends at the end of 2001. I did think of extending it when this issue of *Do or Die* became ever later and later but I



Part One: Recent Pre-History

An Insurgency of Dreams

**"Defend the Collective Imagination.
Beneath the cobblestones, the beach"
—Slogan daubed in Paris, May 1968**

The radical ecological movement was born from the world-wide revolutionary upsurge of the 1960s and '70s. Love of the earth and for each other has always been with us, but in that period these feelings exploded across the world in a way they hadn't for decades. In nearly every land people came together and resisted. In some areas there were decisive victories for people in the battle against power; in others, power won hands down.

The epic struggle of the Vietnamese people and the anti-Vietnam war actions across the world; urban guerrillas across Europe; barricades in Paris; the European squatting movement, the brutal end of the Prague Spring; the rise of the Black Power movement.

This upsurge brought with it the (re)birth of the feminist, ecological, indigenous and libertarian ideas that now form the basis of our worldview.

Authoritarian Communism had dominated the radical movements ever since the Bolshevik counter-revolution. After having been physically exterminated in country after country, anarchist/libertarian groups started once again to grow.

Industrial development accelerated in the 'Third World' following World War Two. The global elite extended its tentacles, attempting to assimilate or exterminate tribes and band societies outside its control. In turn 'indigenous' peoples fought back. In the 1970s the American Indian Movement (AIM) re-launched indigenous armed resistance in North America, reminding us that even the capitalist core countries were always colonies.



Seeing the horrors inflicted on our imprisoned non-human relations—in laboratories, abattoirs and factory farms—the animal liberation movement was born with sabotage at its centre.

New generations took up the standard of Women's Liberation, challenging not only the dominant society but also its patriarchal (loyal) opposition that forever sidelined women's lives in the cause of the (male) workers struggle.

After decades of almost universal technoworship, not least by radicals, many people began to see that the earth was being destroyed, and started trying both to defend it and regain understanding.

The Rise of Environmentalism

**“It’s time for a warrior society to rise up out of the Earth and throw itself in front of the juggernaut of destruction.”
—Dave Foreman, US EF! co-founder.**



The Western environmental movement grew as part of the upsurge, but also in large part as a postscript. When the barricades—both actual and metaphorical—were cleared, a generation of Western radicals looked to new fronts while many others retreated to rural idylls and communes. What they both found was strength in nature and a burning urge to defend it. This early environmental movement fundamentally challenged the established conservation organisations which for so long had acted as mere (ineffective) park keepers.

At sea a raw energy propelled tiny dinghies to confront the nuclear and whaling industries. On land new organisations were forming, fighting toxic waste dumps, logging, mining and other essentials of industry. Scientists were uncovering huge cataclysms facing the earth and—to elite horror—breaking ranks. This environmentalism had a threatening potential that had to be defused—an army of hacks, cops, advertisers and ideologues got to work.

Capital and state both attacked environmentalists while simultaneously funding counter-tendencies to steer the movement away from confrontation and towards co-operation. This carrot and stick approach co-opted many; groups which had looked promising succumbed to respectability and corporate funding. Environmentalists were given a seat at the table but the talk was not of nature but of compromise, techno-fix and corporate greenwash. Assimilation.

In fact, as early as 1972, *The Ecologist* magazine (at the time printing articles on the links between ecology and anarchy) carried an editorial entitled ‘Down with Environmentalism’ saying: “We must repudiate the term environmental. It is too far gone to be rescued.”¹

All through the ‘70s environmental groups were gaining increased support and membership lists were expanding dramatically. By building **mass**

based organisations environmentalism was split into campaigners and supporters. Bigger offices and bigger salaries were needed to **manage** the movement. This division—a creation of scale—acted (and still acts) as a terrible internal pressure crushing the radical content and practical usefulness of groups.

Those attracted to ‘campaign’ jobs were often exactly the wrong **class** of people (inclined to paper pushing rather than physical action) while most of the support their ‘supporters’ gave was the annual return of cheques and membership forms—conscience-salving exercises. When serious people got involved in groups their action was often curtailed by other ‘campaigners’ (or the cop in their own head) reminding them that it could alienate the ‘public’ and thus cut into membership and funding.

This process was as prevalent in what was then the most radical of the environmental groups—Greenpeace (GP). In 1977 Paul Watson one of GP’s directors (who became an icon when he drove a dinghy straight into the path of a whaling harpoon) was heading an expedition to the Newfoundland ice floes. At one point he grabbed a club used to kill baby harp seals and threw it into the waters. The sealers dunked and nearly drowned him yet worse was to come on return to the office—betrayal. Throwing the club into the sea was criminal damage and he was told by a faceless lawyer, “I don’t think you understand what Greenpeace is all about.” He was expelled from the corporation.

Watson went on to found the whaler-sinking Sea Shepherd (more of them later) while Greenpeace just got bigger, gaining millions of members while all the time becoming more symbolic and less of a threat. As GP’s founder Bob Hunter said with an air of depression. “Nothing could be done to stop it from growing. It’ll keep growing and growing, a juggernaut that is out of control.”²

Meanwhile the global attack on the wild was left largely unabated. Christopher Maines in *Green Rage* put it well:

“Like the Youth movement, the women’s movement, and rock and roll, the reform environmental movement suffered from its own success. It entered the ‘70s as a vague critic of our society and exited as an institution, wrapped in the consumerism and political ambitions it once condemned. In their drive to win credibility with the government agencies and corporations... the new professional environmentalists seemed to have wandered into the ambiguous world of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, where it was increasingly difficult to tell the farmers from the pigs.”³



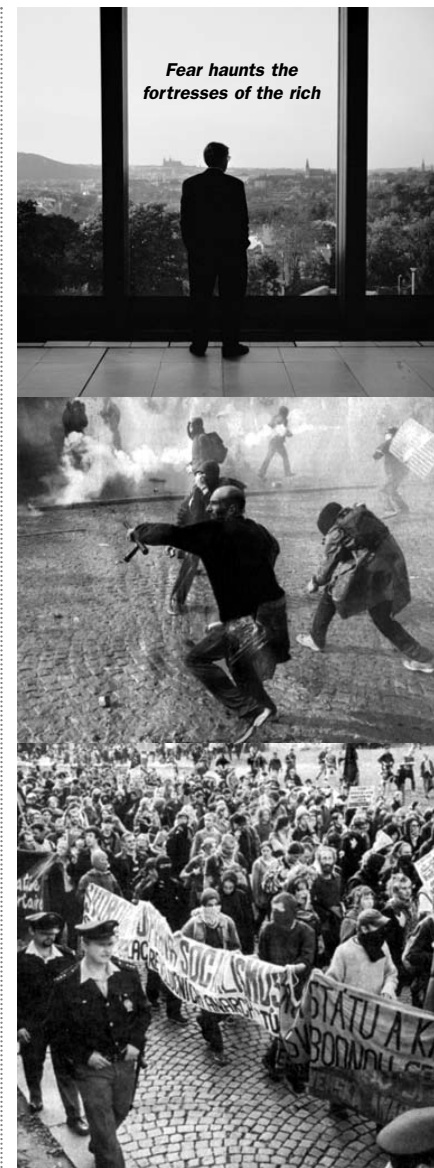
carried out covertly at night. Globally, GM sabotage was now spreading even more. Across the world shadows in the moonlight were razing GM crops trials to the ground. Spades, sticks, scythes, sickles and fire brought in the harvest. Doors splintered as labs were broken into. Pies were aimed at the arrogance of the powerful. Harassment and disruption greeted the biotech industry wherever it gathered. The deputy head of the American Treasury said in a statement to the Senate that the campaign against genetic engineering in Europe “is the greatest block to global economic liberalisation presently in existence.”

The actions were hugely successful in frightening institutions into not extending GM research and forcing many supermarkets to withdraw from pushing GM food. Sadly though, ‘pure research’ was rarely attacked in Britain. Apart from the major successes the campaign achieved/is achieving, GM sabotage schooled hundreds in covert cell-structured sabotage—a capacity which will no doubt become ever more useful.

Channel Hopping

Given the decrease in day-to-day struggle and the failure of the London street actions, there was a sharp turn towards international riot tourism. The biggest ‘workshops’ at the 2000 EF! Summer gathering were for those preparing to go to the next meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in Prague. Hundreds went from Britain, experiencing an exciting range of success and failure.

Divisions over violence and symbolism that were always present in the British scene were thrown into relief by the extremes of the situation. Some joined the street-fighting international black block, others (both pro- and anti-violent attacks on the summit), formed together in the Pink and Silver Block. This ‘Barmy Army’ was a contradictory group of people with quite divergent views, pulled together by a desire for ‘national unity’. Diversity in this case, was definitely NOT strength. Putting the problems aside (dealt with well elsewhere⁷⁰), Prague was immensely inspiring. Thousands from



all over Europe converged and forced the conferences to close early, creating a surreal, almost civil war atmosphere. Though the crowds failed to break into the conference, they shattered the desire of future cities to host these events. Previously, a visit from one of these august ruling class bodies was the dream of any town bureaucrat or politician—now it was their nightmare.

moved into—often at the same time as night-time sabotage and irregular ‘big days out’—has been community organising. From helping run women’s refuges and self defence, to doing ecological education with kids and sorting out local food projects, this work has been an important extension of direct action.⁶⁷ While these actions don’t directly defend ecologies they (hopefully) work to grow libertarian and ecological tendencies in society, an integral part of the revolutionary process.⁶⁸

Guerrilla Gardening

The next PGA International Day of Action was Mayday 2000. Once again there were actions all over the globe. Across Britain events happened in quite a few established ‘activist towns’, many very successfully; unfortunately overshadowing them was the mess that was the London ‘Guerrilla Gardening’ event.

The idea of doing another big national action was mooted at an EF! gathering in Oxford the previous winter—nearly everyone thought it a terrible concept. The state would massively prepare, the number of imprisoned activists would no doubt increase. As has been argued elsewhere,⁶⁹ Mayday 2000—and most of its follow ups—were essentially attempts to copy J18 minus the street violence and sound-systems.

J18 had come from a momentum built up by street parties and anti-road protests, and it worked in part because it involved groups all over the country and had the element of surprise. As with national EF! actions after Whatley, the police were once bitten, twice shy. Containment of the crowd by both the cops, and in part by the organisers, created what most saw as both a rubbish party and a rubbish riot. Up until this event there had



A doomed tree in a sterile wasteland

always been quite a strong ‘working relationship’ between radical eco groups nationwide and activists in London. Following Mayday this would, sadly decrease.

Ironically, the symbolic ‘guerrilla gardening’ at Parliament Square only succeeded in reminding activists across the country why they liked actual guerrilla action, like covert GM sabotage; and actual gardening, on their allotments. The next year’s London Mayday was hardly better. The double whammy of N30 followed by Mayday resulted in RTS London losing its ‘great party’ reputation, at the same time as street parties were happening less and less regularly across the country.

Meanwhile actions against GM continued to increase in scale, some involving up to 800 people. The vast majority, however, continued to be



The Birth of Earth First!

“So, from the vast sea of raging moderation, irresponsible compromise, knee-jerk rhetorical Sierra Club dogma, and unknowing (OK, sometimes knowing) duplicity in the systematic destruction of the earth, a small seed of sanity sprouts: Earth First!”
—Howie Wolke, EF! co-founder.

In 1980 five friends hiked into the desert. All long term activists sick with careerism, legality and failure, they knew a new kind of group was needed. One that would break the law, push open the envelope, hit the corporations where it hurt (in the pocket) and most of all never EVER compromise in defence of mother earth. Around their camp fire Earth First! was born.

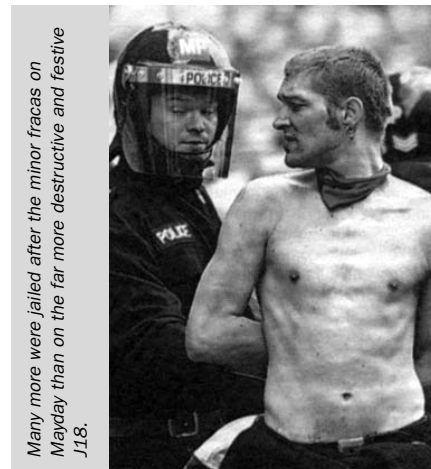
EF!’s first act was one of sarcastic symbolism—and defection. In a land full of memorials to the genocidal victor, EF! raised a plaque commemorating Victorio, an Apache who wiped out a mining camp.

“Victorio, Outstanding Preservationist and Great American. This monument celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the great Apache chief, Victorio’s, raid on the Cooney mining camp near Mogollon, New Mexico, on April 28, 1880. Victorio strove to protect these mountains from mining and other destructive activities of the white race. The present Gila Wilderness is partly a fruit of his efforts. Erected by the New Mexico Patriotic Heritage Society”



The next action EF! pulled off was at the Glen Canyon Dam, where a three hundred foot polythene banner was unfurled down the side of the dam, looking for all the world like a vast crack opening up. The demonstrators chanted RAZE THE DAM. People had campaigned in the past against new dams but no one had ever had the audacity to campaign to pull down those already built. The Glen Canyon Dam in fact held special significance. In a sickening deal the big environmental groups had accepted the damming of the canyon in return for the cancellation of a dam elsewhere. This was exactly the kind of compromise EF! was founded to resist.

Thus from the very beginning EF!ers set themselves not only the task of defending the last fragments but of reversing the process: pulling down the dams and the powerlines. EF! launched its proposal for a network of vast wilderness preserves—half of Nevada for instance would be declared “off limits to industrial human civilisation, as preserves for the free flow of natural processes.” EF! didn’t want people to wait for the state to set them up. Instead the people themselves should make them happen—direct action. If logging needed stopping—stop it, blockade it, trash the machines. If a road needed digging up—DIG IT UP! This militancy was a touchstone of even early EF!, but it wasn’t just its militancy that made it stand out globally (though it shocked Americans). All around the world groups were turning to direct action in environmental struggles. In both Britain and Germany, for example, anti-nuclear mass action had been growing apace. What was really unique in the



Many more were jailed after the minor fracas on Mayday than on the far more destructive and festive J18.

environmental movement was EF! militant biocentrism.

The wilderness proposals preamble stated: "the central idea of EF! is that humans have no divine right to subdue the Earth, that we are merely one of several million forms of life on this planet. We reject even the notion of benevolent stewardship as that implies dominance. Instead we believe that we should be plain citizens of the Land community."

Echoing *The Ecologist's* earlier denunciation of environmentalism Dave Foreman goes one step further.

"Wilderness is the essence of everything we're after. We aren't an environmental group.

Environmental groups worry about environmental health hazards to human beings, they worry about clean air and water for the benefit of people and ask us why we're so wrapped up in something as irrelevant and tangential and elitist as wilderness. Well, I can tell you a wolf or a redwood or a grizzly bear doesn't think wilderness is elitist. Wilderness is the essence of everything. It's the real world."⁴

Within a year EF! moved beyond symbolism to direct struggle. Around the country a combination of civil disobedience and sabotage halted logging and oil drilling. Groups were setting up all over. What many in industry had originally written off as a joke was quickly becoming a nightmare. In 1985 EF!ers published *Ecodefence: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*. This was unashamed, heads held high 350 page manual on how to trash pretty much any machine with which civilisation attacks the wild. Written by over 100 contributors to the *Earth First! Journal*, this book was information for action.

Diggers trashed, forests occupied, billboards subverted, logging roads dug up, trees spiked, offices invaded, windows smashed, snares disabled, computers scrapped—EF! was on the move.

But so now was the state.

The FBI wasn't about to let a crew of hippies, feminists, cowboys and desert anarchists continue to hammer company profits. The late '80s onwards



Corporate/state repression of EF! led to its logical conclusion with the car bombing of California EF! activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney. They were targeted during the successful Redwood Summer forest blockades. The bomb exploded directly below Judi, who awoke in hospital with major injuries. The police then attempted to frame her for her own bombing. Judi is now dead, but her estate has continued to drag the FBI through the courts.



saw a wave of reaction that included infiltration, set ups, conspiracy trials, raids, corporate directed anti-environmental hate groups and even assassination attempts on 'leading' EF!ers. This was a continuation of the FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter Insurgency Programme) previously unleashed in the '60s/'70s upsurge against the Weather Underground, the New Left, the American Indian Movement, the Black Panthers and the Puertorican liberation movement. Now some of the same agents that had destroyed those movements were overseeing the attack on EF!

Pre-existing divisions over philosophy, tactics and not least of all personality were exacerbated by the crisis that engulfed EF! A split begun to emerge between supporters of EF! co-founder Dave Foreman and long term California organiser Judi Bari. All the while both were under serious corporate/state attack. Foreman was woken up one morning with an FBI gun to his head and charged with conspiracy to down power lines. Bari was carbombed.

The split and state attacks seriously weakened US EF! and it would never fully recover it's accelerating drive. Nevertheless survive it did and at the beginning of the '90s it was still the kick ass environmental movement of the developed world. It's actions, ideas and attitude would inspire a massive wave of action across the Atlantic.



assimilated nature of much of American opposition. The victory in America was mirrored in Britain by what many saw as a defeat. RTS London were now in a pickle. People expected them to organise big mass events, but apart from being very busy many were worried about the (violent) genie they had let out of the bottle on J18. N30 in London was a static rally, masks were not handed out. Despite the burning cop van (always a pretty sight) N30 London remained contained by the police, and to a certain extent by the organisers. For good or bad you can't turn the clock back—from now on any RTS style event in the capital would see massive policing and people coming expecting a major ruck.

Of course, resistance was not only centred around GM and the International Days of Action, or for that matter around internationalism; the local was still at the forefront for many. While the big days got the column inches, everywhere activists were fighting small local land struggles and increasingly getting stuck into community organising. In fact, in the twelve months following the Global Street Party, there were 34 direct action camps across the country.⁶³ Most of these were now a combination of tree-houses, benders and tunnels and set up against a diverse set of developments. While most were populated by what The Sun described as the 'tribe of treepeople', some were almost entirely done by locals—the type of people who before the 'road wars' might have simply written to their MP. Direct action was so big in the '90s that it was/is seen as a normal tactic for fighting projects.

This generalisation of direct action is one of the many hidden but hugely important victories the movement has had.

While there were no major technical innovations in camps over this period (Nine Ladies in 2002 looked pretty like Manchester Airport in 1997—but smaller) there were many victories. Simply the threat of a site stopped many developments and many camps had to 'tat down' after victories, usually against local authorities or developers. Even evicted camps sometimes resulted in victory. In London a camp ran for a year against a major

leisure complex in Crystal Palace Park. The eviction came at the cost of over £1 million.

"Bailliffs, accompanied by around 350 police, moved on to the site and began removing the fifty people present from the various tree and bunker defences. The eviction was completed a record breaking 19 days later when the last two occupants came out of the bunker they had been in since the beginning of the eviction."⁶⁴

This campaign won. The eviction cost, and the prospect of more trouble, freaked out the council no end. Though this period saw far less victories than the fight against the national roads programme, it saw many more victories where camps themselves actually won there and then. Despite this, without the unifying nature of the previous period (and with many activists both 'looking to the global' and not willing to go to sites), camps decreased in number.

Other factors also included increased police harassment (especially following J18) and of course 'defeat through victory'. In the South Downs during this time, two major developments, the Hastings Bypass and a house building project in Peacehaven⁶⁵ were both halted (for now) after direct action pledges were launched. Many other groups have been in this situation, which, while a cause for jubilation, has meant that 'the culture of camps' has suffered set-backs while its spectre wins victories. The year and a half between July '99 and January '01 saw only 10 camps operate, a quarter of the number that had been active in the previous year and a half. Since January '02 there have never been more than four ecological direct action camps at any given time.

Other local struggles such as those against casualised workplaces or for access to the land have continued, never though really become period-setting events.⁶⁶ One major area that many have



A cherry picker hoists an activist out of the trees at Crystal Palace. The development was shelved—just one of many of the victories on the land in this period.

The Struggle is Global, The Struggle is Local

The PGA International Day of Action and the Global Street Party catalysed a wave of actions across the globe, unprecedented in recent times in terms of both scale and interconnection.

Hundreds of Indian farmers from PGA affiliated organisations travelled across Europe holding meetings and demos and carrying out anti-GM actions. Strange occasions proliferated. A squatted ex-test site in Essex hosted a visit from the farmers, one of which (to much applause) sang an old Indian song about killing the English. The farmers' organisations had destroyed test sites and a laboratory in India, so despite the huge cultural differences, this was a meeting of comrades. As one Indian put it: "Together we, the peasants, and you, the poor of Europe, will fight the multinationals with our sweat and together we will succeed in defeating them." That month nine test sites were destroyed in one night and a major research organisation pulled out of GM due to being constantly attacked by direct action.⁶¹ The year would see over 50 experiments trashed.



Next came J18, bringing actions in 27 countries by over a hundred groups. Thousands closing down the centre of the capital in Nigeria, besieging Shell, and 12,000 storming the City of London—one of the hearts of the global financial system—were just two of the highlights. J18 in London was more successful than anyone could have imagined. Many offices were closed for the day in fear of the action. Many of those that weren't probably wished they had been. As the soundsystems played, a festive masked crowd (9,000 had been handed out) took advantage of their control of a slice of the city to dance and destroy.

"I ran into the LIFFE building [the Futures Exchange], smashing a few mirrors in the foyer and then looked round to see this masked up figure light a distress flare and hurl it up the escalators towards the offices. Fuck I thought, this is really full on."

"I was nicked... so I was in the police station... one cop came in drenched from head to toe in white paint. I really had to control myself to stop laughing—it looked like he'd been shat on by a huge bird."⁶²



The HQ of the GM food giant Cargill had its foyer trashed as were the fronts of countless other banks, posh car showrooms and the like. The police were solidly defeated on the day. Above the crowd glittered beautiful banners, one proclaiming 'Resist, Refuse, Reclaim, Revolt'; and to back up the statement, hidden inside the banner were half a dozen broom handles—seen the next day on front covers being used against the cops to great effect. Another banner high above the street declared—"Our Resistance is as Global as Capital", with a huge list of places where actions were happening across the planet. June 18th, more than any event before it, saw the coming together of generations of radical opposition in a celebration of our power to create another world—unified around the planet by action.

The success of the first two days of action had now created a global cycle of inspiration. In November 1999, N30 saw more action. Timed once again to coincide with the meeting of the WTO, actions happened in Britain but undoubtedly the main event was in the US—Seattle. Tens of thousands brought the city to a standstill and in three incredible days forced the meeting to close. This was understandably seen as an amazing victory, especially considering the paucity and



EF! Crosses the Atlantic

The climate in Britain in 1991 was similar to that which had given birth to US EF! Organisations that had started off quite radical in the '70s were well and truly assimilated. Big offices, good salaries, lobbying and little else.

Back in 1972, in its first ever newsletter, FoE UK stated:

"We want to avoid the centre-periphery situation, whereby an organisation's forces and resources tend to be drawn to the centre, to 'head office' while patently the strength of the group... is derived from experience in the field."⁵

By the '90s FoE had undeniably FAILED to avoid the 'centre-periphery situation' (to put it politely). Greenpeace was even more centrist—its local groups simply fundraisers.⁶ The late '80s had seen a massive increase in support for environmental groups yet nothing real was happening. Something more radical—and practical—was needed.

On the south coast in the seedy kiss-me-quick seaside town of Hastings some sixth form students were plotting. They were bored out of their minds by A-levels and disillusioned with FoE. In contrast the biocentric approach of US EF! and its victorious direct action tactics were inspiring. The wild was calling...

They formed Britain's first EF! group with a handful of people and no resources. Within a few months they would be making headlines—for now they spray painted Hastings. A year later they had kick-started the biggest wave of ecological defence Britain has seen since the vanquishing of the peasantry...⁷

EF! Birth Period

(1991-1993)

Earth First! hit the headlines when two EF!ers flew from Britain to the rainforests of Sarawak. At the time the Penan tribes were barricading logging roads and standing up to the corporate attack on their home—the forest. The two joined the blockades and for their efforts were locked up for two months in a stinking Malay jail. This news story went through the roof—much to the annoyance of both the Malaysian government and the UK's leading environmental groups.



So as to cover the last decade relatively briefly I'm going to have to paint with big strokes. The time covered divides (pretty) neatly into three overlapping stages:

- Earth First! Birth Period (1991-1993)
- Land Struggle Period (1993—1998)
- Consolidation and Global Resistance Period (1998—2002)

FoE Central Office publicly denounced EF!, arguing that by taking action in Sarawak the EF!ers AIDED the Malaysian government who wanted to paint all opposition as emanating from the West. This position ignored that the Penan had requested that people join them and that the Malaysian government was unlikely to halt the destruction without increased PHYSICAL opposition. As one of the imprisoned EF!ers said:

"In our absence from Britain we had been tried and convicted by the mainstream groups. They have convicted us of a crime they themselves could never be accused of: action. With friends like these, the Earth doesn't need enemies."

This was the first of many public attacks on the new generation of radical ecological activists by the

headquarters of the environmental NGOs. The difference between the two tendencies was shown in July 1991. While the Sarawak Two were in prison the annual meeting of the G7 (worlds seven leading state powers) came to London. EF!ers with no money and few numbers carried out a number of actions—banner drops outside and disruption of meetings inside. The NGOs submitted reports. This mobilisation by EF! was small but a portent of things to come. The next time the G7 came to Britain the radical ecological movement would field not dozens but thousands...

Thanks to the Sarawak campaign the Hastings lot quickly began to make links with people around the country from a variety of pre-existing networks: Green Anarchist, the (embryonic) Rainforest Action Network, ALF, Green Student groups, peace groups, local FoE and the hunt saboteurs. Out of a generation largely consisting of students and dolies disillusioned with mainstream environmentalism, groups sprang up in London, Brighton, Glastonbury, Liverpool, Oxford, Manchester and Norwich.

Roads, Rebels and Rainforests

Inspired by abroad the handful of new activists went about importing the North American/Australian model. What this meant was a combination of non-violent civil disobedience, media stunts, and monkey-wrenching. Actions were organised as part of international rainforest days co-ordinated in the US and Australia. Australia had seen some recent big dock blockades and the tactic was quickly brought to Britain.

On 4th December 1991, in what was EF!'s first really successful action, 200 people invaded Tilbury docks in London. That month the *EF! Action Update* also reported under the headline 'Reclaim the Streets' a small roadblock done by South Downs EF! More was to be heard of Reclaim the Streets...

Tilbury was followed by a 400 strong protest at Liverpool docks.

"On the first day we stormed the fences, occupied cranes, piles of dead rainforest, observation towers and machinery; we hung banners off everything and blocked the busy dock road... Police relations were good; because of full liaison work, violence on both sides was prevented and we all got on like good mates. This was helped with good legal backup, and non-violence training from experienced CND activists... People stayed up the cranes all night... The second day saw a complete change in attitude by the authorities. They'd let us have our fun on the first day and they were determined that the ship would dock on the Wednesday. Under fear of violence, our press office got the media straight down there—our strongest weapon against foul play, but already the police



(Above) Penan logging blockade. Without either large numbers or decent arms the Penan were always unlikely to win. However they might have had a better chance had they been given direct aid by Western environmental groups—which at the time were bringing in MILLIONS on the back of rainforest imagery. Bar EF!/RAN no-one provided any meaningful aid. Many of those who manned the logging barricades in 1991 were forced into becoming loggers due to the destitution their struggle's defeat left them in. Some rebel tribespeople continue to hide out in the forest remnants. (Below) EF! organises 400 people to blockade entrances and occupy cranes, closing Liverpool docks as a shipment of rainforest timber arrives.



contribution to the Global Street Party. Tripods, sound-systems and banners were all smuggled into the area.

"There were some great comic scenes of police incompetence, including them surrounding the small soundsystem (disguised as a family car) and escorting it into the middle of the party. They never once asked why the 'frightened family' inside wanted to escape by deliberately driving the wrong way around the roundabout towards the crowd. By the time they realised their mistake it was all too late... *the decks were under the travel blankets, boys. What threw you off the scent? The baby seat, or the toys?*"⁵⁹

The party, populated by ranks of scary clowns and gurning ravers, lasted for hours, the normal strange combination of ruck and rave. Unamused, the leaders of the most powerful nations on earth fled the city for the day to a country manor. This being their showpiece, the day was a major victory.

Simultaneously other PGA affiliates were on the streets in the first International Day of Action. In India 200,000 peasant farmers called for the death of the WTO, in Brasilia, landless peasants and unemployed workers joined forces and 50,000 took to the streets. Across the world over 30 Reclaim the Streets parties took place, from Finland to Sydney, San Francisco to Toronto, Lyon to Berlin.



Following the Global Street Party, thousands of people from all over Europe bring fire to the streets of Geneva.

The world leaders flew off our island, no doubt with TV images of dancing rioters on their minds, thinking 'Ah now to genteel Geneva and wine by the lake at the WTO'. On arrival a huge (molotov) cocktail party welcomed them, the car of the WTO Director General was turned over and three days of heavy rioting followed. While the movement against power was always global, now it was networking and co-ordinating at a speed and depth rarely seen before.

Street parties and GM sabotage continued throughout the Summer. No longer content with holding one massive street party, RTS London organised two on the same day—in both North and South London. By now state counter-action was a real problem; following the M41 action, the RTS office had been raided and activists arrested for conspiracy. Despite the surveillance, the parties were both pulled off beautifully, with 4,000 in Tottenham and a similar number in Brixton.

"I remember two of us standing at Tottenham in the hot sun, getting drenched by a hose directed at us by a laughing local in a flat above. North London RTS had entirely outfoxed the cops and we knew so had South London. Three sound-systems, thousands of people—all blocking some of London's main arteries. It felt wonderful.



"A couple of nights before, seven oil seed rape test sites had been destroyed across the country on one night. I mean, both of us were usually pretty positive about the movement, yet if a couple of years before someone had predicted that one night multiple affinity groups would covertly hit seven different targets and that that would be almost immediately followed by the simultaneous take-over of two main streets in the capital; well both of us would have thought they were a nutter. Thinking about those actions and looking around us at the smiling crowd we both cracked up, our dreams were becoming reality, we were getting stronger, the music was thumping and the party even had tented pissoirs over the drains!"⁶⁰

Manchester airport dozens moved into the Hulme redbricks in inner-city Manchester. Other needed 'supports' such as vans, printing machines, a mobile action kitchen, prisoner support groups and propaganda distribution were slowly built up. This process of consolidating local direct action communities has paid a large part in making sure that the radical ecological movement hasn't been a one hit wonder: dying off after the victory against the roads programme. At its centre was the obvious truth; what's the point in trying to get more people involved if you can't keep those who already are?

On the Streets, In the Fields

This period saw an escalation of crowd action on the streets and covert sabotage in the fields: both types of action increasingly *seen* as part of a global struggle.

In February '98 the first ever meeting of the PGA was held in Geneva, home of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The congress, despite in-built problems, was an amazing coming together of over 300 people from movements across the globe:

"There's a woman from the Peruvian guerrilla group Tupac Amaru chatting to an Russian environmentalist. Nearby, activists from the Brazilian land squatters movement are doing some funky moves on the dancefloor with a guy from the Filipino seafarers union. Then some Brits brashly challenge a bunch of Maori indigenous activists to a drinking contest."⁵⁵

Needless to say, the Brits lost. Ideas were swapped, arguments had and plans were laid to take action around two events coming up in May—the annual G8 meeting and the second ministerial of the WTO a day later. Back in Britain Reclaim the Streets parties were continuing around the country—Leeds' fourth RTS was typical:

"West Yorkshire coppers threatened to ruin the party before it had started, petulantly waving around side handled batons and vigorously wrestling the not-yet-inflated bouncy castle from the vigorously bouncy crowd. But after half an hour of unrest the police suddenly withdrew. Then a full on 600-strong party: bouncy castle, billowing banners, free food and techno... At the end of the afternoon everyone escorted the system safely away, whilst the police sent a few cheeky snatch squads into the crowd's dwindling remainder; one



person was run down and then beaten with truncheons. 22 arrests."⁵⁶

Meanwhile sabotage of GM sites was on the up. The first action against a test site may have been in '97, but by the end of '98, thirty-six had been done over. Most were destroyed by small groups acting at night—covert, anonymous, prepared and loving every minute. Others were carried out by hundreds in festive daytime trashings. GM sabotage by this time was becoming an international pursuit with actions throughout the 'Global South' and trashings in four other European countries. One of the best aspects of test-site sabotage is that it has been a lot less intimidating for people to do if they have had no experience of sabotage. After all, you don't need to know your way around a JCB engine (or an incendiary device) to work out how to dig up sugar beet. Alongside sabotage, other actions against GM proliferated, ranging from office occupations to the squatting of a (recently trashed) test site.

Activists were getting more sorted, as *Police Review* attested: "The protesters are ingenious, organised, articulate... They use inventive tactics to achieve their aims. Forces are having to deploy increasingly sophisticated techniques in the policing of environmental protests."⁵⁷ These 'sophisticated techniques' were often quite comical: "Undercover cops who'd set up a secret camera in a Tayside farmer's barn and parked up in their unmarked car, hoping to catch some of the Scottish folk who are decontaminating their country by removing genetic test crops, had to run for their lives when the car exhaust set the barn on fire. Both the barn and the car were destroyed."⁵⁸

On May 16th the annual G8 meeting came to Britain. The last time it had been here in 1991, half a dozen EF!ers had caused trouble. In 1998 things were a bit different—5,000 people paralysed central Birmingham in Britain's

were wading in and holding people in a big cage."¹⁰

The description of state force as 'foul play' and our greatest protection from it being the media illustrates well the startlingly naive views held by many at the time. The dock-workers refused to unload the shipment while EF!ers were still running around in danger. Eventually the police cleared the dock and the shipment was unloaded.

February saw the first anti-road direct action at Twyford Down. FoE held a symbolic chaining up of the site which they ended when injured. At the request of the Twyford Down

Association EF!ers from all over the country started a wave of site actions, sabotage and blockades.

Offices started to be targeted around this time with an example being the chaining up of the Malaysian airline office by 29 activists in solidarity with 31 Penan on trial.¹¹

While the national days of actions at Twyford continued down south, up north the campaign to stop peat extraction from Thorne Moors hotted up.



On Monday 13th April £100,000 of damage was done to Fisons machinery. A telephone call to the media claimed the action for Earth First! FoE central office quickly condemned the action on television.

In many ways the first few months of 1992 set a pattern of activism prevalent for much of the next decade—a cycle of national actions, anti-road campaigns, office occupations, night-time sabotage and street blockades.

The South Downs hosted Britain's first EF! gathering in April 1992. Around 60 people turned up to discuss direction, aims and plan future actions. While EF! was quite unified at the time, divisions were definitely present. The recent Moors sabotage and unwise interviews to the press concerning the future environmental use of explosives caused quite a stir. Most agreed that if EF! itself was seen to do criminal damage then it would put groups at risk. A line of 'We neither condemn nor condone' was agreed upon. For some this was simply a legal technicality—in reality EF!ers would still be doing damage. For the less militant faction it was seen as meaning civil disobedience was *the* tactic for EF! while sabotage was secondary, separate and something done by others. Though I'd still say that the wet faction was wrong, it was understandable given the widespread paranoia following the then recent Arizona conspiracy trial and the FBI bombing of EF!ers.

In this period EF! was primarily involved nationally in two campaigns: rainforests and anti-roads. While similar tactics were used for both they had fundamentally different characters. While rainforest days of action would trail off, anti-road action would get bigger and bigger.

Earth First!

No.2

First!

30p

ACTION UPDATE (UK)
Winter Solstice 91.

RECLAIM THE STREETS

On the 21st December South Downs EF! carried out the first road blockade in the Carnageadon campaign and their first action.

The last Saturday before the consumer hype of Christmas set the scene, complemented by several thousand cars which are daily crammed into Brighton. After a gathering of the masses (about 500 in the town centre, banner waving and singing along to groovy tunes we moved in for our attack on the car engine.

Minutes later our blockade was up, horns honked, engines started, motorists screamed, while we sang, laughed and urinated at the scene which was now before us.

When the police arrived they managed to cut down a few

motorists who seemed close to falling off the edge of sanity such as "I've got nothing to loose - move or die!"

Our spirits were lifted however by several people from surrounding houses who ventured out on to the new clear street to offer us tea. Planners by tried to convince us to blockade their street and people waved and gave us the thumbs up for our efforts.

The police finally broke the blockade - after about half an hour of deliberation - when we failed to 'be reasonable'.

There was an arrest - which was followed with no charges, just a chance for a good rest for a very tired activist.

Workshops took place on the following day, where activists from Glastonbury, London and Brighton had the chance to talk about the action and the way forward.

Upcoming.....Upcoming.....Upcoming.....Upcoming.....Upcoming.....

LIVERPOOL TIMBER SHIP BLOCKADE 27th Feb. <small>see page 5</small>	SAVE CANADIAN OLD GROWTH 22nd Feb. <small>see page 5</small>	PROTECT TWYFORD DOWN 1st March. <small>see page 3</small>
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While the rainforest actions were often very successful—on their own terms—they rarely lasted more than a day. On May 11th '92 over 100 invaded the yard of Britain's biggest mahogany importer. Though a successful action in itself, it remained in the whole a media stunt. The site remained operative, the offices weren't trashed and next day it opened up again as usual. We all felt empowered by the action, but there was a different feeling at Twyford Down. At Twyford the movement could engage in protracted physical

resistance. It was a land struggle. You could feel the land you were struggling over with your hands and your soul. When people started to move onto the land itself they connected with it, became part of it. Standing in the sun, grass between your toes looking to the diggers on the horizon *the rage grew*. It wasn't a single issue—it was war.

On an entirely practical level it was a focus; an easily accessible battleground local groups could drive their vans to. In this struggle EF! grew and evolved. Most actions through '92 were done by

Friend or FoE?

In the early 1990s Friends of the Earth (FoE) central office made a concerted effort to restrict the growth of the new movement. Negative public statements about EF! were issued (most notably about the Sarawak jailings) but it wasn't until the April 1992 Thorne Moors sabotage that FoE central office showed its true colours when Andrew Lees—then head of FoE—condemned the action on TV.

"We have to be very careful that this style of anti-environmental action does not actually get misrepresented as something the environment movement support. We decry, we deny it. It has no place in a democracy which relies, and must rely, on public demanding the politicians deliver the goods."⁸

This public condemnation of the very essence of direct action showed how far FoE central office had come from its early radical days. Contrast it with a statement by FoE's first director twenty years previously.

"Whilst it is the case that the Japanese experience of people physically fighting the construction of an airport or motorway has not been repeated in Britain that is not to say that it will not occur here. Indeed... it is almost inconceivable that clashes... will be avoided... When patience runs out we won't really be—what's the word?—militant. After all is said and done, putting sugar in a bulldozer's petrol tank is relatively undramatic compared with blowing up a mountain."⁹

After slugging the action publicly Lees got to work on his own members. Worried (correctly) that many local FoE groups were showing interest in direct action an edict was issued banning them from working with EF! It even went as far as to warn FoE groups that if they demonstrated with EF! their right to use the FoE Ltd. name might be revoked. This intimidation was too much for some of the FoE grassroots. At FoE National Conference local groups led by Birmingham and Brighton challenged Lees on this and defeated him.

Lees and others at FoE Central had seen the new movement as a potential threat to power. They thought they could nip it in the bud—they couldn't. It would grow much bigger and gain vast public sympathy. The strategy of FoE changed—from one of strength to one of weakness. By the mid-'90s a new director was trying to court EF!—even turning up to an EF! Gathering with a large block of dope (whisky for the natives). He envisaged a series of meetings at which he and two or three other top staff could meet a similar number of EF! 'representatives' behind closed doors. This was of course out of the question. Just as no-one could represent EF! at a national level, EF! could not represent everyone involved in eco-direct action. Over twenty EF!ers came to the first meeting, most to make this point and make sure no one could sell the movement down the river. FoE said it had learnt from its past mistakes—most EF!ers looked sceptical.

At the same time the Newbury Bypass saw FoE central's biggest push to capitalise on direct action. It even managed to take over the campaign's media liaison, (resulting in a major increase in its media profile and resultant subs money). Promises not to publicly slag direct action were hastily forgotten when over a hundred stormed an office throwing computers out of the window. When hundreds took part in the festive burning of diggers, FoE Central once again condemned the resistance.

The experience of dealing with FoE Central would be just the first of its kind. A few years later, following the J18 global day of action, the Socialist Workers Party (another reformist hierarchical racket) would try to boost its membership by fronting itself as the backbone of the movement. Just like FoE it condemned militant and genuine resistance while trying to build bridges to mainstream groups.

NGOs, political parties. These professional priests of assimilation are simply vampires—let's do some staking.



High street squat centres spread across the country, helping group outreach and consolidation. Open and accessible political spaces challenged popular perceptions: "ooh, I didn't know anarchists cleaned windows" said one little old lady to a sponge-wielding squatter.



on, find out what's next, live outside, strategise, hang out, incite, laugh and conspire."⁴⁹

At the 1997 gathering near Glasgow, attended by around 400 people in total, it was obvious that with the roads programme massively scaled down, some major things were going to change. While there were many discussions throughout the week, these were some of the key points:

- The national roads programme would continue to create individual aberrations (such as Birmingham Northern Relief Road) but it would not provide so many sites for resistance nationwide.
- The road campaigns had been very successful as struggles, but had largely failed to leave solid groups or communities of activists behind after the 'direct action camp roadshow' moved on.
- Most of those present saw the radical ecological movement (and EF! in particular) as a network of revolutionaries, part of a global libertarian, ecological movement of movements.

Of course these things converged. Given that revolution wasn't looking immediate that week, as revolutionaries we had to be in it for 'the long haul'. The '90s had seen rapid growth, thousands had taken action but the movement, being

relatively new, didn't have the infrastructure to support long term participation. With less major land struggles, less people would get involved in direct action. There was a high risk that established groups might entropy when activists got disillusioned. 'Non-aligned' individuals who had been active against roads, yet who hadn't become part of any network, might simply drift into reformist politics/work/drugs/mental asylums.⁵⁰

Unsurprisingly the gathering didn't cook up any magical formulae, but it did throw together something passable. To tackle a drop in 'recruitment' concerted outreach would be done and to keep what activists the movement did have, local groups would consolidate. The fight against GM test sites was enthusiastically accepted as a new terrain of action.⁵¹ The keynote evening talk on the weekend was done by a woman recently returned from the Zapatista autonomous territories. With the first congress of Peoples Global Action (PGA) coming up the following Spring it looked like despite the drop in *sizeable* confrontations on the land, we were in for an exciting few years...

Local Consolidation and Outreach

Squat cafés were nothing new, but 1998 saw a sudden proliferation around the country, as groups took over buildings in highly prominent locations, creating autonomous spaces where people interested in direct action could mix and conspire. In January, Manchester EF! opened up the first of many OKasional Cafés: "The squats were intended mainly to get political ideas across through socialising, as political groups in Manchester were quite inaccessible."⁵² Similar projects were carried out in Brighton, London, North Wales, Leeds, Worthing and Nottingham. In Norwich a squat café was opened because the local group "thought it would be a good idea to do a squat centre as a form of outreach and as a group building exercise."⁵³ In this period 'direct action forums' sprung up all over—regular town meetings for mischief making miscreants. Both the forums and the centres were essentially attempts to bring together the diverse scenes of animal liberationists, class struggle anarchists, forest gardeners, EF!ers and the like.

In parallel with this outreach, many radical eco circles were working to give themselves permanent bases and support mechanisms—needed for the long haul.⁵⁴ The number of towns with activist housing co-ops would increase substantially over the next four years. In the countryside quite a few communities of ex-road protesters would consolidate in bought or occupied land/housing from the Scottish Highlands, to Yorkshire and through to Devon. Others went onto the water in narrow boats. Following the last evictions at

After all, there wasn't any major expansions elsewhere happening at the time.

Once the evictions had finished, some moved onto smaller camps around the country—but many of those who remained active moved off site and onto new terrains of struggle. Britain's higgeldy-piggeldy mix of land occupations, office invasions and national actions were happening in a global context, and that context was changing. In 1997 two landmark events happened, one in Cambridgeshire and one in Southern Spain; both would shape the next period.

The Mexican Zapatista rebels had inspired strugglers around the world and in 1996 held an *encuentro* of movements for 'land, liberty and democracy' in their Lacandon rainforest home. A diverse mix of 6,000 turned up. The following year in 1997 a second global *encuentro* was held in Spain. Attended by many from Britain, this proposed the formation of the Peoples' Global Action (PGA). It seemed a new global movement was being born and EFlers wanted in. At the same time it turned out that the 'globe' was soon coming to Britain.

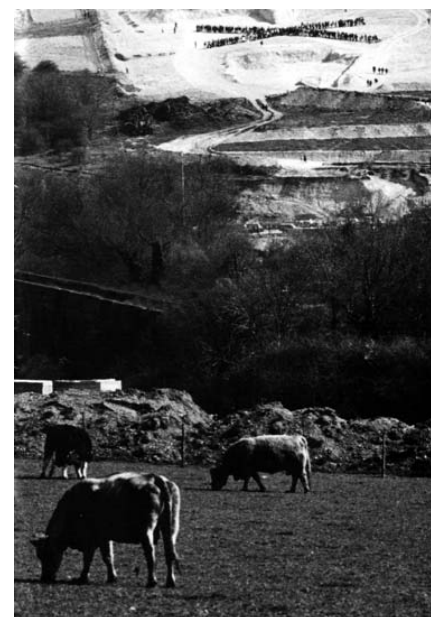
"In the Autumn of 1997 a handful of activists started to talk about the May 1998 G8 summit. It seemed an opportunity not to be missed—world leaders meeting in the UK and the chance to kick-start the debate on globalisation."⁴⁸

On the continent there was increasing resistance to genetic engineering; but in Britain, none. In the summer of '97 in a potato field somewhere in Cambridgeshire activists carried out the first sabotage of a GM test site in Britain. It was the first of hundreds to come.

Land Struggles—though still useful and active—would soon no longer be the main 'hook' the movement hung on. Camps would continue to be set up and many victories (and some defeats) were



yet to come but the radical ecological movement was definitely now going in a new direction. The Land Struggle Period had inspired, involved and trained thousands. Let's make no mistake—it played the major role in the cancellation of 500 new roads, numerous quarry/open cast expansions, and many house building projects. An amazing coming together of rebel subcultures (travellers, animal liberationists, EFlers, city squatters, Welsh ex-miners, ravers, local FoE activists and the mad) forged the biggest wave of struggle for the land Industrial Britain had ever seen.



Reformist groups organise a symbolic 'vote' at Twyford in the run up to the 1992 general election. After the photo opportunity, the crowd goes down the hill, many spontaneously joining an EFl road blockade, pickaxing a dam and flooding the site, causing thousands of pounds worth of damage. Sunny sabotage—a far better message to send the politicians.

between 10-50 people and commonly resulted in minor arrests for breach of the peace. Sabotage commenced almost immediately. The site was regularly flooded by redirecting the River Itchens water and machines were wrenched. Just as it was new for us so too it was for the state, who were suprisingly unprepared. In these first few months it would be case of running onto site, climbing a crane or locking onto a digger. An hour or so later the state's most regular foot-soldier would arrive—Bill Aud, a copper with a sideline in mobile disco.

The Camps Begin...

The need for groups to have somewhere to sleep after travelling distances for days of action was the catalyst that set up Britains first ever ecological direct action camp. A traveller site had long graced one side of the hill, but in June an obviously separate action camp was set up on the dongas—an area of threatened downland furrowed deep with sheep droves. This became a base for action against the road-building that was going on further down the hill. On the dongas a real feeling

of tribe developed as many more were attracted to the site by summer beauty and direct action.

While some travellers had early on got involved in EFl,¹² it was at Twyford that a real mix started to develop between (predominately urban) EFl/Animal lib types and (predominately rural) travellers. Each threw different ingredients into the campfire cauldron (of veggie slop). The activists—action techniques. The Travellers—on the land living skills. Teepees and benders sprung up, machines were trashed. This crossover would propel ecological direct action into a potent cycle of struggle with big numbers and big successes.

However while both sides complimented each other it would be ridiculous to iron over the very real family squabbles. As the summer progressed there was tension within the Dongas Tribe over what offensive actions should be taken and what defensive measures should be put in place. Discussion of how to resist the (obviously imminent) eviction was silenced with the classic hippy refrain: 'If you think negative things, negative things will happen'. It was even suggested, in a basically religious formulation, that mother earth would simply not 'allow' the destruction of the dongas to happen. This tendency grew as the months went on until by autumn serious conflict reared up. Following a threat by security to repeat an earlier arson attack on the camp in retaliation for site sabotage, offensive action was actually 'banned' by a 'meeting of the tribe'. Hippy authoritarian pacifists¹³ practically 'banished' EFlers who had been involved from the start. Predictably, however, the state wasn't standing idle—it was preparing.

Elsewhere the campaign against roads was building apace. New road openings were disrupted and the newspapers were already talking about the 'next Twyford'—the battle for Oxleas Wood in London. Across the country the government boasted it was building the biggest road programme since the Romans. These roads smashed through some of the most biologically important areas—SSSIs (Special Sites of Scientific Interest) and so it was obvious that by fighting roads one could take on Thatchers 'Great Car Economy', while directly defending important habitat. Direct action was starting to spread beyond roads. At Golden Hill in Bristol an impressive community resistance against Tesco destroying local green space resulted in arrests and mass policing. A new air was definitely abroad.

Back at Twyford the inevitable eviction came brutally on the 9th of December—Yellow Wednesday. A hundred flouro-jacketed Group 4 security guards escorted bulldozers in to trash the camp. Throwing themselves in front of the landrovers and machines those in the camp slowed the eviction—suffering arrests and injuries. Two

Consolidation and Global Resistance Period (1998—2002)

The spectacular growth of our action through much of the '90s was in part thanks to the clear ecological priority of the moment—stop roads. While many camps continued after Newbury against other developments, without the obvious and nationally unifying factor of major road-building the movement was a bit lost. We had never had to really think about what to defend before; the Department of Transport did that job for us. By moving into a period of Consolidation and Global Resistance we

could pretty much sidestep this question—for a time anyway.

Tribal Gatherings

Throughout the '90s EFl gatherings were the main place that activists from all over got together to discuss and organise. While most that attended felt some allegiance to the EFl banner, many were not active in listed EFl groups and would not consider themselves 'EFlers'. More, the gatherings were/are a place:

"...where people involved in radical ecological direct action—or those who want to be—get together for four days of time and space to talk, walk, share skills, learn, play, rant, find out what's

were rendered unconscious by cops; lines of coiled razor wire crossed the down. The drama appearing live on television brought local ramblers, environmentalists, kids and the simply shocked to the site, many of whom without hesitation joined the resistance. Others came from around the country, making the eviction last three days. The eviction was an important moment—deeply depressing to most involved, it nevertheless captured the imagination of thousands.

“Many, particularly the media, who like a nice neat story—will see the move of the Dongas Camp as the closing act of the Twyford drama, but the battle has not ended—it’s beginning. If they think they can stop us with threats and violence, we’ve got to make damn sure they don’t. Hunt sabs regularly get hassle but carry on regardless—let’s learn from their example. Obstruction on site needs to be co-ordinated and supported. The number of days work lost is what counts. To broaden it out nationally, every Tarmac and associated subcontractors office, depots and sites in the country should be targeted. Every leaflet produced should contain the information needed for a cell to wreak £10,000 of havoc against the contractors and even put smaller sub-contractors out of business. No Compromise in Defence of Planet Earth!”—*Do or Die* No.1, Jan 1993

From the Ashes... Twyford Rising!

In February following an eventful invasion of Whatley Quarry, a new camp was set up at Twyford. Off route and up on the hill overlooking the cutting, this camp, and those that followed it, would have a very different attitude than the one on the dongas. Not defence, ATTACK!

Starting with half a dozen campers (Camelot EF) the site steadily grew through spring with direct action practically everyday—and many nights too! Some actions were carried out by a handful of people locking onto machines, others were mass invasions by hundreds. Diggers were trashed, offices invaded. A sunrise circle-dance was followed by an eight car sabotage convoy.

The state response to these actions grew more organised: hordes of guards, private investigators and cops were stationed daily to stop the actions.



They failed. Endless arrests, restrictive bail conditions, camp evictions and harassment only hardened resolve. By late April the Department of Transport was in the High Court pushing for an injunction on 76 named individuals. To back up their case they produced evidence nearly a foot thick with hilarious daily reports from Twyford. A not unusual entry read thus:

“At 0845hrs a group of protestors raided one of the small earthmoving operations at Shawford Down and did some very severe damage to the excavator before making off. There were between 35-50 of them and they seemed to know exactly what to do to cause the most damage to the machines.”¹⁴

Unsurprisingly the High Court backed the DoT and enjoined the 76. The reaction from our side was swift, two days after the hearing 500 joined a Mass Trespass at the cutting. In a moving sign of multi-generational resistance the crowd was addressed by Benny Rothman, one of the leaders of the 1932 Kinder Scout Trespass. The mass injunction breaking resulted in six being sent to jail for a month—the first of many to end up in the clink for fighting road building. On the day of their release they were greeted by friends, smiles, hugs and... sabotage. In Collingham, Lincolnshire, under the spray painted title ‘For the Prisoners of Twyford Down’, the following was wrenched: 3 bulldozers, 3 Tarmac Trucks, 2 Diesel Pumps, 1 Work Shed and a Control Station.¹⁵

Tarmac PLC was feeling the pressure. Across the country many of its offices were occupied, its machines targeted. When its AGM was disrupted the directors made their fears known. Thanks to good corporate research their home addresses had



Environment building in Whitehall. Though the police succeeded in stopping this happening, the march ended in a huge party/riot at Trafalgar Square, above the crowd a massive banner—‘Never Mind the Ballots, Reclaim the Streets’. More and more street parties were continuing around the country.

National Actions

After Whatley had been such a success, people wanted more. Unfortunately, the police were once bitten, twice shy. Any whiff of an EF! national mobilisation resulted in massive policing that made most actions just impossible. While the cops were still often outfoxed, mostly by moving location (an action in North Wales moved to Manchester, an action at an oil refinery moved to an open-cast site), it was largely making the best of a bad situation.

Yet it wasn’t just the state that caused problems here. The big Whatley action had come out of discussion at an EF! national gathering, with groups all over committing themselves to both turning up and organising it. Other ‘national actions’ that followed were often organised by local groups who wanted an injection of collective power into their campaign. This meant that effectively they were local campaigns calling on the national movement for support—very different from the national movement organising to support a local campaign.

One of the biggest failures came when a local group—Cardigan Bay EF!—declared a national day of action on the anniversary of the Milford Haven oil spill. This was to be followed by actions against opencast in the Welsh valleys.

Vans arrived from around the country to find little local work had been done by CBEF! (not even accommodation had been sorted) and no decent plans were in place, the ‘organising group’ not even turning up to sort out the mess. Meanwhile hundreds of cops waited at the port. Thankfully, the wonderful Reclaim the Valleys stepped in days before they were due to and sorted a squat and a few decent actions. Nevertheless, it was a disempowering experience to say the least.

It was followed by an action at Shoreham Docks that drew 60 people... and 800 cops. Like at Milford Haven where the refinery had been closed despite no action, all work at Shoreham stopped for the day. On one level these actions were successful, in that they stopped work comprehensively, but disempowerment meant they stifled any chance of long term organising around the issue.

Public defeats also resulted in a loss to the movement ‘threat capacity’—something which had the power to stall developments before they started. Though even successful national actions (such as that at Doe Hill opencast in Yorkshire, which turned into a smorgasbord of criminal damage) did not result in local campaign numbers swelling, the threat capacity factor meant that local groups looked a whole lot scarier to the target involved. This fear was a factor in many developments not going ahead.

Attempts to go beyond individual land struggles to get ‘at the root of the problem’ usually meant taking a step backwards to occasional, media-centric events with no easily winnable immediate objectives. National direct action campaigns against the oil industry and ruling class land ownership both died early on.

A Shift from the Local to the Global

In 1997 a major shift of emphasis happened in the movement. At the time it wasn’t so obvious, but after a while it would become seismic. The last massive eviction-based land struggle with multiple camps was the resistance at Manchester airport. This was near Newbury in scale and saw weeks of sieges and evictions, scraps in the trees, night-time fence pulling and underground tunnel occupations: “What Newbury did for the South, Manchester Airport did for the North in terms of attracting thousands of new people and cementing the network.”⁴⁷

Both sides of the conflict were now highly evolved, with complex delay tactics and well-trained state tunnel and tree specialists; on one level it became a clash of professionals. Manchester probably continues to have an impact on the speed at which the government is prepared to build new airports, but the campaign—unlike that against roads or quarries—was not easily reproducible.



Wales thanks to the sterling resistance at the evictions of the Selar and Brynhenllys camps. Camps saved nature reserves from destruction by agribusiness in Sussex. Camps stopped supermarket developments. Camps stopped leisure developments in Kent, and quarries were put on hold in the Southwest after costly evictions at Dead Woman's Bottom.

If Newbury put the final nail in the coffin of the 'Roads to Prosperity' building programme, the A30 camps were shovelling in the soil. Put into full use for the first time, tunnels became another tactic of delay. Tree defence and complex subterranean networks made the eviction at Fairmile last longer than every previous eviction—with the tunnels staying occupied six days in. While the resistance to the A30 was amazing it was also a waymarker. Following the evictions there was NO daytime offensive action against the construction contract, though a one day camp and some impressive 'night-work' did get done. The amazing community had evolved over two and half years of occupation—its effect would last far longer.

By mid 1997 Road Alert! could happily report the demise of the national roads programme.

"It has been sliced from about £23 billion to a few £billion since 1992; nearly 500 out of the 600 road schemes have been scrapped; that's 500 places untrashed, saved—for now. These are massive cuts," *Construction News* wrote '...the major road-building programme has virtually been destroyed'... It seems fair to link the rise of direct action with the diminishing budget, down every year since 1993, the year of the big Twyford actions."⁴⁶

On TV even the ex-Transport Minister Stephen Norris, of all people, presented a documentary on how 'the protesters were right' and he was wrong. Contractor newspapers sounded more and more like obituary columns every week.

The unlikely had happened, the movement's main immediate objective had been largely attained, and the 'threat capacity' generated by the struggle now deterred developments in other fields.

More sites were still being set up—now against disparate targets; logging in Caledonia, housing in Essex, an airport extension at Manchester.

Fly, Fly into the Streets!

While most camps were in the countryside, contestation was also spreading in the streets. After the success of the London '95 street parties, RTS followed up with an 8,000 strong take over of the M41; across the country RTSs were held in dozens of towns often more than once. Some were amazing revelatory moments—windows into future worlds—others were just crap. In '96/'97 RTS London had mobilised the alternative culture ghetto—now it was organising a break out, first making connections with the striking tube-workers, then with the locked-out Liverpool Dockers. In an inspiring act of solidarity radical eco-types climbed cranes, blockaded entrances and occupied roofs at the Docks. Around 800 protestors and dockers mingled on the action and a strong feeling of connection was born.

Following on the back of this action came a massive mobilisation just before the May election, around 20,000 marched and partied with the Dockers at the 'March for Social Justice.' The plan had been to occupy the then empty Department of

Earth First! Action Update

No.30 AUGUST 96

"Security 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!



THE M41
The M41 was the first of a series of road closures in London. It was a major road, and its closure was a significant event. The closure was organized by the Earth First! group, and it was a success. The road was closed for several days, and the closure was a major victory for the group. The closure was a major victory for the group, and it was a success. The closure was a major victory for the group, and it was a success.

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As the AU reports, 8,000 take over the M41. A giant pantomime dame promenades. Under her skirt, a pneumatic drill digs up the road to the rhythm of the soundsystems' beat.

been uncovered and published. Some had been freaked enough to hire security guards—their apprehension heightened by past targeting of directors by Animal Liberationists. Considering the relatively few 'radical eco' home visits since, this may seem surprising. However at this time the movement was influenced by quite divergent groups. The fact that directors were largely left unscathed in the years to come was not a given—it was a choice.

During that summer everything from Druid curses to burning tarmac was hurled at the contractors in a hectic campaign which was; "a symbol of resistance, a training ground, a life changer and a kick up the arse to the British green movement."¹⁶ Nevertheless, though it slowed it, the M3 was not stopped. 'The cutting at Twyford Down gets ever deeper and the down, the water-



meadows and of course most of the dongas are now destroyed, but it's destruction has given birth to a movement and the fight goes on."¹⁷

As the resistance at Twyford waned anti-road actions were spreading across the country like wildfire. Digger diving was organised on a near daily basis at Wymondham near Norwich, and in Newcastle hammocks were strewn in the trees at Jesmond Dene. Like Twyford, once again it was local EFlers and residents that catalysed the initial actions that burgeoned into widescale *tribal* resistance on the land.

Further north, action was hotting up in Scotland with tree and crane sits, some lasting days, connected to the M74 in Glasgow. Even further north was the campaign against the Skye Bridge, a monstrosity cutting across the Kyle of Lockash, immortalised in the environmental classic, *The Ring of Bright Water*. The bridge not only affected the direct habitat (famous for its otters) but connected the Hebrides into the mainland infrastructure, endangering the whole regions ecology by exposing it to further development.

Unfortunately at the time there was only limited active local support for resistance. The first and only day of action against the building was carried out by around a dozen, who, bar a few from Skye and Glasgow EFl, were all from 'south of the border'. As cops stationed on the island could be counted on one hand, reinforcements were brought in. Inflatables were launched as the main work was being carried out off barges. The reaction of the construction firm was brutal—industrial hoses were used as water-cannons in an attempt to knock those up floating cranes into the sea. The Scottish press were present in numbers and also enjoyed some corporate PR. The front page of *The Scotsman* put it like this:

"Journalistic objectivity is a wonderful thing. However, it is easily damaged, especially by people trying to ram your boat, sink you, throw rocks at you, then threatening you first with a crowbar and then a grappling hook, not to mention attacking you with a tracked excavator."¹⁸

The boats were impounded and most were arrested. Bussed a hundred miles away, the group was given strict bail by an all-powerful 'Roving Sheriff' (another great colonial legacy) not to return to the Highlands and Islands for over a year. Police escorted the van most of the way to the border. Elsewhere actions were taken against the projects funders, The Bank of America, but the campaign was effectively stillborn by low local involvement and immediate corporate/state 'direct action'.

A very different situation had produced a very different result at Oxleas Wood in London. These woods in SE London were widely believed to be the next big battle and 3,000 people had signed a pledge to 'Beat the Bulldozers'. After over a year of

direct action at Twyford and with resistance spreading the government knew it couldn't risk hitting such a beautiful place within 'recruitment distance' of millions. The summer of 1993 saw this £300 million scheme dropped, a major victory after just a year of sustained action against infrastructural growth.

Not Single Issues, Just One War

This success was all the more impressive considering that this campaign, though then becoming the dominant terrain of struggle for the movement, was still only one of the battles it was involved in. The daily fight on the land was interspersed with national and local days of action across the country on a range of issues.

Timber depots in Oxford, Rochdale and London were all targeted by days of action. One national week of action against mahogany saw 'ethical shoplifting' (the seizure of illegally logged timber from shops), in towns across the country; and abroad the simultaneous total destruction of logging equipment by the Amazonian Parkana Indians!¹⁹ Other actions included bank occupations (against Third World debt), an ICI factory invasion (to highlight continued ozone depletion), road blockades (against car culture) and regular quarry blockades at Whatley in Somerset. These different battles were all viewed as part of the same war by EF!ers. Many of the hundreds that invaded Oxford Timbnet for the second time had come direct from a weekend of action at Twyford. The next day a cavalcade moved onto Bristol to help disrupt the opening of the disputed Golden Hill Tesco. Then, as now (maybe more so) many EF!ers were also also involved in the animal liberation movement.

The campaigns were carried out in a global context of escalating radical ecological resistance. Anti-road campaigns in the (French) Pyrenees, anti-whaling action by Sea Shepherd (around Norway), the campaign against the Narmada Dam (in India), the Ogoni struggle against Shell (Nigeria), EF! defence of the Danube (in Slovakia), biotech companies bombed (in Switzerland), GM crop experiments dug up (in the Netherlands), and of course anti-logging battles (in N. America, the Pacific, the Amazon and Australia).



It's a long way from North America to Newcastle but in 1993 the tactic of protracted tree-sits crossed the Atlantic. Following demos earlier in the year the bulldozers had gone into Jesmond Dene unannounced on June 16th. The state, however, hadn't factored in skiving Georgie kids, who stopped the machines working while the alarm went out. The next morning protestors

barricaded the site entrance. More kids came back and shovelled earth with plastic flowerpots to build up the barricade—the Flowerpot Tribe was born. The campfire was set burning and a strong community formed. A combination of 'local talent' and reinforcements from Twyford and elsewhere, made the next five months an avalanche of site occupations, tree-sitting, piss-taking and nightly sabotage. The legendary winds of Newcastle seemed to blow down the construction site fencing again and again! The kids sang: "The Chainsaws, the Chainsaws—they cut down all our trees. The Pixies, the Pixies, trashed their JCBs." Of course despite the laughs it was hard.

"Everyone is getting very knackered and pissed off—tree sitting is saving the trees that are hammocked, but it's tiring, cold, stressful and often boring. Ground support people face prison for breaking injunctions as they take food to trees. It's GRIM for sitters when the trees are felled near them. Local people sab a Cement mixer under the copper beech by throwing rock salt into it—a workman goes berserk and tries attacking the beech with a JCB, trying to knock the tree-sitters out. He survived but the copper beech loses another couple of branches."²⁰

In 1991 EF!'s handful of activists were the radical ecological movement. By the end of the summer of 1993, EF! not only had 45 local groups but had catalysed thousands to take direct action—mostly not under the EF! banner. Now one could really begin to talk about a movement. After the Jesmond Dene camps were evicted one of the Flowerpot Tribe wrote:

"Those who've been involved are also gearing up to fight other schemes... What we've learnt will spread out to other road and environmental protests... it just gets bigger and bigger. If we can't stop the bastards totally we can COST them, show them there's no easy profit in earth rape. They've already been cost millions—let's cost them some more."²¹

times best, with a mix of photos, interviews and cartoons. VERY highly recommended!)

The state had by this time learnt from some of its previous mistakes; no longer would it try to clear the road in stages at the same time as building works progressed. In the past this allowed a healthy mix of offensive action against construction as well as defensive action against clearance. At Newbury the chainsaws were given five months to clear the site. Initially when protests had started the massive increased cost of clearance had pushed up costs—billed straight to the corporations, destroying any profits. Now when the contracts were tendered these millions were factored in—billed straight to the state. This made the campaigns of this period increasingly defensive in nature. Though there were attempts to move beyond this, to a certain extent it was an inevitable result of a change in 'terrain'. Yet the costs of keeping a force capable of clearing a route dotted with camps, with highly evolved defence techniques, needing highly paid specialist climbers



After a hard day digging tunnels at Fairmile there's nothing quite like a perfect cuppa and a subterranean knitting session.



Fort Trollheim on the A30. Temporary Autonomous Zones don't get more autonomous than this. Where the barricades rise, the state ends.

to evict, was now immense. Newbury, more than any other, was a national campaign in one locale. Practically everyone who had been heavily involved in radical eco stuff over the preceding five years bumped into each other in the wasteland. This was no accident—everyone knew that at Newbury the state wanted to break the movement. In reply people were determined to break the state's resolve to build roads beyond Newbury. Glorious defeats for us meant economic defeat for the Department of Transport. This war of

attrition had been rolling now for years but at Newbury both sides wanted to put in the death blow. After over a year of building defences, five months of fighting evictions, night after night of sabotage and a lifetime of manic moments, the clearance was finished; but in the aftermath so was the roads programme. Of course it took a while to die. Some projects were still in the pipeline and others were continuing, but after Newbury the conclusion was not in doubt.

A year after the clearance work had started, hundreds arrived at Newbury for the anniversary, now known as the Reunion Rampage. After minor scuffles and tedious speeches from the likes of FoE leadership, fencing surrounding a major construction compound was cut, and the crowd surged in.

"So we put sand in the fuel tanks of generators, took spanners to the motor of the crane. As we were leaving the site, a tipper truck on fire to my left and the crane on fire down to my right, there was one man standing straight in front of me, silhouetted against the bright billowing flames rolling up out of the portacabin. He stood in an X shape, his hands in victory V signs, shouting 'YES! YES! YES!' It wasn't chaotic, there was a sense of purpose, of collective will, of carnival, celebration, strong magic, triumph of people power, of a small but very real piece of justice being done."⁴⁵

After Defeats, Victories!

If this kind of disorder freaked the nation state, local government was terrified. At Guildford, Surrey Council cancelled a scheme where five camps had been set up—it simply couldn't afford the economic and social costs of taking on the movement. Opencast mines were shelved in South

This repression, like the CJA, backfired. Instead of marginalising GA it actually made them far more well known; an alliance of largely liberal publications swung behind them, motions of support were even brought up at the Green Party and FoE annual conferences. This increased exposure, combined with M15 fears about court documents released in appeal hearings compromising their agents, secured their release. A major aim of the repression against GA had been to deter sabotage, while large parts of the CJA were aimed at stopping 'Aggravated Trespass'. Their absolute failure to deter the radical ecological direct action movement was shown clearly one morning in Somerset.

Whatley Quarry—Yee Ha!

"The 'national' EF! action to shut down Whatley Quarry was an even greater success than expected. A week later the owners hadn't managed to restart work. At 5.30am, 400 activists descended on the quarry. Small teams ensured gates were blocked and all plant and machinery occupied... Detailed maps and a predetermined plan ensured police and security were out manoeuvred. Tripods were carried 9 miles overnight and set up on the quarry's rail line whilst lorries were turned away. Press reports state that £250,000 worth of damage was caused—not counting the cost of a week's lost production, for a quarry normally selling 11,000 tonnes per day! Twenty metres of railway track leading out of the quarry 'disappeared'; the control panel for video monitoring of the plant fell apart; a two storey crane pulled itself to bits; three control rooms dismantled themselves; and several diggers and conveyor belts broke down."⁴²

The police managed to arrest 64 people, mostly under the CJA for aggravated trespass. In time, most of the cases were dropped. All through the land struggle period EF! had been organising national actions—this was by far the most effective. It had come on the back of four years of



concerted actions at Whatley and showed what can be achieved by good organisation and the element of surprise. While the cops had prepared in their hundreds, they simply hadn't factored in that 'hippies' could get up at 4am. This action really set the mood for the next year.

"An Adrenaline Junkie's Idea of Heaven"

"Police on the Newbury Bypass site today condemned the tactics of those who last night took a heavy tractor from road-works and drove to a construction area, where they damaged compound fencing, lighting equipment and a portacabin building. Police were called but the offenders ran away before they arrived at the scene."⁴³

The Newbury bypass was the big battle. The scale was immense. Nine miles long, over 30 camps, ten thousand trees, over a thousand arrests. A daily struggle with up to 1,600 security guards⁴⁴, hundreds of police, private detectives, and state climbers lined up against tribes of hundreds of committed, mud-living activists. Day after relentless day, evictions and resistance. "Every morning, cider and flies".

I don't have space to cover all the campaigns across the country, so I am focusing on those which saw important changes. Equally, I can't hope to give a true impression of what it was like to be living on site, at Newbury least of all. Crazy and medieval—in both good ways and bad—is all I'll say. (The book *Copse* captures the spirit of those

Land Struggle Period

(1993—1998)

Land struggles were infectious, the next period seeing an explosion of activity. The winning combination was relatively solid networks of long term anti-road campaigners (ALARM UK), a nationwide network of EF! groups and most importantly a swelling 'tribe' willing to travel across the land.



Welcome to the Autonomous Zones

While the state had backed down at Oxleas it intended to go full steam ahead with the M11 link through East London. DoT bureaucrats and politicians probably thought the movement wouldn't pull together over the destruction of a small amount of trees and hundreds of working class homes. They were wrong.

Hundreds of the houses were already squatted, long since having been compulsorily purchased. This vibrant scene was joined by others from Jesmond and Twyford. With much of the road smashing through a long-term squatting community and a solidly working class area, this more than any previous anti-road campaign was a defence of human lives as well as wildlife. Nevertheless, there were beautiful patches of overgrown gardens and copses, and the struggle was also understood in the national ecological context.

"By halting the road in London we can save woodlands, rivers and heathlands all the way to Scotland, without endangering their ecology by having mud fights with hundreds of security guards and police in their midst."²²

The first real flashpoint came at a chestnut tree on George Green, common land in the heart of Wanstead. The 10ft hoardings which had been erected to enclose the common were trashed by a jolly mob of kids, activists and local people. On the Green a hunched woman in her eighties was crying. She had always felt powerless, but when she pushed the fences down with hundreds of

others, she said she felt powerful for the first time in her life. Empowerment is direct action's magic, and the spell was spreading.

"A treehouse was built in the branches of the chestnut tree... For the following month the campfire became a focal point... People from different backgrounds began to get to know one another, spending long evenings together, talking, forming new friendships. Something new and beautiful had been created in the community. Many local people talk of their lives having been completely changed by the experience."²³

The eviction came in December and was carried out by 400 police. With 150 people resisting it took nine hours to bring down one tree! Sabotage also played a part—both of the contractor's hydraulic platforms had been wrenched the night before.

"The eviction had forced the DoT to humiliate itself in a very public way. The loss of the tree was a tragic day, and yet also a truly wonderful day. It had hammered another huge nail in the coffin of the roads programme."²⁴

The state hoped this was the end of No M11, but it was just

the beginning. Other areas had already been occupied, and regular action against the contractors continued. It was a fitting end to the second year of concerted action against roads.

On January 1st 1994 the Indigenous Zapatistas of Mexico launched themselves on to the stage of world history. Liberating town after town, freeing prisoners, re-distributing food, declaring

New green army rises up against roads



themselves autonomous of the new economic order. They didn't just redistribute food; they redistributed hope worldwide, and were to have a significant impact on the movement here.

Meanwhile in Britain the year nearly started off with a big bang. In January a very small amount of broadsheet coverage reported the police detonation of an explosive device under the main bridge at Twyford Down. Coverage also reported a bomb found at Tarmac's HQ.²⁵

The Spring saw camps sprout up against the Wymondham Bypass near Norwich, the Leadenhall Bypass in Lincolnshire, the Batheastern-Swainwick Bypasses outside Bath and the Blackburn Bypass in Lancashire. In inner-city Manchester, a threatened local park got a dose of eco-action at Abbey Pond.

Back in the East End, Spring saw vast defensive and offensive road-resisting. A row of large Edwardian houses were next en route—they were barricaded, and Wanstonia was born: "it was declared an autonomous free zone. People made joke passports and the like. We were digging this huge trench all the way around the site. Doing that probably had zero tactical effectiveness but it really made us feel that this was where the UK ended and our space started."²⁶

The State does not take well to losing territory.

"In a scene reminiscent of a medieval siege, around 800 police and bailiffs supported by cherry-pickers and diggers besieged the independent state of Wanstonia. After cordoning off the area the invaders preceded to storm the five houses. The police had to break through the barricades to enter only to find the staircases removed thus forcing them to get in through roofs or upper floors.

Some protestors were on the roofs having chained themselves to the chimneys, the contractors preceded to destroy the houses while many people were still occupying them... It took ten hours to remove 300 people."²⁷

This impressive and costly eviction was followed up by Operation Roadblock—a month of rota-based daily direct action, where groups booked in which days they would take action. It worked remarkably well, with sizeable disruption every day through March. Elsewhere many of the resistance techniques developed at the M11,

both for the defence of houses and trees, were now being used against other schemes.

Progress, Yuck—Time to Go Back to the Trees

Tactics were evolving fast. At Jesmond, temporary hammocks had graced the branches; at George Green a single treehouse had been built; at Bath the first real network of treehouses hit the skyline; in Blackburn there was a full-on Ewok-style Tree Village. Unable to defeat the bailiffs on the ground, resistance had moved skyward.

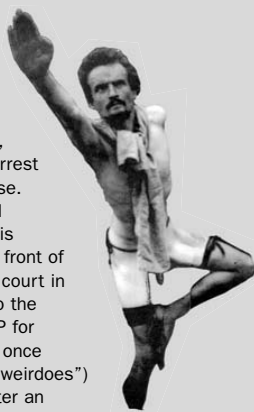
"You'd be standing at the fire at night, and it would be the first time you'd been down on the ground all day. You'd look up and there would be all these little twinkles from candles up above you... How were they going to get us out?... I don't think I can describe here how special it is to sleep and wake in the branches of a tree. To see the stars and the moon. To feel the sunshine and feel the rain."²⁸

Hundreds were now living on-site across the country, with many, many more 'weekending' or visiting for days of action. Most campaigns were now setting up multiple camps, each taking a slightly different form according to the lay of the land. Previously, barricades had been built around houses and woodlands—now they themselves were transformed into barricades—complex networks of walkways, treehouses, lock-ons, concrete and determination.

Solsbury Hill's fourth site eviction at Whitecroft was the first full-on, all-treetop eviction. Using cherry-pickers and standard chainsaw men, the Sheriff failed to take down a single tree; the camp had defeated him... for now. The cost was high;

Utter Contempt for the Court

During Jesmond Dene, people were still being picked up for having broken the Twyford injunction. 'Quolobolox' knew the cops would nick him sooner or later at the Dene and send him down to the High Court, but he was prepared. When the inevitable arrest came he gave the High Court quite a surprise. Stripping off to orange suspenders, worn all summer under his trousers especially for this occasion, he goosestepped up and down in front of the judge sieg-heiling. The judge closed the court in horror. This was a not-so-subtle reference to the recent death of Steven Milligan, the Tory MP for Eastleigh (near Twyford). Milligan, (who had once memorably described the Dongas Tribe as "weirdoes") was found dead hanging from the ceiling after an erotic auto-asphyxiation disaster, wearing nothing but suspenders with an amyl nitrate-soaked orange in his mouth. Unsurprisingly the judge added weeks to Quolobolox's sentence for 'contempt of court'.



(Above) The involvement of well-known climbers in state evictions inspired a major reaction in the climbing community: they were seen for what they were—scabs. As a result, many climbers joined the protests at Newbury. Leading climbing writer Jim Perrin wrote: "The collaborator's traditional fate awaits you: rigorous denunciation, vehement haranguing, exclusion from social venues, arctic contempt. I want to ask this, of you who have betrayed your community, friends and fellow human beings: how long will your money last? And when it's gone, remember when he faced what he'd done, Judas had a rope too..." (Climber magazine, May 1996) True to the threat, the state climbers were ostracised and even forced off rock faces. (Below) Fearing a similar reaction, state tunnellers made sure to hide their identities.



opened up, such as those against the live export of sheep and calves, involving thousands more in direct action.

In the Southwest the one year anniversary gathering at Solsbury Hill went off with a bang. An Anti-CJA event on the hill ended with lots of fencing pulled down, trashed machinery and security thugs in hospital. As one woman from the local Avon Gorge EFi group put it: "I guess people had had enough of being used as punch bags."⁴⁰ This was followed by a day of action with 200 people—stopping most of the work along the route.

Up North the campaign against the M65 saw a major shift in tactics by both those in the trees and those who'd taken the job of getting them out. Three camps had already been evicted, but the

crescendo came at Stanworth Valley, an amazing network of walkways, platforms, nets and over 40 treehouses. Through the valley surged the River Ribblesworth. It was truly a village in the sky, which was lucky as the ground was pure quagmire half the time. You've never seen such mud!

As well as new people and local activists there was now a dedicated nomadic tribe, seasoned at many previous evictions. After over a year of life in the branches, some were agile and confident at height—at home in the trees. The state realised that it needed a new force that was as confident on the ropes—Stanworth became the first place where members of the climbing community took sides against nature.

"Upon entering the treetops they were quite shocked to find the people were not just passive spectators to their own removal. A gentle but firm push with the foot often kept them out of a treehouse. Two climbers tried to manhandle an activist out of the trees, mistakenly thinking they were alone. The calls for help were quickly answered and to the climbers' astonishment out of the thick shroud of leaves above, activists abseiled down, others pained up from below and yet more appeared from both sides running along the walkways and branches. The climbers could be forgiven for thinking they were caught in a spiders web."⁴¹

Eventually after five days, all 120 people had been ripped from the trees—bringing the total contract cost increased by the No M65 campaign to £12.2 million. The climbers had found new lucrative employment but they would do their best to avoid ever repeating an eviction under leaf cover. From now on most evictions would be when the leaves were off the trees; the combined factor of nature's abundance and activist up-for-it attitude a severe deterrent.

The spread of anti-road camps was by now incredible with '95 probably the highpoint in terms of national spread. On top of the established camps, new areas were occupied in Berkshire, Kent, Devon and Somerset. Over the next year the struggle moved well beyond just fighting roads. Camps were set up to protect land from open-cast mining in South Wales, leisure development in Kent and quarrying in the South West. No surprise then that one of the major voices spurring on this 'culture of resistance' got some special attention from some special people.

Green Anarchist magazine in the mid '90s was a meeting point of movements. Its readership included significant numbers of travellers, hunt sabs, class struggle anarchists, Green Party members, 'eco-warriors', and animal liberationists. It was an obvious target for the secret state. A set of 17 raids aimed at *Green Anarchist* and the ALF resulted in the jailing of a number of its editors.

expensive in English history—5 days, 700 police, 200 bailiffs and 400 security guards, costing £2 million.

“When the bailiffs arrived they were met by 500 people using every delay tactic possible. A concrete filled car with protruding scaffold poles stopping the cherry pickers moving in. People locked on to the road. Others hung in nets strung across the street. People in bunkers, others huddled on rooftops and in treehouses. Lastly, 12 people scrambled up the 100ft scaffold tower painted with grease and tied with pink ribbons.”¹⁷

One by one, minute by costly minute, the state forces removed the 500—taking the best part of a week. The sheer ingenuity of the tactics, the resolve of the people involved and the incredible barricading techniques made this an amazing moment. Like the Chestnut Tree, Solsbury Hill and a dozen other evictions, the state won the battle—but they were losing the war. With every hugely expensive eviction, every trashed machine, every delayed contract, every citizen turned subversive, every tree occupied—the social and economic cost of pushing through the roads programme was becoming unbearable.

Yet Claremont—like all anti-roads sites—wasn't simply a reaction to destruction, it was also a reaffirmation of life, of autonomy. It was an experience that changed hundreds of people; its memory would remain precious and propel a whole new wave of streets to be reclaimed. Reclaim the Streets had been formed by EFlers in '92 to combat the car culture on the city streets. With the expansion of anti-road resistance the idea had gone into hibernation, but many who had seen the topsy-turvy, inside-out world of Claremont Road wanted to feel the like again. After the end of the M11 campaign, RTS was reformed. The state had foolishly thought Claremont Road lay in rubble; in fact it haunted those who'd been there and its festive rebel spectre would reappear on streets across the country.

It started with a reclamation of that bastion of consumption, Camden High Street.

“Two cars entered the high street and to the astonishment of passing shoppers ceremoniously piled into each other—crash! Thirty radical pedestrians jumped on top and started trashing them—soon joined by kids. An instant café was set up distributing free food to all and sundry, rainbow carpets unrolled, smothering the tarmac, and a host of alternative street décor... A plethora of entertainment



followed including live music, fire-breathing... and the Rinky-Dink bike powered sound system.”³⁸

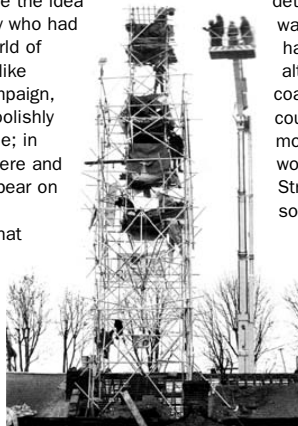
A month later and the action was much bigger; word had got around—1,500 met at the meet-up point, jumped the Tube and arrived at Islington High Street.

“They swarmed across the dual carriageway as five 25ft tripods were erected blocking all the access roads. Half a ton of sand was dumped on the tarmac for kids of all ages to build sand castles with. An armoured personnel carrier blasting out rave set up, fire hydrants were opened up—spraying the ravers dancing in the sunshine. All the cops could do was stand to the side and sweat.”³⁹

While the Claremont eviction was the first major sign of the failure of the CJA, street parties spreading across the country were basically dancing on its grave. With the Act's implementation resistance became a bit more difficult, but its deterrent effect was dead in the water. The rebellion against the CJA had brought together different alternative culture currents and coalesced them into a serious counter-culture; now RTS was making more connections. Above the wonderful spectacle of the Islington Street Party flew a banner declaring solidarity with the Tubeworkers.

Back on the Farm

While London events got the lion's share of media coverage, people were defying the CJA all over, most by simply carrying on with actions—'business as usual'. The eviction of urban camps at Pollock in Glasgow against the M77 involved hundreds—250 kids even broke out of school to help stop one eviction. The act had been meant to neuter direct action. Instead in the climate of opposition, whole new struggles



Like most materials on road protests, these scaffold poles were all nicked. What a world we could build with shopping trolleys, polyprop, pallets and cement!



one protestor hospitalised with spinal injuries and a collapsed lung. Ten days later the Sheriff returned, this time with madder bailiffs—Equity card-holding stunt men. These were more crazy, muscular and willing to take risks with their own lives as well as of those in the trees. By the end of the day Whitecroft was no more. This—the most spectacular at the time—was only one of the many conflicts countrywide. These evictions were becoming hugely costly—to the contractors, to the state, and to social stability. Most sites at this time continued offensive action as well, using the by then standard formula; digger diving, office occupations and crane-sits, alongside overt and covert sabotage. The state was being challenged—it would soon escalate its response.

With every campaign the movement seemed to be going from strength to strength, with one exception, Leadenham. A camp had set up, and the DoT said it was putting the scheme into review, but victory was not to be. The contractors launched a surprise attack—during the 'reprieve'—while those still on site were 'dealt with' a few weeks later by local thugs. Vigilante attacks on sites had always been an occasional occurrence, but they were usually minor in scale. At Leadenham though there was a sizeable group of pro-road locals willing to take direct action.

“The attack happened following a demo by local people in favour of the bypass. Leadenham villagers decided in their

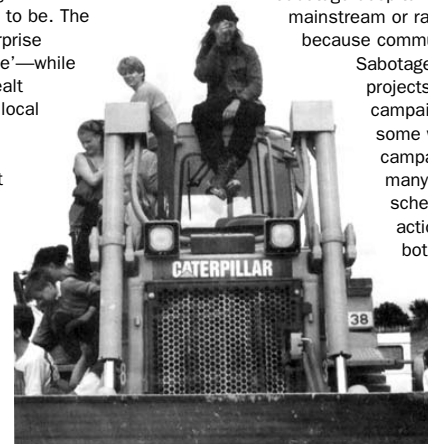
it, there was a danger of being sitting/sleeping targets. Thankfully, through this period no other sites were mass attacked by local vigilantes in this way.”³⁰

While in this article I'll give an overview of this period, from so high up one can't hope to focus on the detail—and it's the detail that counts. The incredible moments, the passion, the exhilaration, the waiting, the amazing people, the occasional twat—the tribe. Not to mention the holy trinity: dogs, mud and cider. On site and in the trees, this feeling of togetherness and otherness grew. Leaving site to get food or giros, the harshness and speed of the industrial world hit you; but by living a daily existence of resistance we were hitting back.

Hunting the Machines

Every month brought news of an increase in sabotage despite minimal coverage in either mainstream or radical press, not least because communiqués were rarely sent.

Sabotage largely centred around projects where ongoing daytime campaigns were underway, but some was done in solidarity with campaigns further afield. With so many groups fighting multiple schemes by the same companies actions often ended fulfilling both roles. ARC, for instance, had supplied roadstone to Twyford Down and was trying to expand quarries in North Wales and Somerset. “After forcing their way into the control room [of ARC Penmaemawr



quarry] the intruders smashed a glass partition and then caused £10,000 worth of damage to computer equipment.”³¹

The scale of sabotage carried out during the ‘90s land struggles is often forgotten. Altogether the direct costs of replacement and repair at construction sites must have easily run into the tens of millions. Fantasists may dream that this was the work of highly organised anonymous cells, striking and then disappearing³², but in truth most trashings were carried out by those camping onsite; either subtly during digger diving, raucously as a mob, or covertly after heavy drinking sessions around the campfire. Basically, whenever it was possible, people fucked shit up. The sensible and commendable desire not to boast has left these actions hidden behind newspaper images of smiling ‘tree-people’. The grins though were often those of mischievous machine wreckers; near campfires no yellow monster was safe from the hunt.

Some celebrity liberals³³ argued ‘criminal damage’ should not have a place in campaigns as it would put off ‘normal everyday people’. This ridiculous idea was even stupider considering one of the main groups consistently carrying out sabotage were those locals with jobs and families who didn’t have available (day)time to live on site, and for whom arrests for minor digger-diving could lead to unemployment and family problems. For many ‘normal everyday people’ covert sabotage was less risky than overt ‘civil disobedience’. Another group of locals that always took to ‘environmental vandalism’ like ducks to water were kids, nearly always the most rebellious section of any community, often with the most intimate relationship to the local environment.

Of course despite what I say above, some ecotage was carried out entirely covertly with modus operandi borrowed from the Animal Liberation Front.

“Police believe a £2 million blaze at an Essex construction site could be the work of Green Activists. The fire swept through Cory Environment’s aggregates and waste disposal site at Barling, near Southend, ruining four bulldozers, two diggers, and a fleet of six trucks owned by the main contractor. The police say that forensic evidence confirms arson.”³⁴

There is no Justice, Just Us!

It was becoming obvious that the ecological land struggles were really getting in the way of ‘progress’.

The government (correctly) saw the movement as part of a social fabric (travelling culture, festivals, squatting, hunt sabbing) born of the ‘60s/’70s upsurge. With the Criminal Justice Bill it sought to tear this fabric apart. No more toleration,



the government announced; it was giving itself new powers to close free parties, ban demonstrations, create huge exclusion zones, evict squats and jail persistent road-protest ‘trespassers’.

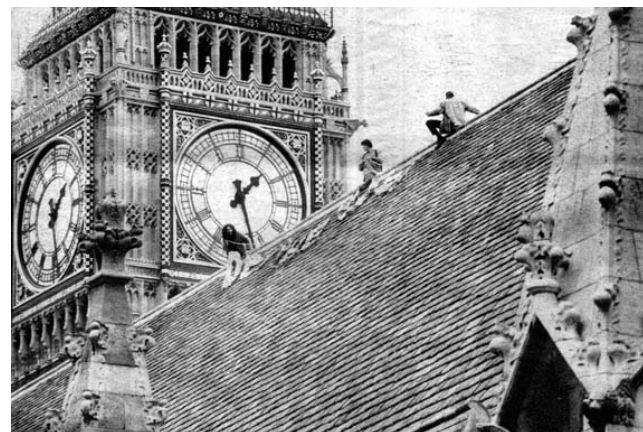
Unsurprisingly this challenge was met with a sudden flurry of activity. High street squat info centres around the country; local and national demos. Thousands turned up for marches in London. Rather than deterring people the new laws brought people together—‘Unity in Diversity’ the call of the day.

On October the 9th a demo of 75,000 ended in Hyde Park for the normal ritual of platform speakers. When a sound-system tried to get in at Speakers Corner to turn it into an illegal ‘party in the park’, it was attacked by police. In turn people fought back. The call went out across the Park—Defend the System; thousands ran from the speeches to the action—the Hyde Park Riot had begun.

“Although some people faced up to the police in Park Lane itself, most of the crowd ended up inside the park separated by the metal railings from the riot cops. This made it difficult for the police to launch baton charges or send in the horses, and when they tried to force their way



Police advances were defeated time after time at Hyde Park. In a sign of mass defiance the planned rally of the bored was abandoned in favour of a festive insurrectionary battle.



through the small gates in the railings they were repelled with sticks, bottles and whatever was to hand.”

“There were some very surreal touches while all this was going on: people dancing not far from the police lines, a unicyclist weaving his way through the riot cops, a man fire-breathing. Some people have argued that the police deliberately provoked a riot to make sure the Criminal Justice Bill was passed, but this ignores the fact that there was never any danger of the CJB not being passed, as there had never been any serious opposition within parliament.”³⁵

Hyde Park—like the eviction of the Dongas—was a landmark confrontation. At Twyford the movement was forced to face up to the reality of state violence. At Hyde Park it was forced to face the reality of movement violence, the reality being simple—when faced with riot cops many saw nothing wrong with fighting back to defend temporarily liberated space. At the beginning of the march ‘Keep it Fluffy’ stickers had been handed out liberally. Later as the helicopter floodlights shone down on a riot, the sight of a crusty with a rainbow jumper emblazoned with one of the stickers—throwing a bit of paving slab at the cops—showed how moments of collective power can change people. The following months would see an intensification of ‘violence/nonviolence’ discussions around the country.

When the Bill became an Act in November everyone understood that the only way to defeat a possible ‘crackdown’ was by defying it. As the *E! Action Update* put it: “As

far as it affects Earth Firsters... its purpose is not so much to imprison us as to intimidate us—and we mustn’t let that work.”³⁶ The day the Act went through on November 4th, activists from No M11 climbed onto the roof of Parliament and unfurled a banner—Defy The Act. Hunt sabs went out in bigger numbers, more road protest camps were established, free parties flourished. By the end of the month a big confrontation came that would test whether the

government had succeeded in intimidating the resistance.

A Street Reclaimed

Throughout the Summer, evictions and resistance on the M11 had continued and most of the route was rubble. One major obstacle lay in the path of the bulldozers—Claremont Road, an entire squatted street had been transformed into a surreal otherworld. Turned inside-out, the road itself became the collective living room, the remaining cars flowerbeds. Above the sofa, huge chess board and open fire a vast scaffolding tower reached daily further up to the sky. This ‘state of the art’ reclaimed street was not going to take eviction easy. When it did come, it became the longest and most

