

# Tales from the Planet

Fifth Estate Collective

1997

## “‘Partial’ Victory for McLibel Two”

At the conclusion of the longest trial in British history, McDonald’s has exacted a quarter-pound of flesh from two radical environmentalists the burger corporation claimed libeled it. The presiding magistrate declared in a 1,000-word judgment that the defendants, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, the McLibel Two, “partially” libeled the \$30 billion a year corporation by publishing and distributing the 6-sided factsheet entitled, “What’s Wrong With McDonald’s?: Everything They Don’t Want You To Know.” The judge awarded the company \$96,000 in damages. Partially is the key word, however, since he upheld the defendants on several important charges leveled against McGarbage in the pamphlet.

The judge surprised a London courtroom packed with journalists, supporters of the defendants, McDonald’s top executives and their lawyers, by declaring that the two members of Greenpeace London proved their contentions that McDonald’s “exploits children” through advertising and promotions, that the company’s claim that their food is nutritious is deceptive, that McDonald’s is “culpably responsible” for cruelty to animals, and that it pays low wages to its UK employees and is anti-union.

The court heard almost two and a half years of testimony from 180 witnesses about the effect of the company’s policies on human health, the environment, farm animals, the Third World and McDonald’s employees from experts in the respective fields, Corporation executives, and even company paid infiltrators.

The case was tried without a jury after the judge ruled the issues were too complex for an average person.

McDonald’s spent \$15 million on the trial, but still suffered a public relations disaster. The hearings received international publicity, and the pamphlet in question, which had a circulation of only several thousand prior to the



54 people from a San Francisco Bay Area cluster of anarchist affinity groups, Homes Not Jails, and several homeless activists were arrested after occupying, barricading, and sitting-in outside of three vacant homes on the Presidio, a former army base. They demanded that the 466 units kept empty by the National Park Service be used for the city’s desperate need for housing. Last year, 154 homeless people died on San Francisco’s streets. Earlier that afternoon, homeless, tenant, anti-poverty, anarchist and environmental groups held a rally, followed by a 300-person march carrying giant puppets and cardboard effigies of homes.

To support them, contact the Tenants Union at 415-282-5525. —photo: Anders Corr

trial, has subsequently had two million distributed in England alone. Also, the McLibel web site, McSpotlight.org, which has had 12 million hits, reproduces the pamphlet plus trial transcripts.

Steel and Morris emerged from the courtroom waving copies of the pamphlet, pledging to keep distributing them. The next day, demonstrations were held at McDonald's franchises across the world. Contact them at McLibel Support Campaign, 5 Caledonian Rd., London N1 9DX, UK.

## **Paul Watson Freed**

Paul Watson, Greenpeace cofounder and president of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, imprisoned in Holland on a Norwegian extradition request was released June 9 by a Dutch judge.

Watson was arrested in Amsterdam April 2 on an Interpol warrant requested by Norway. The Oslo government wants him to serve a 120-day sentence for sinking a Norwegian whaling vessel following a trial where he was convicted in absentia. Other charges stem from an incident involving the Sea Shepherd boat, Whales Forever, which was rammed, depth-charged and fired upon by a Norwegian destroyer. Norway claims its ship was rammed by Watson although video footage of the 1994 incident and the accounts of numerous journalists who witnessed the confrontation in international waters put the blame on the much larger Norwegian vessel.

Watson, a vehement critic of illegal whaling by Norway, was the focus of an intense international public and celebrity campaign. A full-page ad in the May 23 edition of the Dutch newspaper Volkskrant featured Pierce Brosnan, Cher, Jane Seymour, Steven Seagal, Mick Jagger and Chrissie Hynde among others demanding his release. At a May 16 Amsterdam concert, Zoli Teglás, IGNITE vocalist, led a crowd of 100,000 in chanting "Free Paul Watson." There were also international demonstrations the day of the hearing.

Lisa Distefano, Sea Shepherd international director thinks Norway made a big mistake arresting the well-known activist who has been fighting to stop whaling and illegal fishing for 25 years. "By trying to manipulate the Dutch justice system for their own ends," she says, "they focused unwanted attention on their illegal whale slaughter for Japanese sushi in defiance of the global moratorium."

Sea Shepherd is at P.O. Box 628, Venice CA 90294; 310-301-7325.

## **Burn All Flags!**

Now that the political system has been exposed as a racket for the corporations and international high rollers (the Democrats sell off the White House to the highest bidder, while the Republicans offer the Congress for sale), the politicians have reintroduced the pathetic flag desecration constitutional amendment hoping the public's attention will be diverted from the never ending influence peddling scandals in Washington.

The drive for a change in the constitution came about after the conservative U.S. Supreme Court held that laws forbidding flag burning were unconstitutional, since such acts were political speech, protected by the First Amendment. The problem is, no one is doing much flag burning these days, and haven't been since it was the RCP's hobby during the Gulf War protests six years ago.

Numerous people we've spoken to around the country agree, if the political opportunists who rule this country manage to pass this obvious attempt at limiting free speech and action, let's make it a problem; a big one. Public defiance would be good although private acts of desecration, the remainders of which could be mailed to politicians, would make the point as well. Can you imagine the reaction of Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, one of the amendment's sponsors, if he received thousands of packages containing burnt flags? Burn all flags!

## **Cove/Mallard Blockade**

Summer 1997 has seen several significant developments in the campaign to end the Cove/Mallard timber sales and protect this vital piece of the lower 48's last Big Wild from destruction. An environmental law suit, the last legal remedy, was dismissed by a state judge, and an appeal won't be heard until January 1998.

While the lopsided wheels of justice are stuck in the same old rut, committed people are busy putting themselves between the chainsaws of the U.S. Forest Service and the forests of Cove/Mallard.

On June 15<sup>th</sup>, as the protection of elk calving season expired, two brave souls perched in tripods, blocking the logging road to one of the sales. The protesters remained for three days before being plucked off with a cherrypicker, and jailed.

Others declared July 4, "Forest Independence Day," and set up a blockade on the road to the Jack Creek timber sale. Activists were in 35-foot high structures designed to force law enforcement to risk lives if they try to take them down. Others were locked to cement barrels buried in the road. On Sept. 17, officers roughly arrested five people in a day long operation. The way is now clear for 200 planned clearcuts unless the courts step in.

Because Cove/Mallard is an area of unprotected national forest that links several major biological corridors, it is one of the most significant timber conflicts in the Northern Rockies this decade. This second longest blockade in forest defense history, linked radical environmentalists with anarchists, creating a free state on the road of the Jack timber sale.

Contact the Cove/Mallard Coalition, P.O. Box 8968, Moscow ID; 208-8829755; [cove@moscow.com](mailto:cove@moscow.com) for updates.

## **Geronimo Freed**

Ex-Black Panther and political prisoner for over a quarter century, Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), was released from a California dungeon June 10. A county judge ruled what every sensible person who looked at the case knew: Geronimo had been denied a fair trial in 1972. Pratt was framed on murder charges after being fingered by a police informer as part of the FBI code-named COINTELPRO conspiracy to silence the Panthers.

The judge's ruling came after a month of testimony by 28 witnesses who affirmed the litany of abuse in the case by LA cops, prosecutor's office and federal officials. The FBI knew for years that Pratt was not at the murder scene since they had illegal wiretaps of his conversations 350 miles away, but kept the evidence suppressed.

We welcome Geronimo back to the minimum security confinement of everyday existence, but will never forget that a brutal, lying government took 27 years from his life.

Other well-known militants remain in prison on frame-up charges such as Mumia Abu Jamal and Leonard Peltier, but they are only the most well known.

Recognizing this as he left the Orange County Jail, Geronimo said, "You have political prisoners on top of political prisoners; I'm only one of a great many."

## **Unabomber Trial**

Theodore Kaczynski, accused of being the Unabomber, will face an anonymous jury Nov. 12 in Sacramento, Calif. at the start of his trial on federal bomb charges. Kaczynski's lawyers agreed on the need to protect jurors from outside influence such as the media, which has all but convicted Kaczynski. He is charged with 4 of the 16 bombings attributed to the mysterious, anti-technology avenger. He has pleaded not guilty and faces the death penalty if convicted.

## **A New McLibel?**

Bob Helms, a Philadelphia IWW activist, and Harper's magazine are being sued by Pittsburgh-based health giant Allegheny University for the Health Sciences (AU) for libel and slander.

Helms is an anarchist historian and publisher of Guinea Pig Zero (GPZ), a jobzine for volunteer research study participants. The suit resulted from Harper's excerpting a GPZ report card on pharmaceutical human study units which slammed the unit acquired as part of AU's recent buying frenzy (over 25 hospitals and medical schools).

Harper's publicly apologized to AU as well as settled out of court for an undisclosed sum. Helms is holding firm for a court date: "I'll make them eat crow," he says. GPZ is available from P.O. Box 4253, Philadelphia. PA 19101; \$3/issue; \$10 a year, four issues.

Hey, how about some nonlegal news? Philadelphia's Wooden Shoe Books has found new quarters following a disastrous fire in February 1997. They're now at 508 S. 5<sup>th</sup> St.; 215-569-2477.

# fifth Estate

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