

## PENNY FOR THE GUY ROPES

### AS 'CLIMATE CAMP' ACTIVISTS DECIDE TO PACK UP AND GO HOME...

They came, they camped, they conquered (well, not quite). During a soul-searching Dorset retreat, Climate Camp have decided to suspend tent-centred activism - citing the "radically different political landscape" of 2011.

Having been through Drax, Kingsnorth, Heathrow, RBS, Copenhagen and one helluva lot of hummus, the group are now turning their attention to coordination with the wider anti-cuts and anti-austerity movement.

In what seems to be a direct attack on the autonomous, grass-roots nature of the collective, a small group of the 'old guard' came to the national planning meeting on 21st - 26th February with their own agenda and passed the decision to kill Climate Camp, despite a block and four stand-asides in the 'consensus' process.

The majority of attendees at the 'Space for Change' meet went expecting to discuss plans for this year's Climate Camp and the future for the movement. When they arrived, they were faced with an agenda that was geared towards the dissolution of the collective and a lack of willingness from the facilitators to engage in alternatives to total shut-down.

Some key people within the group, involved since the first camp at Drax in 2006, went as far as to criticise the 'horizontal' nature of the organisation, and the way people were able to enter into the planning processes and 'disrupt' things. Strong words for a movement supposedly based on anarchist principles of open engagement and participation.

The 'retreat' was limited to 80 people - half the normal number of individuals at national gatherings - with places allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. It soon became clear that the five days would be framed around the dissolution question, with a 'them and us' atmosphere quickly developing. On one side were the few remaining original members who did most of facilitating, arguing for either a more NGO-type structure to Climate Camp or no Climate Camp at all; on the other, the more grass-roots minded individuals from strong regional groups who saw the way forward as an increased push for organisational skill-sharing and local autonomy.

On the first day the proposal to dissolve the shared national identity of Climate Camp reached an impasse with 6 blocks to the decision. Members in favour of dissolution fought back with what has now been termed as the 'anti-block' - the threat to leave the group if the decision didn't pass. Blockers and anti-blockers met to thrash out the differences, resulting in one remaining block to

the proposal. Despite the normal conventions of consensus decision-making, and the statement published on the website following the meeting, the proposal was carried forward without consensus, ignoring the block.

The 'Metamorphosis Statement' published after this blatant disregard for agreed process reads like a bizarre mix of self-congratulation and random key words. Citing events like "droughts in the Amazon, floods in Pakistan; food prices rising [and] revolutions across the Middle East" which have created a world "very different from 2005 when the Camp for Climate Action first met" it emphasises a need to change. Err - Boxing Day tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, oil price rises due to trouble in the Middle East, occupation of Iraq? All around 2005. And aren't extreme weather conditions that cause floods and droughts essentially climate change issues? A weird justification for the dissolution of a climate action group. The statement was not agreed collectively, but written afterwards by one of the group who had proposed the disbanding of the network.

### NEGOTIATIONS IN TENTS

SchNEWS spoke to one attendee of the hijacked gathering who explained why the core group of founder members wanted out. "They went into it with best intentions 5 years ago, but they failed to skill share and get enough people involved in the core organising - they don't trust anyone else to do it. It got to the stage where they were completely burned out. A recurring complaint they had was that they weren't appreciated for their skills - but their skills seem to be mostly that they've got a degree from Oxford or Cambridge. Everything about this has been the wrong way round - we went to discuss ideas for the future but the whole thing seemed to be geared towards not talking about the future because they wanted to kill it. The national process hasn't been encouraging localism. I think this has been planned since the last national Camp for Climate Action in Edinburgh."

Climate Camp has been dogged with criticism for the last few years. After reasonably successful mobilisations at Drax in 2006 and Heathrow in 2007 (SchNEWS 558, 600), the intensification of police pressure on the group at Kingsnorth in 2008 (SchNEWS 642) led to 2009's activities being split into two parts, workshops and networking at Blackheath, London in August (SchNEWS 689), and direct action targeting Ratcliffe-on-Soar

AS UK CLIMATE ACTIVISTS' ALL-INCLUSIVE CAMP DISBANDS CLAIMING IT HAS FAILED TO MOVE WITH THE TIMES, IT'S...



power station in October (SchNEWS 696). This separation of the 'fluffy' side to Climate Camp and the 'spikey' radical action just fuelled the disharmony. Individuals started to question whether the movement was losing its focus. Media attention was escalating and the group was in danger of becoming a comfy bandwagon for middle (or upper)-class self-professed environmentalists in high profile journalistic or political positions to add a 'radical' element to their public image, without actually having to risk getting nicked.

Concerns over misrepresentation by mass media, fears of police violence and infiltration, discontent from participating members and a lack of clear direction culminated in a palpable feeling of paranoia and exhaustion in 2010's Edinburgh national camp (see SchNEWS 736). The camp's direct action methods seemed less well equipped to tackle the smoke and mirrors of the financial system. The change of focus and resulting confusion of tactics could in hindsight be seen as an indicator of the struggles within the core of the organisation, regarding the priorities of the campaign.

The decision to totally erase the national identity of Climate Camp will surely come as a kick in the teeth to those in regional groups doing good work in their areas. Waking up to find that the name that you organise under has been pulled out from under your feet by centralised decision-making is unprecedented in activist circles. This issue transcends national boundaries, with groups meeting under the Climate Camp banner in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, New Zealand, the USA and Ghana. Inspired by events in the UK, each country took on the Climate Camp name, and none have been consulted in this decision.

Ultimately, the act of a minority to shut-down an organisation which is meant to be run autonomously is entirely contradictory. It shows a lack of flexibility, a willingness to allow active participation of new individuals, and an inability to allow dynamic change within a group that has an established public presence. Where Climate Camp goes after this, and whether local groups can effectively use the collective identity which has done so much for environmental activism over the last 5 years remains to be seen.

### CRAP EVICTION OF THE WEEK

#### For not being at home...

Police descended mob-handed on the site of anti-supermarket squatting campaigners SaboTaj (see SchNEWS 760) on Tuesday (1st) to evict the occupiers - only to find they'd already left.

Over fifty cops in full riot gear broke through several barricades built throughout the 4-storey building searching for their elusive quarry, who had left via the roof nearly a week before. The campaign continues with council lobbying and ideas for other free spaces both being explored.

## THAT'LL LEARN 'EM

Overshadowed by turmoil in Libya, last week saw more student protests in London, leading up to the self-styled 'DayX4' protests on Thursday 24th. At around 2pm, a gaggle of students and lecturers assembled outside Woburn House in Tavistock Square with the intention of disrupting a national meeting of UUK (Universities UK), where vice-chancellors hob-nob and plot how to lobby for higher fees and deliver a corporate-backed, consumer-driven university sector.

The crowd soon doubled in size as reinforcements from London School of Economics (LSE) arrived with a bicycle soundsystem and took over the road. The dozen or so cops in attendance were heavily outnumbered but minor scuffles with them led to the abandonment of attempts to enter the building. Cops then started erecting metal barriers to close off the entrance but students, seeing the potential kettle coming, took action to delay efforts.

Getting mobile the crowd then swept down Euston Road and up Oxford Street, with regular UK Uncut targets coming in for some abuse along the way. Vodafone, Barclays, Boots and Top Shop were all inconvenienced for a while.

Student solidarity was also in evidence when police attempted to feel someone's collar. Those nearby piled in and performed a classic de-arrest. One copper lost his helmet, while several others lost their tempers. Surprisingly still no reinforcements arrived, leaving the same handful of officers to plod after the crowd as they continued the walkabout.

After a strange stand-off at the Union of London University (ULU) building where protesters were confronted at the door by security and Claire Solomon, the socialist president of ULU elected last March on a 'mandate for resistance' - it was off to the Libyan embassy in Grosvenor Square for a quick solidarity demo. The roving protest then ended trying to attend a meeting at University College London (UCL) where BP reps were speaking.

Presumably knackered from all that walking, those remaining decided to stay put and started an occupation at the Old Refectory. That remained until Monday when they withdrew and joined another larger occupation at Royal Holloway (Uni of London)'s building in Bedford Square. That 'Anti-Cuts Space' was thriving until this Thursday (3rd) when - for the first time in 20 years - baliffs used violent force to evict a student occupation. The anti-swot-SWAT team entered through the roof before forcibly booting everybody out.

Perhaps university authorities are becoming more fearful of all this burgeoning student radicalism. Last week, a student occupation forced the management of LSE (see SchNEWS 760) to cave to some of the demands. Whilst only a partial victory, the uni has promised to ring-fence the dirty \$1.5 billion Ghaddafi donation to provide grants and bursaries for Libyan students.

\* For fuller X4 accounts and pics, see [www.london.indymedia.org/articles/7577](http://www.london.indymedia.org/articles/7577)

## SAYING NO TO NATO

Hundreds of protesters took to the streets on Wednesday in the southern-eastern region of Kunar, Afghanistan, following the deaths of 73 civilians during NATO air strikes on their villages.

NATO issued an apology for what it branded as 'an accident'. The statement read "(NATO-led) International Security Assistance Force apologises and accepts full responsibility for the civilian casualties". This is the third NATO-initiated incident in the space of two weeks to cause civilian deaths. A protester said: "Our kids were killed in the nearby forest when they went out to collect firewood. It was a vicious attack."

## BONUS CULTURE UNCUT

In reaction to last week's brazen bumper bank bonus announcements, on Saturday (26th) UK Uncut activists set up shop in more than 40 branches of RBS, Natwest and Lloyds across the country.

The idea was to reimagine them as more socially useful spaces, making clear the links between the massive cuts in public services on the one hand, and bailed out banks returning to 'business-as-usual' at everybody else's expense on the other. Branches were thus appropriately decorated and staffed by activists 'reopening' them as everything from creches and libraries to walk-in clinics and leisure centres.

In Islington fifty activists launched a two-pronged attack and set up a laundry in an RBS branch, a nod to the Council's threats to cut services to the elderly, including a much-needed laundry service. Protesters set up washing lines, buckets for handwashing, and a team of window cleaners on the outside.

Meanwhile it was back to school at Lloyds on Oxford St. A classroom was set up in the branch and lectures on the failures of the banking industry, tax avoidance and the alternatives to the public sector cuts were given.

Branches of bailed out banks around the country were transformed; including hospitals in Liverpool and Redhill; a classroom in Cardiff; a leisure centre in Eastleigh; a job centre in Birmingham; and twenty people brought tents and sleeping bags into Natwest in Brixton to create a homeless shelter.

Despite RBS making a loss of £1.1bn, they still paid out £950m in bonuses, including £2m to CEO Stephen Hester. Lloyds TSB also announced large profits and £2.2bn bonuses - and that because of previous losses they actually paid no corporation tax at all in the last financial year! The two tax-avoidance specialists also revealed they have, respectively, 135 and 121 offshore subsidiaries in tax havens.

\* For more and news on future demos see [www.ukuncut.org.uk/blog](http://www.ukuncut.org.uk/blog)

## BLATANT LIBERTY

Roll up, roll up, get yer hypocrisy here. Civil liberties group Liberty ("the very existence of the infamous TSG with its militaristic approach needs to be urgently reviewed", "It seems to us that [kettling] risks increasing anger, increasing distress and increasing rather than diffusing any threat to public safety") have accepted an offer to be the Met's sweaty bedfellows over the course of the major trade union march later this month. The organisation will be providing legal observers, sparking outrage from the protester-run legal observer community. Liberty will also, rather spy-tastically, be privy to police 'intelligence' over the event and allowed to sit in the 'specialist operations room' - presumably where the moral lobotomies are performed...

## PARTY & PROTEST

**MARCH 6th: Rebel Alliance.** A monthly meet-up and forum for Brighton's direct action groups - the Rebel Alliance will be happening on Sunday from 6pm at the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd. Come along and find out how to join the resistance! \*\* 10th: **Brighton Anti-Fascists** (a new local autonomous group) are hosting a screening of Ken Loach's **LAND AND FREEDOM** at the Duke of York's cinema. The film tells a story of a young communist who travels to Spain to fight fascism in the civil war. There will a discussion after the film about how to fight the fash more locally.

For events listings updated weekly see [www.schnews.org.uk/pap](http://www.schnews.org.uk/pap)

## LOPP-SIDED IN CALAIS

SchNEWS got the low-down this week from Calais Migrant Solidarity activists about the latest developments in Calais in light of police crack downs, CRS strikes and the soon-to-be-introduced fascist security law 'LOPPSI II'.

The new year started with a tragedy as two Palestinians jumped into a sewer to escape arrest, and never emerged. "There appears to be no investigation into their disappearance and the police are being incredibly vague about the incident," one reports.

Later in the month CRS riot cops staged a one-week strike to protest the cutting of their numbers - but far from being good news for the persecuted migrants, the CRS made twice as many arrests the week before for fear of falling short of their quota.

The rolling programme of raids, harassment and beatings also continued, but mass arrests at a food distro site at the beginning of February suggested that the CRS were trying a change of tack. Activists report overhearing cop-talk to the affect that squat raids weren't being effective enough.

A week later two Palestinians were seriously injured falling from the first floor of a building to escape police. The cops told the media that the men were fleeing from a fire. The next day, another man was rushed to hospital after a similar incident.

The new Africa House is on an eviction alert over the coming months, and activists and migrants are in need of tents, tarps, clothes and other materials to help prepare. There is also a wider concern over the affect of the new 'LOPPSI II' law on the migrant population. The law is a multifaceted attack on civil liberties in France, but the worry in the Calais jungles is the increased powers for the deportation of migrants accused of acting or speaking against the state.

## PANAMA MOMENTS

Indigenous Panamanians have been fighting back against new legislation designed to entice foreign investment to the country's mining industry.

For two days demonstrators blockaded segments of the Pan-American highway, which links Panama City with Costa Rica. Armed with machetes, bows, spears or arrows and adorned in either face paint or ski masks, the discontented burned tyres and employed tree trunks to stop traffic.

When police moved to clear the barricades there were dozens of injuries. In earlier protests police used tear gas on women and children.

The natives of the land detained the Governor's assistant and colleague inside their vehicle for 24 hours in another day of anti-mining demonstrations, puncturing their tyres and scribbling, "Now it's the turn of the Gnabe people" on the vehicle - a jest on the government's slogan, "Now it's the people's turn." Demos have continued despite a government directive dispensed on Tuesday (1st) banning mining in Indian territory. The government have already opened for tender a copper deposit in Cerro Colorawdo, in Ngobe Bugle territory.

\* For more see <http://sysiphus-angrynewsfromaroundtheworld.blogspot.com>

## ...and finally...

It's come to something when you need a rallying call from the governor of the Bank of England to stir the flames of protest. This week he cheerfully admitted that the recession was entirely the banks' fault and austier cuts are totally unfair - adding he was 'surprised' at how little anger there was about it on the streets. Come and see us Merv, let's discuss tactics - and bring yer £1.4m 'early pension' with ya.!

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, if you can't stand the heat, get out the fire. Honest.

**Subscribe!** Get SchNEWS free every week by email in pdf or text file - visit our site, or send us stamps and we'll post it to you. Copy and distribute! Keep SchNEWS free with donations (via website or cheques payable to Justice?). Posted free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email [mail@schnews.org.uk](mailto:mail@schnews.org.uk) Web [www.schnews.org.uk](http://www.schnews.org.uk)