



solid **A** rity

AUGUST 1997



A PEOPLE'S FESTIVAL

200 PEOPLE took over Edinburgh's Grassmarket on 11 August 1997 in Scotland's first Reclaim the Streets action.

Demonstrators blockaded the road with crowd control barriers and a giant tripod. For 2 hours the sounds of music and dancing and the tinkle of tea on china replaced the roar of the traffic.

But then the police moved in. Determined to clear the road for King Car, the blue meanies arrested 18 people. 17 were held overnight, and one locked up for 4 nights. The trials are due on 1st and 2nd September.

This was at least the 27th Reclaim the Streets (RTS) action in Britain since May 1995. The direct action movement is about encouraging people to take control of the streets and create a safe and friendly space for people, in resistance to the deaths and destruction caused by cars and roads. Recently important links have been made between RTS and the Liverpool dockers struggle, with joint actions in Liverpool last September, and in London in April.

RTS Edinburgh started with demonstrators gathering at the advertised meeting place at The Mound, off Princes Street. Prominent was a large international contingent from the Ecotopia camp in West Lothian.

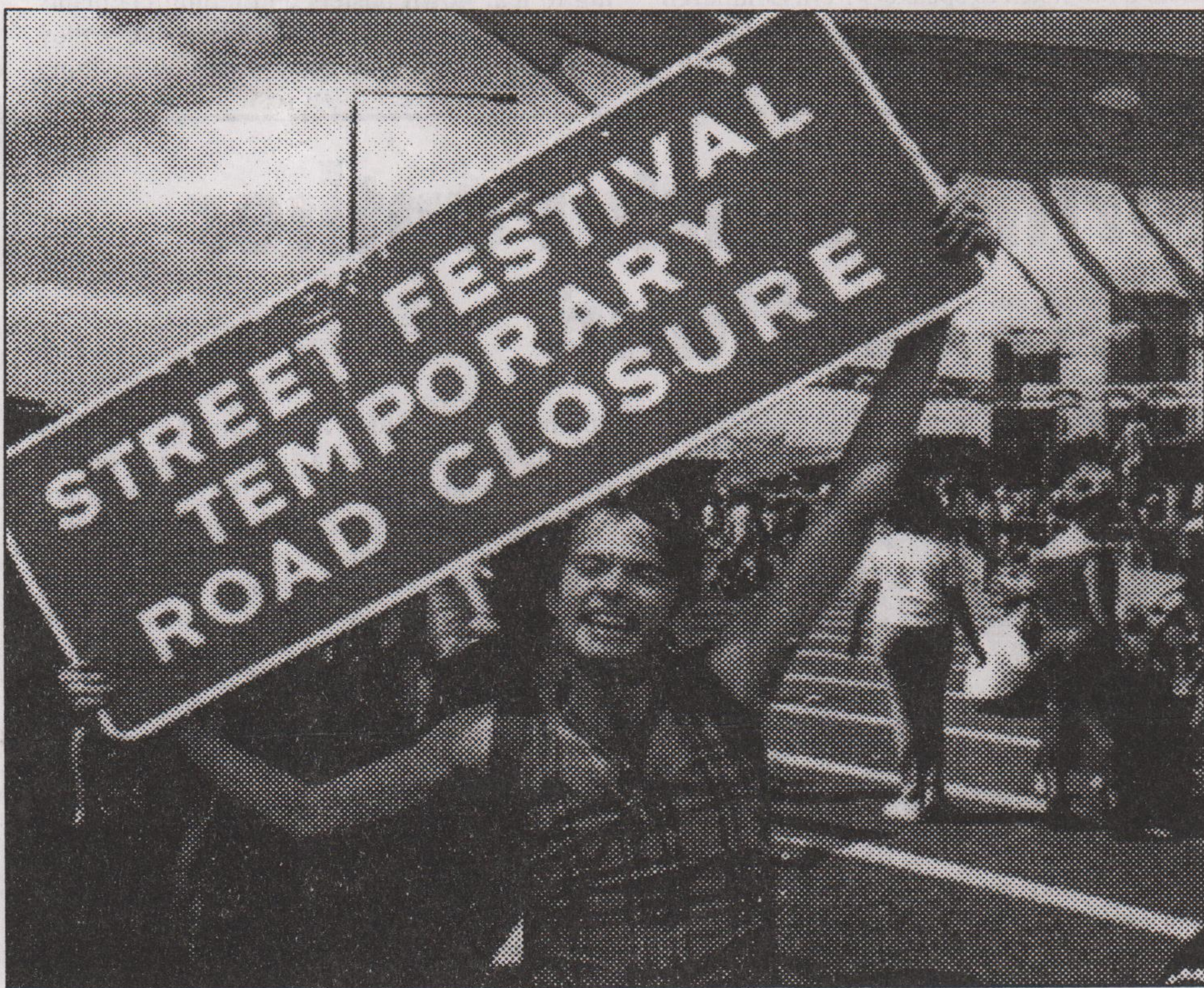
At 10.30am, unnoticed by plod, a dozen strong advance group sealed off part of the Grassmarket, in central Edinburgh's Old Town. Commandeered crowd control barriers and an enormous tripod of scaffolding poles - from the top of which an intrepid demonstrator was suspended in a net - soon stopped the traffic.

The main group, now escorted by alarmed polis, marched the half mile or so from The Mound to the Grassmarket and successfully made it into the liberated area, defying an attempt by mounted police to block their path.

Now the forces of darkness could only look on helplessly as tables and chairs magically appeared and an impromptu street café sprouted on the highway. A bewildering array of international folk dances were performed as the carnival continued for 2 hours.

But meantime the police were bringing in reinforcements and issued an ultimatum: leave by 12.30. Demonstrators insisted that our response must be determined collectively. A giant circle was formed on the road and a mass meeting discussed our next step. After an intriguing debate, in which each contribution was translated into around a dozen different languages, we elected to leave at 1.30pm.

The police response was to wade in and start nicking people. Around a dozen people linked arms and lay on the road. Police eventually hurled them into a police van with some violence.



★ Scene from a previous Reclaim the Streets action

The Fire Brigade were diverted from potential emergencies to bring down the tripod perch. He put up a spirited resistance to the end. It took around 45 - 50 minutes before police violence allowed the resumption of "business as usual".

Several of us went to St Leonards police station to support the prisoners, by delivering books, papers etc. One was released late that night, but everyone else was locked up for over 24 hours, appearing at Chambers St sheriff court the following afternoon.

Almost all pleaded not guilty to charges such as Breach of the Peace, and were bailed until the trials on 1st September. But disgracefully one French guy was refused bail and taken to Saughton prison. He spent 3 nights in jail before appearing in court on 15 August and being admonished.

This first Reclaim the Streets should inspire more such actions in Edinburgh and Scotland. Future activity will hopefully build on the success and lessons of this action - which was organised at short notice - by involving more local people, groups and communities and by being better prepared in various ways, such as being better able to prevent the police regaining control of the liberated zone.

And let's not forget, as the recent joint RTS - Liverpool Dockers activity illustrates, Reclaim the Streets is not a single issue campaign, but part of the struggle to Reclaim the World for humanity.

As Reclaim the Streets say "The power that attacks those who work, through union legislation and casualisation, is the same power that is attacking the planet with overproduction and consumption of resources..."

...This power is capital. As long as economies run on the basis of profit for business, social and ecological exploitation will occur. The question is: can we come together as a movement that will effectively challenge and dissolve this power, before those in control lead society into the social and ecological catastrophe that is currently just beginning?" (*Do or Die* mag no.6, p.9)

Written by one participant

■ For info on how you can get involved in future RTS activity, and on how you can make donations to help those facing fines, contact Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, 17 W. Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Tel: 0131 557 6242.

spread the word

WE'RE NOT WORKING ON A CHAIN GANG

EDINBURGH ANTI WORKFARE DEMO

ANTI-WORKFARE DEMONSTRATORS rallied in Edinburgh city centre then occupied a Job Centre as part of the Groundswell Network's UK Wide Day of Action on 21 July.

Edinburgh Claimants and the Edinburgh Support Group for the Liverpool Dockers joined forces to organise a rally on the theme No to Workfare, No to benefit cuts for single parents, No to casualisation and sackings.

Around 30-35 demonstrators were joined by passers-by to listen to speakers from Edinburgh Claimants, the Dockers Support group and the newly formed Claimants Union in Wester Hailes

(a large Council scheme in the west of Edinburgh).

Over 20 protectors moved on from the rally at The Mound Edinburgh's speakers corner - to nearby South St Andrews St Job Centre. Inside the Job Centre, demonstrators stuck up posters and gave out leaflets to claimants and staff. In between blowing whistles and chanting, an impromptu speech was made through a megaphone appealing to benefit office workers to join the resistance to workfare.

Meanwhile manager Berny Jaster, having called the police, dashed about frantically, trying to tear down posters and telling claimants not to believe the demonstrators - surely they didn't think that Tony Blair would do anything

wrong? Suddenly a loud shout FUCK OFF JASTER! rang out from behind a Job Centre board, causing consternation among the manager's underlings.

Police ejected the demonstrators but there were no arrests and the protest continued outside for around half an hour longer, till several hundred leaflets were all given out. All in all a successful day, and the joint organisation between Edinburgh Claimants and the Dockers' Support Group augurs well for future co-operation.

Edinburgh Claimants, c/o Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Tel 0131 557 6242.

Former Black Panther tours Scotland



LORENZO KOM'BOA ERVIN, ex Black Panther and now Black Autonomy activist in Chattanooga (Tennessee), toured Scotland in May as part of a worldwide speaking tour.

Kom'boa became a member of the Black Panther Party in the Southern States of the USA in 1968, but was framed by the FBI, and sentenced to life imprisonment by an all-white racist jury. He served 15 years, including a period in the

infamous 'control unit' at Marion (IL). Since his release, he has worked as a community organizer in Chattanooga, and he is the past President of the Concerned Citizens for Justice, a local group fighting racism and police brutality.

Kom'boa spoke in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee giving a personal history of the black civil-rights movement in the US and of his years in federal prisons around the US.

Kom'boa outlined the newly formed Black Autonomy movement; a network of anti-authoritarian, class-conscious black groups seeking to organize an international black revolutionary movement and to build links of solidarity with white class-struggle groups.

He also called on our support for a moratorium on the death penalty in the US - a penal system which is clearly unjust, anti-working class and racist. In response to this, Edinburgh Anarchists organised a day of action against US government and US owned business in Edinburgh, the high point of which was the burning of a US flag on the steps of the US Consulate.

Faslane: Eviction threat to peace group

AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS of sustained peace campaigning, halting nuclear convoys, boarding nuclear submarines, monitoring the Naval Base and laughing off 1,090 arrests, Faslane Peace Camp is threatened with eviction. Argyll and Bute Council has served us notice to quit by 28th July. If we don't leave, the Council intends to go to seek an eviction order. Needless to say we urnae leaving!

We are now in the process of constructing defences at the camp, and it is vitally important to build up a strong presence here. Cash-strapped councillors have admitted on Channel 5 News that if they were to face a Manchester-style eviction at the camp, they would give up.

Bodies needed

While we need bodies to live here permanently, we would also like people to stay for a few weeks on a rota basis. We need individuals and groups to contact us and arrange these short term visits. You will need warm clothes, tent and food. So if you fancy spending time by the bonnie banks of the Gareloch building defences, stopping nuclear convoys, etc. Even better, organise a bus-load and bring your friends with you.

Reprinted from Faslane Focus

VISIT GLASGOW'S
RADICAL BOOKSHOP

FAHRENHEIT
451

VIRGINIA GALLERIES,
VIRGINIA STREET, GLASGOW

Scottish Anarchist
Gathering

Sat 30th August 1997

11.30am to 5pm

Kinning Park Complex, Glasgow

(directly across from Kinning
Park Underground)



FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS of a recent benefit, which raised £1,500 for the Liverpool Dockers, the Clydeside Support Group are having a night with DJs and Rappers at the Bedsit, Friday 12 September from 9pm to 2am. Tickets £3/2.

**WRITE TO: Box A,
Fahrenheit 451 Bookshop,
Virginia Galleries,
Virginia Street, Glasgow**

