

Tales from the Planet

Fifth Estate Collective

1996

According to David Brower, the ecology elder “archdruid,” the Clinton administration has done more harm to the environment than either preceding right-wing Republican presidents. For instance, Clinton’s signature on the infamous salvage rider bill allows extensive clear cutting in America’s forests such as Northern California’s Headwaters and Cove/Mallard in Idaho.

Clinton also signed- another rider this year giving the go-ahead to the University of Arizona’s plans to build unneeded telescopes on Mt. Graham which is Apache sacred land and home to the endangered red squirrel. The rider exempts the telescope project from all cultural, religious and environmental laws.

Justice Department lawyers appeared in Tucson recently to oppose Apache and environmental challenges to the clearing of old-growth trees to make way for a third telescope on Mt. Graham’s East Peak. Sure glad the evil, anti-environmental Bob Dole isn’t going to be president:

Clifford Harper, the English anarchist artist whose work graces so many anti-authoritarian publications and posters, suffered a heart attack last year and almost died. Now, he has trouble working because of his health, he’s broke and British tax collectors are hounding him. Clifford needs a morale boost and some mutual aid. Contact him at 78 Crofton Rd., London SE5 8NA, England.

Six protesters arrested at last year’s National Governors Association conference in Burlington, Vt. (See Spring 1996 FE; p. 3) for defending the life of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal won a victory in June when a judge permitted the use of a necessity defense.

Those arrested will argue they had to break the trespass law at -the Sheraton Hotel to get the attention of Pennsylvania’s Governor Tom Ridge, who signed Mumia’s execution order, and would not come out to speak to protesters.

Scheduled to testify at the trial are historian and civil disobedience expert Howard Zinn, Native American activist and FBI counter-intelligence program expert Ward Churchill, and Mumia’s attorney, Leonard Weinglass.

Tax-deductible donations to cover legal costs of this important trial can be sent to the Mumia Solidarity Coalition made payable to Native Forest Network and earmarked for MSC. Send to PO Box 57, Burlington, VT 05402; (802) 863-0571.

—Anne Petermann/*NFN Bulletin*

1996 raids on fur farms by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) has been such effective economic sabotage that this vicious industry has suffered significant financial losses. So far this year, over 25,000 mink were illegally released from a dozen U.S. fur farms in eight states. An additional 8,000 were freed from similar Canadian facilities- resulting in \$1 million losses.

Although it’s unsettling to put a price on a living creature, at \$30 a pelt, U.S. fur farmers suffered \$750,000 lost revenue from freed animals. In addition, the destruction of killing sheds, breeding records and farm buildings meant further losses to the industry. Estimates go even higher when unreported actions are factored in.

In response to the raids, North American Fur Auctions (NAFA), an industry clearinghouse, fearing that their producers would be driven out of business (despite new markets in the Far East) created a blanket insurance policy

offering protection for farmers shipping through them. However, the policies contain a \$25,000 deductible and only cover losses to \$250,000. In light of the fact that a single action in British Columbia in 1995 was estimated at \$632,000, this policy would offer little protection from ALF.

This year, ALF struck frequently across North America. Raids took place in Sheboygan, Wis., Victor, N.Y., Sandy, South Jordan and Riverton, Utah., Langley, B.C., Howard Lake, Minn., and Alliance, Ohio.

Generally, governments turn up the heat when social movements go beyond getting the word out, to getting the job done. No exception to the rule, both Canada and the U.S. set a price on the heads of ALF activists. The fur industry is demanding ALF activists be targeted for a continent-wide criminal investigation. The RCMP (Canada's FBI) says, "There is a major investigation. This is a major concern." The cops are offering a substantial reward for the arrest of individuals involved in the raids. In the U.S., \$100,000 has been put up.

Information about ALF and ALF actions is available from NA-ALFSG Box 69597, 5845 Yonge St., Willowdale, Ont., Canada. M2M 4K3; (subs for the publication Underground are on a sliding scale of \$20-30 a year); and the Coalition To Abolish the Fur Trade, PO Box 822411, Dallas, Texas 75382, newsletter and a how-to book, The Final Nail; \$2.

—Maya

Department of We Told You So: Cyril Ramaphosa, who led a crippling 1987 strike of black South African miners against apartheid, and most recently, an ANC official, led the signing of the purchase of 25 percent of that country's largest corporation, which controls diamond and gold mining. Ramaphosa joined with other old ANC comrades to form a consortium of black investors to become part of the ruling economic structure. Meanwhile, conditions only worsen for the dwellers of Sovveto. Isn't this Animal Farm with a South African setting?

On 13 July, trains carrying 1,000-plus assorted ravers, revelers and road protesters arrived at London's Shepherd's Bush rail station and disgorged its radical occupants. A signal was given by someone waiting in the wings, and the first 500 ravers were unleashed. This was the third London Reclaim The Streets action (See Spring 1996 FE) and by far the most radical.

Police crews filmed everyone exiting the station and several hundred police were already on hand to prevent access to a tempting traffic roundabout.

People spent an hour milling around while drummers beat out rhythms and a bagpiper entertained the crowd as a dreadlocked man undressed and revealed himself to the rigid line of Metropolitan police.

A back lane was discovered behind the station by the crowd which suddenly seethed around and onto the adjacent M41 Motorway, completely blocking motor traffic. The police realised too late they had been outflanked, but as if to console themselves, snatched eight people randomly from the front line of movers and shakers.

With the M41 completely shut down, two sound systems, on the back of curtained hire-trucks drove into place and began pumping out generator-powered sound as the police were driven back. An adjacent housing estate, revealed food stalls, furniture, carpets, a third sound system and various props, all prearranged for the event all of which were carted onto the roadway.

By 14.00 hours, a two kilometre stretch of the motorway was crowded with an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 people, many of who arrived in fancy dress. Perhaps the most bizarre theatrics of the day came from two women, dressed in Edwardian period costume, who climbed into enormous billowing skirts stretched over circular frames eight metres high. The frames were wheeled through the throng and, unbeknownst to the neighbouring revelers, one of the giant skirts hid a jackhammer which was used to dig several holes in the highway tarmac.

Two trees were planted as a symbol of the damage done to the environment by roads. The Highways Agency estimated damage to the road surface was 20,000 pounds. The trees were later torn out and the highway restored.



Reclaiming the streets: Kids and parents play in a sand pile dropped in the middle of the M41 motorway outside London, part of thousands participating in an anti-road protest. photo—Alec Smart

The demonstrations seek to lessen society's reliance on private 'petroleum-powered vehicles, improve public transport facilities and create communities planned and built within pedestrianised zones.

—Alec Smart, Black, White and Green, 10 Waterloo Place, Brighton, BN2 2NB, East Sussex, U.K.

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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/348-fall-1996/tales-from-the-planet>
Fifth Estate #348, Fall, 1996

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