CATS, COPS AND CHAOS

On Saturday February 20th 2000 people gathered at Hillgrove Farm in one of the largest demos in the long running campaign against the only remaining breeder of cats for vivisection in the UK.

At the start of the day the police imposed an assembly point at the bottom of the lane, half a mile from the farm.

One group of activists made it round the back onto the property. Unprepared for the huge numbers the police could not stop the rest of the crowd moving up to the farm perimeter but after about an hour police horses were brought in to try and force the crowd back down the lane.

Mounted police then proceeded to clear the crowd. One woman is still in hospital, with hoof marks covering her body and a fractured leg. Next national demo April 18th

Save the Hillgrove Cats: 0121 632 6460

BOAT BASHED IN BARROW

In the early hours of February 4th, two activists from the ‘anti-Hilary’ and ‘anti-death machine’, before turning their attention to what Vickers are calling “testing equipment” attached to the conning tower. After smashing it, they hung a banner reading “Women Want Peace.” It was only then that security guards cordonned off, but they still refused to let anyone under the side of the sub, chatting to a worker on the way. Unable to gain entrance to the main part of the sub, they came out again and took to the deck, leading off the locals, who cheered them on.

Two hours after their arrest, three women from the support team were also arrested “on suspicion of conspiracy to commit criminal damage” while they were delivering dry clothes to the Damen to the police station. All five women were later charged with the damage. Magistrates remanded one of the first two women for a week before releasing her on conditional bail. All of them were given extremely restrictive conditions including curfews, exclusion zones and signs and windows.

All five women were bailed to appear at

CARRIGALDEBACLE

On the 19th of February a group of 35 activists occupied part of a massive seed processing plant in central Hull for 4 hours, owned by Cargill, a multinational, which despite being family owned, is involved in 60% of the world grain trade. It is also directly connected to the biotech industry due to undertake joint operations with Monsanto. It deserves the description of a ‘death factory’. By lunch time it had become clear that any police action would be met with barricades and a mass of outnumbered protesters. A smaller group set off to storm the town hall, where they soon found themselves in the office of Jim Dickson (the New Labour leader of the Council), Police broke in to the office and the group took over the conning tower. The smaller group set up a stall to form the town hall, where they soon found themselves in the office of Jim Dickson (the New Labour leader of the Council), Police broke in to the office and the group took over the conning tower. The smaller group set up a stall to form the town hall, where they soon found themselves in the office of Jim Dickson (the New Labour leader of the Council), Police broke in to the office and the group took over the conning tower. The smaller group set up a stall to form the town hall, where they soon found themselves in the office of Jim Dickson (the New Labour leader of the Council), Police broke in to the office and the group took over the conning tower. The smaller group set up a stall to form the town hall, where they soon found themselves in the office of Jim Dickson (the New Labour leader of the Council), Police broke in to the office and the group took over the conning tower. The smaller group set up a stall to form the town hall, where they soon found themselves in the office of Jim Dickson (the New Labour leader of the Council), Police broke in to the office and the group took over the conning tower. The smaller group set up a stall to form the town hall, where they soon found themselves in the office of Jim Dickson (the New Labour leader of the Council), Police broke in to the office and the group took over the conning tower.

Squats have been evicted, while rents and house prices have rocketed, pushing people out of the area. Local pubs have been replaced by upmarket bars. Drinking in the street has been banned. CCTV cameras push crime away from the ‘town centre’ and into private estates and streets.

Many community spaces, advice centres and services are facing forced closures, including

BOAT BASHED IN BARROW

The 121 centre in Brixton has been squatted since 1981; over the years it has been used as an info-shop, cafe and venue, and provided space and resources for a wide range of anarchist groups, campaigns and publications.

Lambeth Council obtained a possession order for the building over 6 weeks ago. On February 8th - the first expected date of eviction - over 80 masked-up supporters were outside and prepared to resist the bailiffs. As the first police-car pulled up, barricades appeared in the street, to be followed by a sound system and huge crowds. The local council has still not responded to the protest, and the bailiffs: a phone tree has been set up, and visitors are welcome. Links are being made with other camps against closures: on Friday 26th activists joined forces to protest the Queen’s visit to one of the borough’s ‘flagship’ (grant-maintained) schools.

The Action Update is a monthly roundup of earth-friendly ecological action news and forthcoming events in Britain. Feature articles inside:

Local Networking Initiatives
Conflict Resolution and EFi! National Campaign (feedback from Winter Moot)

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FARMERS ON THE MOVE

The Inter-Continental Caravan (500 farmers mostly from the Karnataka State Farmers Association) have been growing crops on Tarmac land (with the permission of the landowner, Dong Nong Environmental Services, a multinational) effectively closing it down for the day. The police, forewarned, had in reinforcements, and an attempt was made to force open the gates but they were managed to chain them across themselves against the South Gate, causing a huge traffic jam all the way up to the North gate where waves of protesters were sitting down in the road and being carted away by the police.

There were 24 arrests made that day, and now fortnightly actions are planned on a variety of fronts and in various locations. The Tarmac camp has been comprehensively rearranged. The local surveyor has been called in to call for the demolition of the camp, and the council has submitted proposals to the council and is expected to hear from the High Court contesting the go-ahead decision.

The council is under renewed pressure from the MPO to evict the camp, so the MPO wants to sell a plot of land adjacent to it. The camp has submitted proposals to the council and is expected to hear from the High Court contesting the go-ahead decision.

On Tuesday 15 February 7am saw over 100 people block the gates of Gaia Natural Seed Base (which supplies M&S, TESCO and many other major high street stores) effectively closing it down for the day. The police, forewarned, had in reinforcements, and an attempt was made to force open the gates but they were managed to chain them across themselves against the South Gate, causing a huge traffic jam all the way up to the North gate where waves of protesters were sitting down in the road and being carted away by the police.

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Earth First! is not a cohesive group or campaign, but a convenient banner for people who share similar philosophies to work under. The general principles behind the name are non-violent direct action and committing to a philosophy that involves living as sustainably as possible. However, the idea was to provide a forum for activists working on different issues to get together in the same place every month. The Rebel Alliance is a monthly meeting of non-hierarchical direct action groups based around Brighton. The original idea was to provide a forum for activists working on different issues to get together in the same place every month. The Rebel Alliance is a monthly meeting of non-hierarchical direct action groups based around Brighton. The original idea was to provide a forum for activists working on different issues to get together in the same place every month.
WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?
If a problem arises at a large event with no mechanism in place to deal with it, it tends to be made public, and naturally everyone feels some sort of duty to be involved, or at least show an interest. But this often feels like voyeurism; problems are not best solved when they descend into being titillating gossip for everyone at the gathering or action. If bringing their problem to the whole group is the only option then people are deterred from bringing it up at all. Small groups are by far better at offering meaningful support than large ones.

Also important is to minimise the disruptive effect these conflicts can have on the business of the gathering, site or action. People with certain mental illnesses can also have a disruptive effect when there is a lot of work to be done, but blowing this out of proportion is not helpful to anyone involved. One suggestion is to try to ensure there is a welfare space. Most festivals have a welfare tent, and it is often the case that this covers some of the larger and active camps. There is a need for “trained” or experienced people who can take on running this space as their main role in the main event. But we should also accept the limits on the movement: dealing with the mentally ill is difficult, and the busy and stressed atmosphere at activist events does not allow us to devote the time to it that it really deserves.

Whilst we recognise that the personal is political, we are not a therapy group and there are certain situations where the needs of certain mentally ill people and the activity in question are not compatible. The variety of conflicts is huge, and we shouldn’t expect to be able to deal with different situations in the same way. Often they trigger emotional reactions in many other people because they are symptomatic of bigger problems in our movement or society. We should recognise that at times we are all both the oppressors and the oppressed, and that under the system we all live in there will always be unequal power relationships. Not recognising these oppressions legitimises and permits them - they are something which we should be continually challenging in our movement.

SHOULD PEOPLE EVER BE EXCLUDED FROM EVENTS?
The consensus in the workshop was that there will be times when this is necessary. Allowing people to be intimidating or abusive puts so many other people off actively participating that doing this is far more exclusive than to take the disruptive action of ensuring those causing the disruption are banned from the event. The difficulties arise in deciding when this should happen. Ground rules, consensus decided at the start of a gathering are a good start. Examples of ground rules which have previously been adopted include banning alcohol before 6pm, and banning racist, sexist or homophobic behaviour. Anyone breaking these ground rules clearly and legitimately be excluded from the rest of the gathering.

Experience has shown that the range of conflicts which require action cannot all be anticipated in advance. Instances will arise where action will have to be taken and if it is not to involve everyone then it must be a small group of people that undertakes that action. These people should be motivated by the smooth running of the event and/or empowering ‘victims’ and not set themselves up as being vigilante/kangaroo courts.

The problem is how to create a safe environment without requiring people to expose gory details. People are often called upon to justify details of the situation, and this can be both difficult and undesirable. But there is also a desire to find out the facts, to get both sides of the story. All sorts of problems arise when you are trying to deal sensitively and fairly with difficult situations, witch hunts do happen, lies are told and so on. There is never going to be a simple solution.

Those involved in conflict resolution need to be careful. We criticise the justice system in mainstream society, we do not want to recreate the same problems ourselves. The work involved can be very draining, and there is a danger that the group/gathering can abdicating responsibility onto a small group of people who ‘deal with situations’. It might best to ask individuals who feel able to deal with it to do it in each case. Remember that it should never be an exclusive group that tackles conflict resolution; anyone who wants to should have the right to intervene.

Of course, those trying to resolve disputes should see exclusion as a last resort. Temporary exclusion might be mutually recognised as a good way to calm down a situation in some cases. In a similar way apologies, recognising problems and agreeing to look at ways of

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION
Whilst not claiming to have the whole of the answer, the workshop felt it could come up with some generally agreed points based on the discussions and past experience, that will hopefully be helpful in the future.

• There is a right to exclude
• Ground rules for acceptable behaviour should be drawn up and agreed by consensus at the start of each event
• A conflict resolution group should be appointed for each gathering, although not rigidly defined - anyone who feels they should be involved has a right to be. The same people should not have to do it each time, the rotation of the job means the sharing of skills
• Recognise that some problems are manifestations of problems in our movement, the particular gathering or society at large.
• Something bigger than a small group will be needed in some instances.
• Local groups should discuss these ideas to see what they can offer to future gatherings. Groups and campaigns should consider getting advice from professionals and other movements (the peace movement has a good record in this area - contact for example Turning the

An EF! National Campaign

It was decided at the Earth First! Winter Moot 1999 that Earth First! would put on a national campaign, or series of hits.

This is a summary of the discussion that led to and arose from this decision, and plans for turning it into reality.

The discussion from which these points are drawn was attended by about 30 people. The main areas talked about were: what might be the aims of a national campaign? How might it be structured? It was generally agreed not to discuss potential targets at this stage, especially given time constraints, though inevitably some ideas on this subject were aired. A meeting will be held on March 20th, by which time it is hoped that these ideas will have been discussed and developed by local groups, which can then feed back to the meeting, whether through attendance or directing correspondence through the Action Update.

There was general agreement that this should not be a one-off action but a sustained campaign, not with one static target, but multiple targets with a wide geographical spread.

AIMS: Internal
To strengthen local, regional and national networks through regular mobilisation for action.

To provide a vehicle for building links with other groups/communities.

To provide individuals with a regular point of contact and action.

External
To damage/shut down a company/activity.

Pro. We could get rid of something we all have a gripe against. Would show up links between state and industry as police moved to protect company. Empowering.

Con. Affecting profits is not as easy as we sometimes think (e.g. Shell had growth in profits in ‘93 year of Brent Spat and Ogoni solidarity action across UK and Europe). If we aim to shut down and that doesn’t happen the campaign would be seen as failure, which wouldn’t be fair to ourselves.

Comparison was drawn with the campaign to shut down Hillgrove cat farm by the animal rights movement. It is the only place of its kind, a ‘weak link’. There were disadvantages in this sort of campaign for EF! Actions are too easily prevented by police if campaign is too geographically specific. If we choose a weak company/activity we could be doing the market’s job, and also not being effective in a wider sense. Lessons should be drawn from Hillgrove.

Structure. There was support for the idea of kicking off the campaign with a large national action, and following it up with monthly regional actions interspersed with regular (ie. every 3 months) national hits. There was a suggestion that the responsibility for sorting out these national hits could rotate around groups/regions. The monthly actions could be on the same day of each month to give people greater access to them (as with Critical Mass). There was acknowledgement of a need for flexibility and constant analysis. The Campaign could be a vehicle for breaking down perceived hierarchies and organisational cliques. We should avoid burdening particular groups/individuals with what could be a large workload (ie. A Road Alert! situation)

Targets: This is probably the most difficult bit. How do we choose one target, when we are against a majority of companies, industrial activities, etc? No matter what we choose one campaign will not bring down global capitalism. Should we focus on a company or an issue?

What criteria do we use to pick the target? Do we pick something where we can use our experience and proven tactics, or something that might take us out of the ‘single issue’ rut and give us an opportunity to build links with other struggles? Here are some of the suggestions so far:

Chevron. An oil company with operations in Nigeria. As well as showing solidarity with struggles over there, it links in to transport, pollution, globalisation etc. and has multiple potential targets

New Deal. Again, multiple targets, links with workforce/unemployed.

Nuclear Industry/Waste Transport. Industry is currently weakened and discredited in the public eye. Opportunities for linking with other groups active on the issue.

Tarmac. Construction company involved in road-building (Twyford Down, M65, Manchester Airport) and lots of quarrying. There has been a target tarmac campaign circa 1993. They didn’t like it.

Genetics. Already a huge focus on this. Possibilities are endless. Could focus on one company ie. Monsanto are in a dodgy position in this country. Suggestion that there are a few smaller companies underpinning the industry, especially in research and development.

Advertising. An attack on this industry is one that would strike at the heart of consumer culture? Billboards, TV, Radio, PR and ad companies provide multiple targets.

None of these suggestions were discussed at any length, and so no doubt there are many more out there. All suggestions, along with reckonings behind them, should be conveyed to the meeting in March via the Action Update.

Meeting on Saturday March 20th, probably in Yorkshire.