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No.19 May / June 2001



Like a Ray of Sunshine Splitting Through the Manchester Smog

The Okasional Cafe is back and it needs you! We have been up and running at 60 Charles St. (just off Oxford Rd, opposite the BBC) for 5 weeks and new people are always welcome to help with anything from putting on workshops or gigs, to recycling or cooking. The cafe was in court on May 2nd , lots of people turned up as defendants and the judge told the licensees of the building they didn't have a legal right to occupation and threw out the case. He also awarded £150 costs to the cafe! We don't know how long this autonomous space will last, so get yourselves down there while you still can. Following a brilliant opening night party there have been

film and poetry nights, capoeira workshops, jam nights, punk and folk gigs, a reggae night and much more. There's always a vegan meal (organic when possible) on Wednesday evenings and often food at other times too. Opening times and days vary so `phone to check we're open on **07753 606723**.

May the Force Be With You!

This year Manchester's mayday celebrations were quiet, the day seemed to have been forgotten. There were a few posters scattered around for various events none of which appealed greatly. So I went along to meet some others for some radical busking. We made our way to Market Street and started to busk outside the Arndale or should I say we made an infernal racket, who needs tunefulness when you've got volume? Soon the street emptied, the shops all deserted declared bankruptcy, multinationals collapsed and capitalism etc ran away with its tail between its legs. Ok it wasn't quite that good. Seeing that the terrorists had arrived we were soon surround by 8 mounted police.

We carried on playing and handing out leaflets, then another random bunch of people could be seen marching up the street with a bright orange banner at the front. They had been parading around town for the past hour leading the police on a merry dance. After having a quick cig break we all set off together down towards St Anns Square. When we got there the police, having spotted one lonely masked up person, decided to get him to unmask and took his details cos he was obviously the leader. The crowd

moved off again snaking around the streets causing chaos among the police as it went this way then that. The crowd splintered into different groups, at one point 4 people found themselves blocking in 5 police vans which were then unable to sprint ahead of the crowd and deploy their officers in Albert Square.

According to the papers 100 people standing 200 yards away from the town hall entrance and looking at it is equal to a riotous mob running up and storming the town hall. Police could be seen in its doorway looking smug. Not to be undone one protester casually wandered up the ramp and went in the side entrance appearing behind the ranks of the police who suddenly looked around dropping the smug looks from their faces and muttering `Oh shit'.

The crowd snaked off again. At Piccadilly Gardens the police tried to hem us in but off we went down Portland Street. Eventually the police got in front of us and cordoned off the road. Suddenly the back of the snake became its head and off it went down Princess Street charging through a police cordon at Canal Street and arriving again at Piccadilly Gardens. By this time the crowd was thinning out and many disappeared off to occupy the local pubs and demand beer.

After this 3 hour operation the top end of Stockport Road was blocked off by 10 police vans and lines of cops. The small crowd of protesters they had surrounded were actually on the pavement, surrounded by 10 mounted officers, the dog unit and various other cops. They were released after half an hour or so, and the police no doubt congratulated themselves on successfully containing the angry mob.

DAN-tastic!

"I don't think I have ever witnessed so much appalling arrogance in my life as I did when encountering police, MPs and various security guards during my first three days with DAN. And you can bet we'll do whatever it takes to change that!" - Disabled Action Network (DAN) activist.

Disabled people from all corners of the UK gathered in London for three days in April to lobby and take direct action. DAN made some powerful and shocking demonstrations against charging for care services and for the right to live independently, not in institutions.

On Monday morning, disabled activists invited 300 MPs to discuss DAN's demands. Not one turned up. "They wouldn't come to us, so we had to go to them!" Millbank and other party HQ's became inaccessible while DAN waited. Later that night a party for the great and the good `in honour of disabled people' with a conspicuous absence of disabled people — was gatecrashed. Minister for the disabled Margaret Hodge cowered behind David Blunkett before leaving by the back entrance.



Next day the shit hit the fan at the Department of Health as disabled activists made their feelings known about the 'toilet tax' — plans to charge disabled people for care services. Riot cops arrived and penned in the mob. While some made their way to the next 'hit', the rest broke their way out of the barricades and joined up at the offices of the Leonard Cheshire Foundation. The red feather being the symbol of this oppressive charity, which continues to imprison disabled people in homes, they decorated their lobby with what seemed like zillions of red feathers.

On day three DAN try arresting the Minister for Housing! DANners in policemen's hats went to the Department of Transport, Environment and the Regions (DETR) and blocked the doors with crime scene tape, placards and bodies in bin bags. The point? Accessible housing would mean less need to institutionalise disabled people. The DETR, always prepared to listen, call the police. So DAN took to the road and marched on Parliament; illegally they are told by a sour cop, but once again, and for reasons that remain obscure, no-one was arrested.

Contact: slowly@whispered.screaming.net

Full report at: www.johnnypops.demon.co.uk/poetry/dan/dan_april_2001.htm

They're Not Invited

'In sum, we are an army of dreamers, and therefore invincible. How can we fail to win, with this imagination overturning everything. Or rather, we do not deserve to lose.' Subcomandante Marcos of the Mexican Zapatistas, 1994

For a hundred years people fought for the vote, now they're abandoning it in droves. With both parties representing big business it's hardly surprising that ordinary people feel excluded.

In the present day we have little more than the illusion of democracy. State and corporate power are two sides of the same coin and neither could survive without the other.

In the USA, where the difference between the two major political parties is even less, the turn out is even lower. Is that where we're heading? We need to fight the powerlessness caused by capitalism with a new kind of organising, in groups that make real changes and that are worth getting involved with. We need a real alternative to sham democracy. And where is this alternative to come from if not ordinary people?

In Manchester the local wildlife group know more about the ecology of their area than the council's environmental management department. Railway workers and passengers know more about how their line works than bureaucrats ever will. The doctors, nurses and porters know more about how their hospital works than the managers do.

Building a new society only means breaking all this knowledge out of its chains. Imagine a free society run by a web of groups co-ordinating neighbourhoods, families and work places; connecting, overlapping, empowering and bringing 'politics' home for everyone. Here's a suggestion — that in our everyday lives we begin to detach ourselves from the state, from the dog-eat-dog world and involve ourselves with something that makes us feel more human, and which could be the start of a more humane world.

On June 7th it is the politicians who are not invited. Come along and take part in a day-long celebration of creative resistance in Manchester.

Can't Stomach the Election?

Free Food & Plants giveaway in the city centre from 1pm

Play the Fool!

Street Theatre & Music, city centre from 1pm

Turn the World Upside Down

Critical Mass
Cycle Ride, 5pm, All Saints Park

State Funeral

Electoral politics is not real democracy and never has been. It's time to bury the State, 6.30pm Sackville Park

Your Views Have Been Noted

Big Noise Drown out the decision makers as the ballots close (follows after the State Funeral)

t: **(0161) 226 6814** e: uninited01@hotmail.com


See <http://www.x21.org/uninvited/>

Eviction Alert at 9 Ladies

The Nine Ladies protest camp is on eviction alert, with a meeting of the Peak District National Park Authority to decide the future of the proposed quarry site scheduled for the 25th May. The word is that any decision is likely to be deferred to November but whatever the case the site crew are looking for more people to join them to strengthen the defences. People are asked to bring timber, polypropylene, rope, tarpaulins, vegan food

uninvited

Stone Circle



tree benders

(cans and non-perishable) but most importantly `you and your interest, visits, time to build, create, climb, have fun and to promote the campaign'.

The protest site _ which lies between Matlock and Bakewell in Derbyshire and includes an ancient stone circle - was set up in August 1999 after Stancliffe Stone sought to invoke permission to quarry the area granted nearly fifty years ago.

You can reach the site by Trans Peak bus from Manchester, Derby or Nottingham to the Peacock Hotel in Rowsley. Ask for directions from there. See [Loombreaker 14](#)

News From Faslane

To celebrate the 19th anniversary of Faslane Peace Camp — a week of workshops and actions and other groovy stuff, from the 1st to the 10th of June is planned.

Workshops on banner and costume making, tai chi, herbal medicine, fire-chain making and fire-dancing and plenty more! Where possible, things that have been learnt in the workshops will be practised as part of an anti-trident action.

During the week there will be a beach and road verge clean up locally, and a trip to the local Community Farm for a day's volunteering.

Friday 8th June will be a wind powered film night. Saturday 9th June will be an acoustic party at the camp - bring instruments - and there are also plans for a loud `Rage against the Base' party.

e-mail: faslania@faslanepeacecamp.org or faslanepeacecamp@hotmail.com



800 Join Gorton Tub Fun Day - Campaigners Block A57

Around 800 supporters of the campaign to save the Neptune's Kingdom swimming pool, known locally as Gorton Tub, turned out for a Fun Day and protest on Sunday 6th May. The Fun Day included a fire engine, balloons, raffle, stalls, badge making, face painting, pirates, fancy dress and walking the plank. In the afternoon session alone, over 400 kids used the tub. At 3:30pm those not in the water marched to the A57 Hyde Road, complete with balloons and banners, and blocked traffic in protest at the closure plans. The council had planned to shut the pool at the end of March. A huge campaign has sprang up and won support from Sir Bobby Charlton, GPs, local councillors and the local MP. The campaign has presented well over 4000 signatures on a petition to the council, held two public meetings of over 120 people, held demonstrations, and lobbied council meetings. The pool is still open, but still under threat.

t: **(0161) 231 5827** e: info@savegortontub.freeserve.co.uk

See www.savegortontub.freereserve.co.uk

Boneheads (Somehow) Organise a Piss-Up

Recently the National Front have been playing cat and mouse with groups who oppose them. Initially the fascists had led people to believe that they intended to march on the 7th of April. Some 300 people met outside the Civic Centre to let the fascists know in no uncertain terms that they were not welcome on the streets of Oldham or any other town. The National Front managed their usual turn out of two or three 'supporters' peeping through the curtains of a nearby pub.

A month later the National Front used an attack on a pensioner as their excuse to march. After complaints by the chief of police and local councillors Jack Boots Straw (defender of democracy) banned all political marches for three months.

Regardless of this the National Front said that they would, firstly, be at Oldham to attack their opposition as they arrived, and also, that they would march past the Civic Centre at 3:30. They did neither. Instead goons from Combat 18 huddled together in groups over two miles from the Civic Centre as their opposition, numbering at least 300, waited for them. The Glorious National Front stayed peeping round the curtains in the nearby pub!

People from Manchester and Bolton managed to spend some time with 300 plus members of the local community who were out on the streets — their main concern is that this is just the beginning, as Nick Griffin (the British National Party chief Knuckle dragger), has announced that he will be standing in Oldham West in the general election. They are also standing in Burnley, so that's a quarter of their membership accounted for.

With the election yawn under way the NF have organised two more rallies. On the 19th May the 'rally' of seven NF consisted in a booze-up in a couple of pubs in Oldham City Centre. A counter demonstration took place not too far away. On the 26th May they will be trying to stir it up again. People should be wary. Although the NF are a piss poor organisation with nothing constructive to offer, their agenda is not far removed from that of the really existing fascism that characterises state and corporate power.

Contact **07949 197548**

AGM News: Our Loombreaker Spies Infiltrate Premier Oil and BAE Systems and Mess With Their Minds

Taking the Biscuit

On the 3rd of May about 50 CAAT (Campaign Against The Arms Trade) activists protested inside & outside the QE2 Conference centre in central London against BAE Systems Annual General Meeting. Many people were able to get in to the centre by previously arranging for a share to be bought on their behalf. Once inside they proceeded to steal all the biscuits & when the announcement came for the shareholders to move into the conference room, a group of 10 activists blockaded the entrance and when the private security guards couldn't move them or shut them up, they had to open an alternative entrance. Strangely enough the activists were not chucked out & so were able to get into the main hall. They managed to bring the meeting to a standstill by tying themselves together & chanting "British Aerospace Deals in Death" very loudly until they were forcibly ejected by the heavy handed security guards.

After the noisy activists were chucked out, other campaigners continued to hassle the board of directors, asking them lots of embarrassing and probing questions. On top of this other people were maintaining a presence outside. British Aeospace is responsible for selling arms to some of the most abusive and totalitarian regimes in the world including Indonesia, Algeria & Saudi Arabia not to mention supplying 30% of the US's military equipment and 80% of the UK's.

Contact CAAT: **(020) 7281 0297**

caat@caat.demon.co.uk

or Manchester EF! **(0161) 226 6814**

A Day Out With the Lizards

'Premier Oil, OUT, OUT, OUT of Burma!' was the message delivered at their AGM in London on the 16th May. Once again a group of 15 activists from the Burma Campaign and the Free Burma Coalition attended the meeting as shareholders. Coffee and biscuits with decrepit capitalists, networking seeds of financial dissent _ talk of human rights issues fell on ears deaf with greed. 70% of the meeting was taken up with targetted questions about why Premier Oil is in Burma and, by association, complicit with human rights abuses and slavery on an horrific and massive scale. Investments in Burma fund the military dictatorship. The Burmese State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) spends 60% of the national income on the military that carries out its programme of genocide.

Each question was met with a practised response from the board of directors. Mindless PR propoganda _ a social performance report of projects _ suggested that educating 10 children makes it okay to murder, rape and torture thousands more. This 'humanitarian contribution' is designed to excuse the fact that Premier Oil directly fund an insane military junta that brutalises 45 million people.

The meeting was followed by a cheap buffet and more mingling with by now not so polite aged shareholders. Serious ongoing pressure is needed as an intervention to target Premier Oil _ a sick union of greed, pollution and 'plausible' propaganda. Any ideas?

Contact: Free Burma Coalition, 110a Rectory Road, Stoke Newington, N16 7SD

Tel: **(07931) 753138**

Email: aung.freeburmacampaign@breezemail.net

The Watershed Campaign

The moorland watershed between Todmorden and Bacup has been systematically trashed for decades _ the rivers run orange because of iron pyrites from old mine workings, the hillsides are scarred and eroding, the area is a fly-tipping blackspot, and someone thought it would be a bright idea to put a landfill site just above the source of the River Calder (the owner has recently applied for a time extension). Now, to cap it all, there is a looming planning application for a huge open cast clay and coal mine using trench and augur extraction, put in by Cobex Ltd (from Wakefield).

There is an active campaign against the mine _ as well as the boring behind-the-scenes work of putting our case to Lancashire County Council, creating a coalition of

local groups, sorting petitions etc, we've recently held a "Walk for the Watershed", which was a joyful and creative event, with huge backing from the local press. At the moment we're not doing direct action _ that may happen later down the line, but it would be better to get it stopped at the planning stage. (The decision will probably be taken in June or July).

The aim of the watershed campaign is not just to oppose the mine. We want to put forward an alternative vision of the ecological restoration of the whole area, healing the scars of the industrial past, finding ways to bring life back to the moorland streams, and reforesting the hillsides to prevent flooding and erosion. (The Upper Calder Valley was badly hit by floods last year, underlining our vulnerability to the effects of climate change).

Our vision is not just pie in the sky _ it is happening already. The Treesresponsibility Climate Action Group in Calderdale has begun tree planting on some steep eroding sites and has carried out a reed-bed study near a particularly polluted mine out flow. We are about to launch our "After the Floods, the Forest" campaign, and are confident about getting funding to establish a community woodland on a huge and badly degraded 6 hectare site (once the location of an old pipeworks). We are also putting input into the structure plan review processes of Calderdale and Lancashire County Councils, in the hope of getting the area "redesignated" to safeguard it for the future.

To get involved call Penny on **(01422) 843222**

Set Lasers to `Destroy`

Representatives from 18 countries and from every continent attended a conference in Leeds aiming to halt Pentagon plans to expand its weapons system into space, sharing information and a sense of urgency that demands action. Helen John, veteran Greenham Common and Menwith Hill direct action campaigner has announced that she will stand against Tony Blair in the forthcoming election.

On 4th July demonstrators at Menwith Hill will be demanding independence from the US and on 4th August there will be a rally at Fylingdales in North Yorkshire. Both sites are key components of the proposed system. A call for a Global Day of Action Against US military bases was also agreed upon. Greater Manchester CND will be providing transport from Manchester to all these events.

At the conference Professor Karl Grossman outlined the US documents blatantly setting out the military's intentions : the Space Command report chaired by Rumsfeld state that Ballistic Missile Defence is to protect US interests and investments. The US Space Command has as its slogan, `Masters of Space.' Theatre Missile Defence(TMD) will protect US troops on the battlefield and National Missile Defence (NMD) will provide a protective shield for the North American continent against enemy missiles. Note: it will not protect the United Kingdom despite the use of Menwith Hill and Fylingdales but instead leave this country a more likely missile target! And less well known is that plans to militarise space are also under way in Europe, as many will have missed the news that the previously civilian European Space Agency now has a military component.

Contact: GMD CND **(0161) 273 8283**

See www.space4peace.org

easyMoney

A Manchester activist up in court on 22nd May following a recent action against the opening of runway 2 at the airport (see *loombreaker 17*) was found not guilty on the charges of assaulting a police officer and breach of the peace, although he was fined £140 for trespass. GMP be warned, he is now gonna sue yo' ass!

Earth First! Summer Gathering 1-5th August, Peak District

Since 1992 the EF! gathering has been a space for everyone involved or interested in ecological direct action, from Britain and abroad, to come together, learn new skills and discuss ideas and plans for action.

For more details contact: EF! Summer Gathering, c/o The Greenhouse Bookshop, 42-46 Bethel St, Norwich, NR2 1NR; **0845 458 9595**;
e: summergathering@yahoo.co.uk ; or see www.eco-action.org/gathering

For travel details from Manchester phone Manchester EF! on **(0161) 226 6814**

[back issues](#)

[loombreaker front page](#)