

## Related articles of interest

- "Are we armed only with peer-reviewed science?", John Archer  
*Shift Magazine, issue 1*
- "Climate Camp - Which side are we on", Kevin Blowe  
<http://www.blowe.org.uk/2009/09/climate-camp-which-side-are-we-on.html>
- Revolting Peasants, Whitechapel Anarchist Group  
<http://whitechapelanarchistgroup.wordpress.com/2009/08/27/revolting-peasants/>
- "Cambridge Anarchists at London Climate Camp", Cambridge Anarchists  
<http://cambridgeanarchists.wordpress.com/2009/08/30/cambridge-anarchists-at-london-climate-camp-09/>
- "The Liberal 'Anti-Capitalist' Climate Camp", Resonance  
<http://resonance.wordpress.com/2009/09/08/the-liberal-anti-capitalist-climate-camp-2009/>
- "Climate Camp: Watching the watchers," Penny Red / Liberal Conspiracy  
<http://www.liberalconspiracy.org/2009/08/27/climate-camp-watching-the-watchers/>
- "Between Protesters and Police, Principalities and Powers...", Adam Dickson  
<http://theprogressiveprophet.wordpress.com/2008/08/07/between-protesters-and-police-principalities-and-powers/>
- "Climate Camp vs Newbury," Merrick  
<http://bristlingbadger.blogspot.com/2009/08/climate-camp-vs-newbury.html>
- "On the 'climate camp has sold out' meme," Dixie Clicker  
<http://www.inmyhumbleetc.org.uk/2009/09/on-the-climate-camp-has-sold-out-meme/>
- "Is the Camp for Climate Action challenging or embodying capitalist consumerism?"  
<http://climateactioncafe.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/is-the-camp-for-climate-action-challenging-or-embodying-capitalist-consumerism/>
- "An Open Letter to the Camp for Climate Action," David Douglass, NUM.  
<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2008/07/403441.html>
- "Open letter to the Met," Camp for Climate Action  
<http://www.climatecamp.org.uk/blog/2009/08/20/open-letter-to-the-met>
- Introduction to the Apocalypse  
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# Criticism *without* Critique

## A Climate Camp Reader

January 2010

a shift magazine / dysophia production



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Not included here (way to long), but highly recommended for a very different perspective, answering many of the criticisms here is the

**"The Camp for Climate Action and the Media,"** interview at <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2009/04/428061.html>



## Editorial

In January & February 2010, the Camp for Climate Action will go through a period of introspection as it works out where it shall go next. While in some ways the Camp has been a success, it has also come under a barrage of criticism from some quarters within the radical movements that spawned it.

To help this debate we have put together a set of resources and relevant articles to inform and spark discussion relating to this criticism. Our bias is obvious, though the opinions expressed are those of the authors alone. Whether you agree with them or not, we believe they are worth taking on board. We hope at least that you feel confident answering their challenges, rather than just dismissing them.

Now is the time for the Camp to examine its politics in more depth, to work out just what it stands for. This is a cross-roads in its development, to continue down a path of ever increasing liberal, reformist approach, or to be the noisy radical, pointing out all the white elephants in the climate change debate. The future of the movement around the camp is being shaped here. The decisions being made now will have profound impacts on who is and who is not involved in the future.

The Camp for Climate Action grew out of the radical anarchist and environmental movements, a synthesis of the organisational skills developed at the Anti-G8 protest camp at Stirling, and the ecological direct action movements such as Earth First! The perception that emerges from these criticisms is this has been lost along the way.

We accept that this booklet makes challenging reading and that we offer little in the way of solutions. These, we believe, must come from within the camp itself. However, it is apparent that there is a need for two things. Firstly, a greater visibility for the anarchist roots within the day to day life of the CCA process and proposals. Secondly, and just as important, a more open and explicit critique of capitalism and how it is the root cause of climate change.

If we do neither out of fear of a mainstream media backlash, then we are reduced to being another NGO. Yet, the power of the Camp has always been the promise of a genuine alternative action in the face of prevarication and obstruction from governments and corporations – now is the time to spell that critique out and use it to build real alternatives, not legitimising the system we complain of. It was the strength of the Camp's founding critiques that gave it the boldness its subsequent successes have rested on.

Ultimately, the message of the Camp is a very radical one – that radical social change is needed, especially if we are to tackle of the root causes of climate change. The answer is not to water down our actions and our messages, but to be bolder than ever. That is the excitement and power that gives the Camp its life.

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## The Aims & Principles of the Camp for Climate Action

- Educated Ourselves
- Take Collective Direct Action
- Build a Movement for Radical Action on Climate Change
- Demonstrate Alternatives

*Later, these became the key messages:*

- Climate change is already happening and its effects will be catastrophic if we don't act now.
- New technology and market-based solutions are not enough to address the problem - tackling climate change will require radical social change.
- We all need to work together in our communities to come up with solutions. We cannot rely on business and government to bring about the radical changes that are needed.

[1] <http://www.climatecamp.org.uk/get-involved/national-gatherings/MancMinutes27-28Sept08.pdf>  
[2] <http://climatecalm.org/hrsite/minutesjan.php>



## An Open Letter to the Climate Camp Neighbourhoods

*The following letter was written by activists at the 2008 camp, as a response to some of the workshops and discussions that were happening, and read out at neighbourhood meetings.*

We are a large group of anti-authoritarian participants in the climate camp. Many of us have put a great deal of time and energy into preparing and setting up the camp this year.

We are writing to express our deep concern with the direction that the debates at the camp have taken in the past days. In more than one workshop we have heard calls from the podium for command-and-control and market orientated measures to address climate change. The responses to these proposals have been far too polite.

While we recognise the importance of creating a welcoming and non-sectarian space, we feel that the camp risks losing contact with its anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian roots and appearing as a gathering that lends its support to top-down, state-centred responses to the crisis that climate change and energy depletion pose for capitalism. As a result, even the mass action is now likely to be interpreted as a gesture of support for tightened social control and austerity measures visited upon the population, rather than expressing resistance to the exploitative obsession with economic growth that has precipitated the present crisis.

In order to re-establish the crucial place of a radical perspective married to action at the core of the climate process, we therefore propose that the camp adopt the following principles as a statement of unity that will guide current discussions and future convergences:

1. A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalization.
2. We reject all forms and systems of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. We embrace the full dignity of all human beings.
3. A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker.
4. A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements' struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximize respect for life and oppressed peoples' rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism.
5. An organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy.

## The Climate Camp on Blackheath Common

*By Shift Magazine*

“What’s wrong with taxes?” – Wat Tyler knew. In 1381, he led a rebellion of some 50,000 peasants against unpopular poll taxes and the hierarchical feudal system, destroying the Savoy palace and killing the Archbishop of Canterbury in its course.

The Climate Camp on Blackheath Common, where Tyler assembled his men before setting off towards London, came with explicit reference to the peasants’ revolt. This was to be a grassroots movement against the power of the country’s political elites who prescribed a new era of green austerity for the majority while letting those responsible for the climate crisis off the hook.

It was sad, but no longer surprising, that a large percentage of Climate Campers did not share this sentiment of purpose. At a workshop that Shift Magazine hosted, most of the 200 participants did not see that the taxation of our travel habits or other state-imposed and policed restrictions on our behaviour are antithetical to an anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian movement against climate change.

But maybe this is not (no longer) what we are? When we first got involved with the Climate Camp, a few months before the Drax camp in 2006, it had a very distinct radical feel to it. In its stated principles, government and markets were regarded as the problem that we needed to tackle, and the camp was to be a festival of grassroots resistance – much alike the Horizon eco-village that was the base for hundreds of British anarchists and their international allies during the Gleneagles G8 summit a year earlier.

At the Heathrow camp in 2007 this atmosphere had all but evaporated. In discussions with friends and other campers, it seemed that many felt that we had made a crucial mistake: we had opened up an exciting political space from where to challenge the status quo, but it was being filled with a message that was no longer our own. We were becoming a hip, media-savvy campaign of flash mobs and publicity stunts, lobbying for tighter government control of our lifestyles. “Friends of the Earth with D-locks” as one of our contributors wrote in the first issue of Shift.

Of course, we are exaggerating here and there are still radical and progressive elements to the camp and its inhabitants. But sometimes it’s hard not to be cynical, and many of our friends and allies have dropped out of the Climate Camp process altogether. They shouldn’t have. The ‘inner circle’, or the ‘Council of Elders’ as the Evening Standard once called it, worked hard to conceptualise and deliver the first camp at Drax and many have stuck to the process even though it has, in many ways (not least politically), become something very different to what it set out to be. And they make sure that an anti-capitalist basic consensus persists, though we doubt that this is actively carried by most participants.



Many seem to have been attracted by the cool, young and trendy image that the Camp adopted in the media. Why would you join Oxfam or the Green Party if Climate Camp offered a lot more fun? The political difference between the two does not always seem to be the reason why one would choose one over the other.

So why are people pissed off with the direction the camp has taken, should we not just be happy with the huge amount of people who have attended the four camps and the equally huge amount of publicity we have attracted around environmental issues regardless of how we got it?

For many, including those who created the first camp back in 2006, the answer is no. Why? Climate change is not an environmental issue. This message was prominent in the radical elements of the mobilisations against COP-15 in December. What does it mean? That climate change is a symptom of wider systemic oppression and cannot be tackled without addressing these underlying causes. It also speaks directly to those elements of the environmental movement that chose to ignore this and instead argue for short-term, state-led solutions at the cost of many of the global population.

Here, based on the critiques, complaints and criticisms that we have heard thrown at the camp over the last four years, from climate campers, academics, friends, family (the list goes on) we would like to put forward what we see as an anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian understanding of climate change and what this means for how we must (and must not!) act.

**Science.** Remember the banner at Heathrow that said 'we are armed only with peer-review science'? Is that really all we have to offer and where is our political vision? Are we just a movement against carbon? The Climate Camp originally did not set out to campaign against climate change, but against its root causes. That's a fundamental difference. It allies us not with Oxfam or the Guardian or Stop Climate Chaos, but with radical antagonistic movements worldwide. The scientific respectability that environmentalism has gained over the past few years should not be the marker of our success but is departure from grass-roots, DIY activism. We are against any movement that attempts to dazzle people with science (and guilt) whilst slipping in higher taxes and austerity deals through the back door.

**The State.** This was a major divisive issue at Blackheath. Many thought it was too late to argue for bottom-up, grassroots solutions. We are all in this together, they said, and a politicians' gathering in Denmark was supposed to be the best chance we had. The state, our 'leaders,' will not be able to work out a deal that benefits big business, the climate and us...someone has to lose out. We all know who that will be. Rejecting state solutions without a blue-print for the future is not idealist; believing the state will (can) take care of this for us is.

**Capitalism.** 'Capitalism is Crisis' said the banner at Blackheath. 'Less Capitalism'

proclaimed a banner at Kingsnorth until people complained about the message. The latter provides a bit of insight into some of the criticisms of climate camps 'anti-capitalism'. It is not possible to have 'Less Capitalism', capitalism is a form of economic and social relations that dominate our society, have dirtied our past and shape our future. Climate Camp sometimes acts as though capitalism is only manifest in big business and greedy bankers or politicians. We live capitalism, through our work, our relationships with each other, even our activism - here lie our platforms for rejecting the everyday domination of the economy.

**Lifestyle.** The environmental movement is weighed heavy with demands for lifestyle changes, sometimes it feels like a glance at a Climate Camp workshops programme wouldn't be any different to a Guardian 'How to do your bit for the environment' special. We (climate campers) might laugh now at 'liberals' and politicians who talk about switching off the light bulbs and turning down the heating, but what about our messages? Don't fly, become vegan, work only in sustainable industries, use public transport, DIY, etc, etc...are they really any different? In reality 'ethical lifestylism' ignores the social aspect of our lives, fails to attack the political and economic system and creates a moral hierarchy of those who can afford (and we're not just talking money) to give up a few modern luxuries and the majority of those who can't, and quite rightly, don't want to!

**Austerity:** This has also caused a stir amongst some of those involved in the Climate Camp (we remember a plenary speaker at Blackheath getting booed for demanding 'more', while no one challenged George Monbiot urging a 'riot for less' at Heathrow) and it relates to the dominance of lifestyle politics but also to calls for state-led solutions to climate change. You don't have to look far to see calls for more austere, or stripped down ways of living. But austerity measures inevitable have to be enforced and policed, and those not complying will have to be punished. Austerity when enforced by the state or by moralistic and romantic notions of more primitive or 'real' lives is a dream you won't share with many. Yes we want sustainability but we also want freedom, creativity and luxury.

Political principles like the above have practical consequences in the way we campaign, how we relate to the media, the actions and targets we choose, who we pick as our allies and where we draw a line. We are not interested in a meaningless anti-capitalist consensus, but would rather see a reengagement of anarchists and anti-authoritarians, and more stimulating discussions about the future of Climate Camp. However, this comes with a plea for serious reflection on our fundamental ideas and visions for the future. Because, as we were forced to conclude after the workshops on Blackheath Common: if some of us campaign for higher taxes and others against, if some argue for population management and others resist, if some put their hopes in stricter legislation while others don't, we might find ourselves at some point on different sides of the fence.



## Critiquing Climate Camp

by a g.r.o.a.t.

When the Camp for Climate Action was established, the founders envisaged an entity based on anarchist principles in how it was organised, but which created an open space for debate around climate change. It was a key ambition that there would be a degree of apoliticalness in the sense that the Camp would not tie itself to particular a solution or to declarations such as Durban.

Thus, to be clear, the CCA has always had a politics – anarchism. Its core principles and its processes have been based on this. There was always a rejection of hierarchy and a recognition that the state cannot provide the solutions. The majority of those on the ground doing the leg-work have held this as self-evident. The apolitical zone was only for what grassroots solutions would be the best approach. If anything, diversity was encouraged as no one solution could provide all the answers. It was agreed that radical social change was required to prevent the calamity that would be climate chaos.

Over the years what happened is that the Camp has become very focused on building a mass movement. This has created tensions within the camp, and between the camp and the constituent radical movements in which its feet are planted.

Simply stating that the criticisms are unfounded because the camp is what it is, fails to appreciate the historical roots of the camp, and the huge amount of blood, sweat and tears – quite literally in many cases – which has been put into it. People are angry and aggrieved, not because they are jealous the Camp has been a success, but because they feel disenfranchised from something that they have put a lot of work into. No debate can take place without taking this on board.

The criticism of the camp comes in three broad strands:

- The relationship between the different classes of the participants.
- Liberalisation of the message.
- The relationship to the state, police and NGOs.

They are all inter-related. The result is a belief, partly true, partly through a misunderstanding of the nature of the Camp, that there is a political critique missing from the CCA. It is there, it just happens to be buried.

### The political vacuum

It is fair to say that the early camp is partly to blame. There was a lack of distinction made between the open political space of environmental solutions and that of the underlying camp itself. We were shy about emphasising that our processes, our nature of organising, our non-hierarchy, etc, which were all based on anarchist principles. In hindsight it was a mistake, but then in those early days, even before Drax, none of us knew or was prepared for the success it would become.

Nevertheless, the main effect is that as people join the process they are not being informed about the underlying politics, and in this vacuum they place their own preconceptions. An example of this is the lack of emphasis on the four core principles (see the start of this booklet). Despite the long and painful national meetings thrashing them out, we rarely inform people coming in what they are, or articulate their implications when applied to different topics. The result is there are representing the Camp who do always grasp that they are putting a personal perspective rather than one reached by consensus.

It also means we cannot articulate our own political structure in anarchist terms because of the misconception that we have no politics at all! Thus, as the title says, the criticisms we level at the root causes of climate change – capitalism, corporations, governments – all end up without having an overt critique to back them up, even though it is there, albeit hidden. This results in comments that alienate large parts of the constituent movements. Hardly movement building.

There is also an apparent wariness within the Camp that being overtly anarchist or simply “political” might discourage others from joining. The consequences of that approach are now apparent from the other articles in this Reader.

There is merit to the point that some criticism comes from people's superficial experience of the camp process, or from mainstream media. It is true that many groups have not recognized the underlying political structure because they have failed to engage in the process in an anarchistic way. However, this is only part of the story. The other side is that the camp has not challenged this image. However, it cannot just be about the image presented as some of the most critical people are not outsiders, but those who have been engaged at the deep end.

### Class Relationships

The issue of class has been a big part of the criticisms levelled at the camp, and possibly the most poisonous. It comes in two forms: internal tensions within the camp, and how the camp approaches the issues of climate change.

At the 2008 Earth First! Gathering there was a long debate about the CCA. Out of this it emerged that the division of labour within the camp was falling along class and political lines. That was, site was largely made up of by the working class and anarchists while the media and outreach teams was dominated by the middle-class / politically liberal end of the spectrum.

Though it is clear these are broad generalisations, it has led to a perception that the CCA as a whole is run by middle-class liberals; and has effectively given control of the message by the liberal end of the spectrum rendering it unrepresentative.

This latter point was exacerbated by two factors: a) naïve belief on behalf of those presenting the message that their circle was actually representative; and b) site crew being too exhausted to participate in much of the rest of the message shaping.



A vicious circle of a liberalising of the message leading to a smaller site crew (compared to those doing outreach and media) undermined the non-hierarchical stance of the Camp and the original assumption that everyone was crew.

When there has been solidarity demonstrated with workers struggles (Vestas, striking workers at Heathrow, Workers Climate Action) it has been tokenistic and rarely placed high on the messaging of the Climate Camp.

From an external perspective, ecological action has often been classified as a lifestyle or middle-class preoccupation. Bar groups such as Earth First!, most environmental NGOs have paid lip-service at best to class issues and those movements that focus around workers.

The Camp's approach to class issues on the whole has exasperated these tensions and pre-conceptions. Thus rather than building a mass movement among the working class, it has probably been alienating it. Being single issue does not deal with people's fears over jobs, etc. Press releases put out have only superficially dealt with concerns such as job security, and only latterly has there been talk about Just Transition.

However, it needs to be more than a phrase trotted out to keep those concerned with workers happy. Likewise bringing in Arthur Scargill to participate in the debate kept the politics on a superficial. This sort of issue needs to be part of the root and branch of the Camp as well. As a demographic shift in the Camp took place, awareness of these issues also changed, with a return to the traditional divides between environmentalists and class struggles that Drax had sought to overcome.

Workshop types and attendance only re-enforce this:

*Climate Camp is, at root, a protest about having a protest. A glance at the extensive and exciting-sounding programme of workshops shows more sessions about activism for students, community organising, resisting police pressure and the legacies of the Brixton riots than sessions about the actual environment. [...] A glance at the shiny shiny website turns up 'Photos from the Camp', 'Media Circus Twitter Feed' and 'Our Open Letter to the Police' and precisely zero aims and objectives.*

*Laurie Penny, Watching the Watchers blog*

<http://www.liberalconspiracy.org/2009/08/27/climate-camp-watching-the-watchers/>

Kevin Blowe of the Newham Monitoring Project identifies some of the problems from the perspective of the labour movement activist, but also points out that there still space to bring the labour movement and climate activists together:

*What was evident from the workshops I attended at Climate Camp – as well as a degree of naivety and some startling gaps in knowledge about earlier struggles for justice and worker's rights – was genuine concern about the movement against climate change's failings, particularly to link up with wider trade union activism. Campaigners talked repeatedly about the need to consider that demanding the closure of coal-fired power stations means telling Eon workers that their jobs will*

*go, just as reducing air travel or closing down the arms trade will have an impact on employment. Anti-capitalist climate campaigners are calling for investment in new "green jobs" – for which the Vestas wind turbine factory lock-in on the Isle of Wight has become symbolic. However, they are also calling for a more radical transformation of society as a necessary step for defending the planet – and they are looking to the wider left to joining in helping to shape it.*

<http://www.blowe.org.uk/2009/09/climate-camp-which-side-are-we-on.html>

If the CCA is to continue its mission to build a mass movement, it must not alienate its core constituents, or pander to the ideas of one political tendency over another.

### **Liberalisation of the message**

The messages put out by the Camp has formed a key point of contention. Due to the failure to make our actual politics explicit, there has been no guide to what can and cannot be said. This was fine when there was a manageable amount of attention and we were setting the agenda rather than reacting to events.

However, now the CCA has moved outside that narrow realm to a wider commentary, it has run aground. People assuming their beliefs are an accurate representation of the camp have put out statements that have jarred.

Camp spokespeople have been put forward when they have simply been individuals putting their own opinions. It has become very media friendly, but ends up misrepresenting constituent parts. If you are putting a lot of work into a project that is saying things you flat out disagree with then it sticks in the throat.

The classic example is in relation to the police and government, where Camp representatives have made statements which implicitly acknowledge the authority of the police and government, or tacitly acknowledged their legitimacy. This goes against the aims and principles which talk about governments and corporations being part of the problem, not the solution – one of the critiques underpinning the CCA position that radical social change is necessary, but which is not being reflected in what is essentially reformist messaging.

A criticism levelled at the media team, and to a lesser degree Outreach, is they err on the side of reform over radical in what is being presented. It is, we appreciate, a hard balance to get right, especially given the pressures of dealing with the media and the police, but it is important that the needs and wishes of the Camp are given just as much priority as reaching out to mainstream media and the public. The media team are trusted to be messengers for the Camp but there is a feeling that they are placing emphasis on the key messages that are shared by many campers.

This is an internal communications problem that has to be resolved, and where the realm of comment is being extended, then caution is probably the better course of action. In the drive to build a mass movement, the Camp's message should not be so compromised that by the needs of mainstream media that it causes as many people to be disenfranchised as are brought on board.



The pressure to be media friendly needs to be balanced; the Camp is the story in itself and if its narrative is strong enough, the media will come to us. It is also difficult for people to swallow kow-towing to mainstream media which has regularly proven to be part of the problem in the past, in particular where rules have been bent to accommodate mainstream media over the desires of the Camp (e.g. access of journalists to site). It only reinforces the concern by some that an agenda is being set by those with an eye on their own (NGO) careers.

Another factor in the liberalisation of the Camp message is not recognising how the choice of keynote speakers can undermine the politics and also present an image of separate politics (cf. the article "*Hijacked by a hardcore of liberals*" in this reader). While the intentions have been honest, looking in from the outside it gave the wrong impression to those not steeped in our hidden politics of non-hierarchy.

There has also been a degree of fetishisation of politicians and eco-journalists by those who have not grasped that non-hierarchy means we do not have leaders, whether practically, or ideologically. It is a mystery to many why the likes of Monbiot and co get put on a pedestal, or the media made such a big deal about their presence being on camp. Saying that, I do appreciate that there were tactical uses for it, but at times there seemed to be deliberate courting, to the point where our message was being lost. Rules were definitely being bent. Getting positive media is not the Camp's *raison d'etre*.

A major justification of this approach is that the CCA is setting out to be as inclusive as possible. We answer that in two ways. One, it has succeeded in including one section of society while actively damaged its ability to influence large other parts that need to be brought on board; and alienated part of its core. That is not a definition of inclusivity or successful outreach which I recognise.

Second, inclusivity means opening up to those who share your aims and objectives; it does not mean watering down the message to become more media friendly. If anything, the initial success of the Camp was precisely its uncompromising stance.

However, to be fair, we should put the alternative:

*All radical movements we venerate had their woolly end. This doesn't mean we should ignore it, but it does mean that their presence isn't indicative of an all-encompassing woolliness. Check your suffragette, civil rights or anti-nuclear history, they all had it. The Climate Camp remains overtly radical. The first thing you see coming up the hill or going past on the 380 bus is the entrance banner saying **Capitalism IS Crisis**.*

Merrick, <http://bristlingbadger.blogspot.com/2009/08/climate-camp-vs-newbury.html>

The Camp has become more of a spectacle than an event living up to its aim of being a radical space, encouraging direct action as the only reasonable response in the face of failure to act on climate change (an original key phrase!). Action was to be more than symbolic, or not as one member of the media team put it, about lobbying the government. It was to be direct and effective, not a series of media

stunts. While many of the actions that came out of the camp were this, the camp itself has struggled to be more than a symbolic spectacle, with media predominating.

*Being a young cool lefty kind of person, I'm aware of many people who are at Climate Camp – and every single one of them has gone with the express or primary intention of taking photographs.*

Laurie Penny, *Watching the Watchers*

The biggest issue however is that this is a self-perpetuating problem. As the "climate camp movement" attracted particular types of individual (liberal green students basically), the message was distorted by the weight of their presence. This is inherent in the process of unrepresentative national gatherings where it is easy to create a bias through the demographics of those able to attend.

### Relationship with the State, the Police & NGOs

In the beginning all three of these were looked upon with the mistrust and policies established to keep them very much at arm's length. The State was part of the problem, standing in the way of solutions, the police their stooges to be treated as an obstacle, while NGOs were not trusted not to sell us out. The Camp wanted to protect its autonomy in order to preserve its internal politics (e.g. control over decision-making through consensus), and to prevent outside groups recuperating it for their own purposes.

Over the years, as it has become a bigger spectacle, it has become more and more attractive to the NGOs interested in its energy and ability to motivate action. This is why BioFuels Watch attempted to hijack the process at the Glasgow gathering. Greenpeace and WDM have been more subtle in their approach, but the pressures to engage are clearly there. Recuperation is an issue that has been rarely discussed, but remains a real threat.

One of the most obvious situations where the failure to have an overt critique, or rather a lack of understanding of the underlying politics, is the change in the way the relationship with the police and State have changed. Those working around the events of the G20 have done so in a vacuum, being asked to comment on matters where their statements represented the Camp as a whole on contentious issues.

Comments that implied that the government had to act, or that parts of the police were okay – especially offering condolences to the police after Radcliffe – are quite offensive to some of us involved in the Camp, and certainly not representative. The natural assumption made by many left-field activists, and I am not sure I disagree with them, is the Camp is simply middle-class people pushing their own personal politics from a position of privilege, not representing the mass movement it claimed to be building. As has been made clear in previous years, the police are not welcome at all, so why is the message getting massaged?

Another problem is that while the camp itself talks about capitalism being the problem, the critique is shallow, often veering into liberalism as it fails to express



the key principle of radical social change being part of its demands - more grist to the mill that it is simply a bunch of middle class students having a laugh in a field.

### **Nationalisation of protest**

An unfortunate side effect of the Camp's success is arrogance over its relationship to other ecological and related activist movements. It is cavalier in setting of dates and has behaved as if the rest of the campaigning world revolves around it. Over the years it had caused considerable pain to other groups which have tried to work around it. I personally witnessed one meeting where dates were changed at a relatively late period despite it being explained the disruption it would cause to other campaigns. This does not endear it to others.

There is an attitude from some of those involved in the CCA that it is the only thing worth doing. This fails to recognise that there are other people out there who are being tossed about in its wake, many who have been working on ecological and social justice issues long before the Camp came along.

A lesson to learn from other movement is that local groups which focus solely on a national campaign will struggle to maintain themselves in the longer term. Despite lip-service, there is little appreciation that the behemoth that is the Camp can damage local structures. There is a lot of people interested only in doing national work, and some have a sneering attitude towards neighbourhoods as if that sort of organising is beneath them. That is a betrayal of the more fundamental politics of non-hierarchy. We should all be coming from, from the ground up in local groups.

### **Final words**

None of this is to say that there is not a lot of good work being done, but I hope this article has explained the foundations of the criticisms of the Climate Camp movement both inside and out. Some of it is misconceived, some of it is deserved. However, if we are to move on and stay strong, then we must take it on board.

I have enjoyed the CCA's success, especially the way it has finally engaged the public on climate change after years of people struggling to raise the issue. I also feel sad that I feel it no longer represents me, and at the anger it brings out in many of my activist friends. It has barely begun to tap into its potential, but never more than now, do I feel it is in danger of being lost to the grassroots, radical movement that gave birth to it. The world does not need another media-savvy Greenpeace; it needs a genuine from-below movement that engages a working class fed up with being patronised and told how much they need to suffer for the benefit of the planet.

We criticise climate abusers, but we need to rediscover the foundation of that criticism – we do have a critique, it is buried in everything we do. Dust it off and shout about it. It has what has made us so strong, so let's not smother it.

*The author was part of the site crew and police liaison at Drax, Heathrow & Kingsnorth, and was involved in the development of the original concept.*

## **Climate Camp and Us**

*by the Anarchist Federation, published in Shift Magazine 7.*

At the 2008 Climate Camp in Kingsnorth an open letter [sic] was circulated by anti-capitalist campers raising concerns that the movement was increasingly being influenced by state-led approaches to tackling climate change. A more developed version was later published by Shift magazine. The original argued broadly that the camp should adopt anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian principles and objectives.

The 2009 Climate Camp, sited this year in Blackheath, London, saw continued debate over the future direction of the struggle against climate change. As a part of this, anarchist and libertarian communist activists hosted a debate on what we saw as a growing trend towards Green authoritarianism within the movement. Key concerns discussed included the assumption within some sections of the movement that the state can be used as a tool in combating climate change, and the general danger of the state co-opting the green movement and stripping it of its radical potential. While the ecological crisis is a pressing and potentially catastrophic issue for our class, it should also be understood as one in a series of crises, economic and political, that are created by the very nature of the capitalist system.

A lengthy debate followed amongst campers in attendance. The points that were most commonly raised were:

- The possibility of using the state as a strategic tool for our movement,
- The urgency of climate change, and the time scale we have to work with,
- That idea that grassroots activity and state-led solutions may work in harmony,
- The need for some form of coercion to promote lifestyle change and
- What "our" (i.e. anti-authoritarian) alternatives are.

Following on from this debate, we felt it was important to work out what place we, as anarchist communist militants, can have inside this movement. It has become increasingly obvious that, despite a commitment to direct action and horizontal organisation, anti-statism is by no means a widely held principle inside this movement. The Climate Camp is moving further and further away from the radical, anti-capitalist politics of the organisations it grew out of, such as Earth First!, the 90s road protests, or Reclaim the Streets. While this movement has equipped itself with the skills (direct action, media relations etc.) and the knowledge (scientific analysis) to intervene in the climate change debate, it has not really worked out what its future political direction will be. The direct action, climate change movement has moved over the years from being fairly politically homogeneous, to being quite wide and diverse. While this has been positive in terms of building mass



support, this growth has not been accompanied by any real, meaningful commitment to political debate. The result is that it is action against climate change (whatever that may be), not any sense of shared aims and values as a community of activists, that is holding our movement together. With this year's camp having less of a focus on mass action, the real contradictions inside the movement are starting to show.

This is most strongly shown, as ecological campaigning is starting to spread into the workplace, in the wholly uncritical way that many Green activists have adopted the strategy and tactics of the traditional Left. Calls for nationalisation, eco-lobbying and work within the trade union bureaucracies have been widely accepted as legitimate tools in our struggle. Without an analysis of capitalism, and an understanding of the historical successes and failures of the workers' movement, we leave ourselves exposed to recuperation by existing political organisations and elites (whether from Right or Left). With the possibility of a "Green capitalism" on the horizon, we're uncertain how committed many activists will be in the face of a potentially carbon-reduced, but still capitalist and therefore unstable and exploitative, economy.

The "anti-capitalism" that is common amongst camp participants is one that objects to capitalism in its excesses, i.e. in the destruction of the planet, not in its everyday functioning. This was particularly obvious at the discussion on "anti-capitalism ten years after Seattle" - while this should have been one of the more radical, politically sophisticated discussions, the speakers still tended to present a view that saw capitalism as a system that only really harms the most super-exploited portions of the "Third World/Global South"'s population, and anti-capitalism as a matter of exotic, idealised people on the other side of the world fighting back. In this worldview, the role of activists in Europe (i.e. everyone who was actually there for the discussion) was simply to provide verbal solidarity with the Bolivians and South Africans in their fight against capitalism, not to take practical action right here and right now for our own class interests. The class nature of climate camp has been much discussed, and we should be careful to avoid falling into simplistic sociological views of class. But at the same time it's hard to imagine anyone who's had to deal with the miserable reality of working-class life for many people in Britain talking about anti-capitalism as if it was simply a process of cheering for the good guys in Asia or South America, and failing to see that any meaningful, effective anti-capitalist movement must be rooted in the struggle to win control over our own lives.

We feel the movement is at a cross roads. Much of the radical base has slipped away from the camp and our ideas are being lost. This is reflected most strongly in the changed dynamics and culture in this year's camp. A lack of mass action and the "softly, softly" approach of the police meant that some aspects of this year's camp resembled a festival more than a political gathering. The debates and discussions in the neighbourhoods were largely concerned with the anti-social behaviour of campers on site towards other campers. There was even some support for the idea of allowing the police to enter our autonomous space in the spirit of future "good

relations". Again, this in itself shows the naivety of many campers, and the narrow social base from which the camp was drawn: no-one who's had much experience of the police (whether they've encountered them in the course of political activism, ecological direct action, or just through the experience of being an ethnic minority or "underclass" youth) could be taken in by the police's strategy towards the camp, which essentially amounted to a well-thought-out PR campaign. In truth, the only real political work that has come out of this camp is the "eco-lobbying" of the media team, aided by spectacular "direct" action geared towards generating media commentary (in truth, many of this year's actions were not direct in any meaningful sense of the word, just purely liberal protests). These are also roles that are routinely filled by those from high income backgrounds. The voice of Climate Camp is overwhelmingly white and privileged.

It is true that anti-statism is not a stated principle of the camp, but we believe that true anti-capitalism cannot be separated from anti-statism. The state is a fundamental part of capitalism. As anarchist communists, we reject state structures and argue that they are incapable of either preventing climate change or creating a better world. Instead, we focus on inclusive, participatory solutions that work from the grass roots up, educating each other about the alternatives that we can build today, and by extension how we see an anarchist-communist society operating. The goal of stopping climate change is vitally important, but so is radically changing society, and we believe that you cannot do one without the other. The state has never played a progressive role in society. Its purpose is to secure, maintain and promote the power of the ruling class. Where radical movements have arisen (in workers struggles, suffrage movements etc), the state has fought and repressed them. Where the state can no longer just rely on violent oppression, it incorporates some of the movement's demands into its existing structures in order to strengthen them. Past radical movements have been recuperated in the same way, and there is a very real danger of the Climate Camp being turned from a genuine movement for social change into a lobbying tool for state reform.

With regards to the climate crisis, estimates for the time we have left vary from 10 years to 100 months, 5 years, or years in the past depending on who you talk to. The one thing we agree on is that time is of the essence. There is a broad assumption amongst our critics that the state is able to act more efficiently than the anarchist "alternative" we are proposing. The simplest argument to raise here is that the state, capitalism and its way of managing society have gotten us into this mess, so it seems unlikely that they'll get us out of it. Their way of running the world has landed us in climate chaos, with the logic of profit and the market economy coming before all other concerns. The state's purpose is to secure the status of the ruling class and protect their profits against any potential threat, to make sure that the smooth running of the economy is not disrupted. We have to raise the question of whether this institution will take the drastic actions we need to combat climate change? Is it able to act against the capitalists who hold its reins?



The origin of Climate Camp's politics are in radical direct action to inspire and demonstrate how a more ecological society can work. The only way a climate crisis can be averted is by radically changing society. Only by a conscious effort of every person to act more responsibly can we change how we operate, how we produce, consume (or more importantly NOT "consume") and live. But we believe the only way to accomplish this is from below, by inspiration, example and education. Not by taxation, involving the state in our lives and encouraging them to monitor our actions. How can we possibly preach the need for responsibility and reduced consumption whilst with its two hands the state continues to feed capitalism's excesses and beat down any alternative movements? Likewise, it is naïve to believe that top-down state control and bottom-up social movements should be working side by side to combat climate change. Suggesting that state control can co-exist with a movement that advocates radical social change is not only counter-productive, it is completely irrational. The state doesn't want us to change, it certainly doesn't want us to stop being good happy consumers who perpetually buy new cars, shop at super-markets and keep voting for things to stay the same. If ultimately all we want is better laws and state intervention on climate change, then why participate in a movement that openly breaks the law and challenges the power of the state?

Despite all this, there were also some very positive developments within the camp. The involvement of campers in the recent Vestas dispute and the Tower Hamlets strike showed a commitment to breaking out of the Green activist ghetto. The importance of workplace organisation as a critical tool in anti-capitalist struggle is gaining greater credibility, and this is the direction we need to take our struggle if we are to expand our movement, generalise our demands and take our place as part of a continuing culture of working class resistance. We have no doubt that anarchist communists belong inside the ecological movement. The positive examples displayed by the organisation of the camp and its decision making structure are important. Climate Camp potentially represents a useful tool for workers in struggle, helping to bring the lessons of collective living, horizontal organising and direct action to a class that is being battered by economic recession. The future political direction of the camp is key. We need to expand the debate and clarify the direction of our movement. When political conservatives, corporations, and even fascists are "turning green", it is no longer enough to avoid debate and declare we must simply do "everything we can" to avert the coming crisis. At the end of our speech we posed a question to the Climate Camp and we feel that collectively we are still far from reaching a definitive answer.

**Do we want to simply change the way that the current economy is managed or do we want to build a truly radical society? Do we want a bigger slice of the cake, or do we want the whole fucking bakery?**

## **Climate Camp: Hijacked by a Hardcore of Liberals**

*by Jessica Charsley, published in Shift Magazine 1.*

### **Introduction**

The Camp for Climate Action landed with a thud at Heathrow this summer, directly in the path proposed for a third runway, at the busiest airport in Europe. I experienced both of the UK's Climate Camps from the starting point of local level preparations. In this article, I do not knock those who put blood, sweat and tears into the camp, because it was a valiant effort and an incredibly inspiring experience. Whilst I had a fantastic time, I also think that if we are for 'social change', it is essential that we critically analyze along the way, so this article will cover my hopes and fears before the camp and whether they were realised. I focus in particular on the messages that the camp gave out and the nature of political debate within the camp.

### **Mixed Messages**

In the run-up to the camp, much promotional material included the message that 'we cannot trust governments and corporations to solve the problem of climate change'. This message was the result of discussion meetings had before the Drax camp and the Heathrow camp, on an open, consensus basis. The result of these discussions was that the Camp would take a fairly radical stance on the solutions to climate change, and present alternative ideas to those proposed in the mainstream. The platforms for the latter are huge, for example, the voices of major NGO's, the government, corporations and the mass media. However, green voices in these situations are severely constrained by the very platforms they stand upon. 'Legitimate' organizations are rarely able to host voices of dissent. Legality, hierarchy, government and corporate influences are the issues that the climate camp originally homed in on as fundamentally linked to the problem of climate change, and these are the very issues that the mainstream ideas cannot confront, because their existence depends upon these concepts being intact. For example, an NGO would be liable for inciting illegal direct action.

The camp therefore set about building its own platform. The method of organization aspired to replace the hierarchical models we are accustomed to with horizontal systems. Rather than a pyramidal hierarchy, horizontal organizing allows participants equal ownership over and responsibility for a process. Whilst tasks can be divided, they are not delegated down to others and significant decisions must be reached via consensus because it is a rejection of leadership. Devolving responsibility for the camp required an enormous amount of time, with frequent open meetings held around the country throughout the year. This is not to say that the organization was inefficient, rather, that incredible effort was put into carefully constructing the platform in a manner that corresponded with the ideals of the camp.

Desiring inclusivity, mainstream voices were welcomed, and the camp attracted



people with a variety of political persuasions, predominantly liberal. In other words, many people came with a desire for moderate social and political change, expressed in opposition to a third runway, for example. All who attended the camp were sufficiently worried about environment issues - and open-minded enough - to leave the realm of conventional lobbying tactics and legality. So what did the camp present to them as an alternative to government action? What were the radical alternative visions of those who agreed that the camp would not trust them the government to act? Unfortunately, from my perspective, the case against the government and capitalist social relations was not explored enough, never mind made strong enough. It was there, but only in glimpses, so the mainstream voices were again the loudest.

Granted, regardless of the camps' message, the mainstream media would only have picked up on soundbites, so the camp did do well to get journalists reporting a criticism of economic growth. But, for the people who attended the camp, criticism of economic growth, corporations, and the government could have been the starting point for crucial debates and ideas sharing. The odd dig at corporations and the government can only hold up with a home audience. Meanwhile, the lack of emphasis on social change left us vulnerable to attack. For example, the camp put major emphasis on lifestyle change, even though most passers-by could tell us that it is impossible to live sustainably in today's society. Compost toilets and grey water systems are not things that the majority of the general public can opt into, so what remained was the demand for them to opt out of other actions, such as flying. Hence, one message of the camp appeared to be a call to 'riot for austerity', in contrast to calls that have historically rallied mass movements around a desire for prosperity.

One of the more radical messages of the camp was the call for direct action. In this case, the concept rested on very murky ground, but was presented as one of our features to be most proud of. The whole camp was geared towards a day of direct action, so the topic came up in almost every interview and press release. Although encouraging a break from the destructive codes of conduct that we live by, such as deference to illegitimate authority, direct action alone does not an anarchist make. One problem is that it can be coercive, and has been employed readily by fascists. Another is that it can be confused as a dramatic lobbying technique. Both of these problems were significant at the camp, for example, tending towards the coercive, it was inevitable that we would be accused of wanting to disrupt holidaymakers. Secondly, the majority of actions taken were in fact more symbolic than direct, in terms of both the amount of disruption caused and their interpretation as a demand to the government. I had hoped that there would be a little more honesty at the camp about the potential of direct action, or, non-violent direct action, as political tools.

### **Green Authoritarianism**

I first became concerned about the politics within the camp when I saw the workshop programme lead with four white middle class men who have no trouble getting their voices heard elsewhere; Lynas, Hillman, Monbiot and Kronick. The star

status given to these people made me uneasy, but this quickly turned to anger as I began to realise that their ideas would be left relatively unchallenged. In the lecture by Hillman, for example, he explained that his latest published work did not go far enough in terms of expressing the urgency of climate change and the severe measures necessary to deal with it. Interpreting the camp as a plea to the general public to change their lifestyles he told us that instead, our best efforts should be geared towards lobbying the government, for it is only the state that can save us now. The talk was well received, even when it hit the topic of authoritarianism, stating that we cannot risk having elections in which one party will offer higher carbon incentives, so in effect what we want is a suspension of democracy.

Also on the topic of state intervention, such as carbon rationing, Monbiot apologized to 'the anarchists in the crowd', despite the Anarchist side of the argument being left virtually untouched. So, as much as I was surprised to see a lack of anarchist theory, I was shocked at the fervor with which green-authoritarianism was received. The call for direct action generally sat uncomfortably next to the call for more state intervention, which would require a higher degree of obedience. At best, I would say that the enthusiastic applause for increased state intervention may have been down to celebrity culture, a reflection of the sheer excitement at the gathering, or, more seriously, down to better formed arguments. Although, this does not explain why the Turbulence panel were not received with such enthusiasm when they raised points in a similar vein to in this article.

A classic argument against anarchist theory is the insufficient time for a complete overhaul of the way society functions, so we are better off trying to improve peoples' lives directly. With a renewed sense of urgency over climate change, many climate campers seemed to be erring towards the side of 'there is no time to have anarchist ideals, we must succumb to the system which is slowly destroying us'. I do not at all suggest that in the run up to the camp a deep critique of capitalism should have been agreed upon by consensus, rather, that debates should have been had at the camp, covering difficult questions such as:

How can one be for autonomous living and for closer policing of personal carbon counts? Why do many environmentalists talk about the problem of increasing global population without talking about redistribution and freedom of movement? If the public are infantilized by state intervention, how can it be the solution to getting people to take responsibility for their environment? If we offer more power to a government will we ever get it back? Will it ever be in the interests of an elite to minimize environmental damage to the poor? Can we reconcile 'we want luxury for all' with 'we want sustainable luxury for all?'

The science tells us that the situation is urgent, so it is essential to think hard, for example, about what kind of world we are trying to save and for whom. There were opportunities at the camp to reveal another emancipatory layer to our desire for social change, for example, a demonstration at the nearby detention centre, but perhaps due to energy drain, they were not fully realised. I concede that the camp was a DIY project, so if I wanted anarchist theory to be more prominent then I



should have done something about it myself, but it actually took the experience of the camp itself to make me realize this as a priority.

## Conclusion

Whilst troubled by the difficulties ahead, I'm excited by the buzz around the emerging movement against climate change. Perhaps it could be the dawn of a mass realization that systemic change is necessary? If it is a climate for change in more ways than one, then let's simultaneously be bold, clear and thoughtful about the type of change we want!

As for the camp, I have the nagging thought that when journalists accused Anarchists of 'infiltrating the camp', we may have missed the chance of a lifetime, to say to the whole world, yes, the camp has been formed on the anarchist principles of horizontal organization, cooperation and self-determination. If the platform that we constructed can be compared to a football stadium, I would report that "it was an absolutely crucial match for a team who never get invited to play away, yet the home game advantage was not quite seized upon and, and 'at the end of the day', too many own goals were scored".

The camp at Drax had a message of decentralizing power in both senses of the word, which fitted well with autonomous ideas. The decision to hold the camp at Heathrow presented many problems for getting such a radical message across, but perhaps it will stimulate overdue reflection on how we tackle issues of individual lifestyle choices versus collective action and desires for wider social change. Of course, all of the disadvantages must be weighed up against the kick that major media coverage may have given to the movement. As for the lack of controversy around the call for increased state intervention in our lives, I think that it would have been a problem regardless of the location of the camp. The sense of urgency will only increase each year, making the Climate Camp movement more susceptible to its' influence.

## The Climate Camp is too self-regarding to be effective

Charming though they are, the protesters should spend more time convincing others their arguments are sound.

*Peter Beaumont, The Observer, 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2009.*

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/aug/30/peter-beaumont-climate-camp-protesters>

Through a fence and beyond the hay bales, past the polite inquisitors who call for a "media escort" and towards the lines of tents and hastily installed turbines and solar panels is... well, precisely what? The Climate Camp on London's Blackheath is helpfully labelled in multicoloured letters and signs, but its naming does not answer the question of what it represents. Nor do its temporary inhabitants who on Friday were being buffeted by squalls of rain.

I spot Leila Deen, famous for a minute or so for sliming Peter Mandelson. Behind her, a squad of campers, some wearing balaclavas, is being put through direct action training, charging silently among the marquees.

What bothers me is a question of function and purpose. Is this, presented as one of the models of the "new protest", all that it advertises? What is the Climate Camp in London for? Answers – some vague – are supplied by the camp's handbook in its 10 reasons to be camping here. It talks about the "tall buildings" as a symbol of the "transnational corporation", and streets as home to banks, poverty, activists and politicians. Other answers are supplied by campers: veterans of Greenham Common and Kingsnorth, and the Vesta wind turbine factory occupation on the Isle of Wight. They talk about the camp as a model of an alternative way of sustainable living. Of its organisation, through consensual democracy – everybody has an equal say in the decision-making process – as an exemplar for a new kind of society.

Its critics have levelled many charges whenever it has appeared over the last few years: for sloganeering that combines anti-capitalism with a global-warming message; actions that invite confrontation with the police; for the involvement of a sometimes aggressive anarchist fringe; even for the diletantism and grandstanding of some of its more middle-class supporters.

And while some criticisms have a kernel of truth, it remains hard to argue that a movement fighting climate change and promoting social equality is a bad thing. But that is not the question. Rather, Climate Camp should be judged on its own ambitions. How effective is the camp in inspiring change?

It is confronting this issue that lies at the heart of one of the key works on grass-roots organising: *Rules for Radicals* written by Saul Alinsky who inspired US radicals in the 1960s and 1970s. A revolutionary in outlook who began agitating for social change in the Chicago stockyards in the 1930s, Alinsky's methodology has proved to have had a greater relevance and longer shelf-life than perhaps he ever expected. In recent history, it not only informed Barack Obama's early political organising, but its



tactics have been adopted by the US Republican right to disrupt Obama's health policies. So how does the Climate Camp fare judged by his rules?

In some respects, Alinsky, who died in 1972, would have admired the Climate Campers' dedication. "Liberals protest; radicals rebel," he wrote. "Liberals become indignant; radicals become fighting mad and go into action." Alinsky, however, is unlikely to have approved of much of the Climate Campers' methodology. The problem with the Climate Campers is not a lack of conviction (as some commentators try to argue); it stems, rather, from an obsession with its own structures and its relationship with media and the police.

More seriously, seen from Alinsky's point of view (he believed in "not rhetoric, but realism"), the Climate Camp suffers from a preoccupation with measuring its achievements in terms of the protests it has undertaken rather than a series of achievable goals that those outside the camp movement can easily identify with.

Alinsky insisted the radical must be able to make a persuasive case for why change is necessary and urgent, a task to which the theatrics of protesting are subsidiary. He taught another crucial lesson, one that has been highly visible in the right's campaign against Obama's health reforms, that campaigners should avoid targeting abstracts such as phenomena and institutions; instead, they should single out individual figures to act as the "personification... of a particular evil". To lever their positions through ridicule and criticism.

I mention Alinsky because he seems to crystallise many of the failings, not just of the Climate Camp, but of significant sectors of the wider anti-war and anti-globalisation movement which have struggled either to articulate precisely what is their message or who have chosen, literally at times, to pitch their tent at the margins of the political debate.

While the campers are articulate in explaining the logic of this positioning and tactics in their rejection of the "hierarchical structures" of both mainstream politics – which they believe to be redundant – as well as many of Europe's green parties, which many believe to have sold out, it does not change the fact of where they have chosen to locate their activism. Outside of the conversation with decision makers.

I sit down with Martin Shaw, a 44-year-old veteran who had his back broken in an encounter with the police. He admits that Climate Camp has had to confront how to balance living both by its own radical ideals – saying "something must happen now [on climate change]" – with being more inclusive. Shaw believes things are getting better, not least in persuading local communities into which they parachute to engage with them.

"Ten years ago, we were much more closed. But we're not naive. We recognise the media are supported by advertising from firms involved in air travel and cars with which the problem of climate change is intrinsically linked."

Another rationalisation is supplied by Ruth, a Greenham Common veteran, who

believes that, as Greenham may not have "changed anything in itself", it became a symbol of an anti-nuclear movement which impacted on the public consciousness and ultimately on policy makers. A symbol. Like Brian Haw, the anti-war protester, on his endless, solitary vigil outside Westminster.

And that is the greatest threat to the campers: that their political relevance is defined not by a meaningful encounter that challenges both the political mainstream and a wider community, effecting change, but is defined, as it increasingly appears to be, by the act of protest itself.

Because the reality of an organisation for successful political change is that it requires a mass movement behind it, drawn not just from those who already passionately believe in it but from those who have been persuaded. And those who may be persuaded.

Climate Camp, with its often hazy message and complex inner negotiations, with its indulgent obsession with its own workings, its insularity and the suggestion of elitism of its direct-action hard core, is in danger of becoming about Climate Camp, the institution, rather than about the wider fight to halt global warming. With all its energy and motivation, that would be a shame.



## Where next for the Climate Camp?

by Stuart Jordan

<http://workersclimateaction.wordpress.com/debates/debate-tactics-demands-anything-you-like/>

The Climate Camp this year took place in London against the backdrop of the Vestas dispute on the Isle of Wight, the first significant working-class fight for the ecology in decades. During the Camp, the Vestas dispute entered a critical stage and the workers sent an urgent call for direct action to keep their dispute alive. Out of the thousands that attended the Camp only a handful responded to this call. To a large degree it was down to fairly mundane reasons like lack of finances and time. But to some degree, it was a reflection of the Camp's dominant political voices and priorities. The Camp has now called for a discussion on the way forward. This paper is intended as a contribution to that debate in a genuine spirit of openness and solidarity.

In the last year, the Climate Camp came to a consensus that it is explicitly "anti-capitalist". This is a good thing. However, there is neither a great deal of clarity about what this means nor how this new theoretical understanding might translate into revolutionary action. This is not a new problem - activists in the anti-capitalist movement have been discussing this for at least ten years (see Give up Activism - Do or Die)

### The Climate Camp's Anti-Capitalism

Climate Camp is, and always has been, kind of "anti-capitalist". The Camp gives you a chance to experience an alternative to the world of wage labour and commodity markets. The things we consume at camp (the tent space, sanitation, food etc.) are to a large extent products of our collective labour. We do not grow the veg or weave the tent fabric (for this we rely on the capitalist market place) but for the duration of Camp the work is collectively shared and the product of that work is held in common. We do not operate a money economy or buy and sell these products. We are not given money in exchange for the time we spend "working". Our daily needs are satisfied by the collective work of the community and so commodity markets are unnecessary. We find that it is not necessary to compel people to work with the threat of poverty. On the contrary, the split between work and leisure which is a feature of capitalist society is broken down and work becomes enjoyable and satisfying. As we work together, human relations are formed quite easily and we have a new appreciation of each other as striving towards a common end: the life and wellbeing of the camp. We no longer relate to each other via the commodities we buy and sell in the market place, the cash in our pockets and the sale of our capacity to work. We relate directly as human beings, reliant on each other for our sustenance.

The beauty of the Camp is that it offers this glimpse of more communistic ways of living and it gives us an insight into what capitalism is and what it is doing to our lives. Crucially, for anti-capitalist environmentalism, the flat hierarchy of the Camp

stands opposed to enormous hierarchies of capitalism. At the Camp we make collective decisions about what we want to produce and how we want to produce it. In the real world, these decisions are made by a tiny minority of people - the capitalist class - and the decisions are made in accordance with the law of profit. Both human beings and natural resources are exploited, degraded and despoiled to this end.

### Capitalism and the Environment

Between the capitalist class and the rest of humanity, lie enormous hierarchical management structures which ensure that the decisions are made in accordance with capital's wishes. In our globalised world, these structures span the planet. In terms of environmental politics, many of the biggest extractive industries are based in the City of London. The natural resource capitalists in the City send their diktats through foreign governments, local capitalists down through their management structures to the workers who destroy the planet in return for a wage. Our class, the working-class produces everything - setting our hands and brains to work on the world around us. The more we work, the more the capitalist class amasses its power and wealth. The systemic compulsion to seek more profit at any cost means our class is constantly attacked and humiliated - our wages are driven down, public services are cut, our environment is wrecked, our communities are broken and fragmented. But as the class that does all the work, we also have the power to stop this system.

The economic crisis is fundamentally a problem of economic decision making. At the moment we live in a society where very few people decide what is produced and how it is produced. Capitalist industry tends to pollute because it does not have to pay for long-term ecological consequences. Profit is amassed by the act of work itself. The object of the work is to a large extent insignificant. As long as capitalists can find people who need to work for a wage and people who can buy what they produce, they can turn a profit. Driving peasants off their land to make way for mines, industrialised agro-business etc. has the added benefit that it creates whole new generations of wage workers.

More importantly, capitalist logic drives research and development. Consequently, the types of technologies that we develop tend to further degrade the earth and our humanity and reinforce capitalist ideologies. We might question whether the car or the television would have become such influential technologies under a democratically controlled economy? Instead of developing the internal combustion engine, our collective intellectual energies might have been directed towards ecologically sustainable transportation.

Lastly, it is important to realise that pollution and CO2 emissions are produced. Our understanding of ecology tells us that everything is in a process of decay. Work is the human act of producing and re-producing society and the world around us. There is no place on earth that has not been affected by human activity. The natural



world does not exist outside of human civilisation – we are a part of the natural world and in a constant process of producing it. This production of the world is simultaneously an act of reproducing our society. In an expansionist capitalist society enormous and increasing numbers of commodities are produced. So the reproduction of capitalism involves creating effective demand for all the commodities we produce. It does this in ideological ways (through advertising, celebrity culture etc.), economic ways (through credit cards, welfare state etc.) and political ways (through wars, imperialism etc.). This understanding cuts against the dominant green myth that climate change is a consequence of over-consumption. Over-consumption is itself a product of capitalism – it is a necessary condition of our expansionist economy. We cannot hope to consume our way out of this crisis. It needs to be addressed at the point of production.

Even under capitalism, we have seen examples of workers taking control of their factories for ecologically sound, socially useful production. In the 1970s the workers at Lucas Aerospace were faced with mass redundancies because their bosses could not find a big enough market for the military machines they produced. In response, the workers asserted their own priorities.

They developed “workers’ plans” for their industry, proposing socially useful, ecologically sound production against the wasteful, destructive production of war machines. They designed green technologies such as a road-rail vehicle, a hybrid car and a tidal power station for the Severn Estuary. Although eventually they lost, this very limited example shows what might be possible if the whole economy was run democratically rather than for profit. A democratically run economy would free up scientific and technological investigation; the lion’s share of which is currently being wasted in capitalist controlled universities and R&D departments to develop weapons, fossil fuel and other socially useless, ecologically damaging technologies.

In order to prevent climate change, therefore, we need to challenge the rule of the boss in the workplace. We need to assert working-class interests in the things we produce and how we produce them. We need to wage a battle for democratic control of our universities and research centres and direct society’s intellectual energy into socially-useful technologies. We need to start producing for human need rather than profit.

### **The Climate Camp’s Reformism**

This year, the Camp chose the City of London to be the focus of direct action. This reflected a theoretical progression from reformist environmentalism (targeting direct polluters) to an explicitly anti-capitalist perspective. But the tactics somehow jarred with the theory and by October we were all back in the more comfortable surroundings of a coal-fired power station. The direct action movement, where many activists first came in contact with the anti-capitalist ideas, has traditionally been based around single issue campaigns that seek to stop specific projects within a capitalist framework. It is a tactic that has some success in securing reforms.

But capitalism does not exist in a bank. Shutting down the City of London for a day does not pose a serious threat to capitalism any more than shutting down a power station for a day poses a threat to the government’s energy policy. Capitalism is a social relation, it cannot be overcome with stunts – or at least this shouldn’t be the first idea that people associate with anti-capitalism. At best the direct action stunt is “pepper up the arse of the bourgeoisie”, it makes us feel good and teaches us something about police tactics. At worst it is elitist, counter-productive and politically disorientating.

Our primary tactic at present is to throw ourselves into police custody in order to make the middle pages of the liberal press. Our activism is largely geared towards creating a spectacle and any change we make is largely ethereal; our propaganda of the deed sends out a woolly message into any public debate surrounding climate change. Climate activism is widely regarded as the domain of people who aren’t too bothered about getting a criminal record. And while getting a criminal record and coming into conflict with the state feels revolutionary, capitalism marches on oblivious.

Most activists at the Camp, I suspect, are aware of these contradictions. People at the Camp frequently express a feeling of disjunction between what they do politically, and the revolutionary theory that they espouse. We speak about an anti-capitalism that is not rooted in the reality of everyday life, rather it is something that is exercised every now and again at anti-capitalist events. Anti-capitalism is a specialist activity for an enlightened activist class. The theoretical knowledge of the “activist” comes with a feeling of alienation from “ordinary” people. The response to this alienation is to group together and create a counter-culture.

For those who understand these contradictions, a new theory is emerging of the “liberated space”. The most important part of the Camp, as I’ve said, is the experience of living in a cooperative space. This has been theorised by some as a revolutionary crack in an otherwise hegemonic capitalist reality. The idea is that these cracks will grow and grow until they cover the whole world. Climate Camp is irresistible and everyone will want to be a part of it – even the capitalists.

However, this notion has been repeated time and again by much more impressive movements than ours, with disastrous results. The experience of Climate Camp cannot simply be expanded and expanded indefinitely until we take over the world. An anti-capitalist future will involve a struggle against capitalist power – it will take place primarily within the workplace where pollution is produced. We cannot create anti-capitalist islands – socialism in one campsite. The main terrain of struggle must be the workplace where we can collectively challenge the domination of our managers.



### **False dichotomies of the utopians**

Part of the nature of this split between reformist tactics and anti-capitalist theory is that the future exists as a utopia in our minds and has no connection to day to day reality. This in turn leads to all sorts of schemes about when and where it is right to fight for revolution. The urgency with which we need to address climate change has led many environmentalists to the view "First save the environment, then have a revolution". This scheme has its mirror image "first have the revolution, and then sort out the environment (and women's liberation, gay liberation, black liberation etc.)" – "One solution, revolution".

Both these formulations are politically wrong. They come from and lead to all sorts of dangerous political positions.

The idea that we can only sort out the environment after the revolution suggests that the workers' movement is a standing army waiting to be lead behind an enlightened, charismatic leader. It is an elitism that says the common worker cannot grasp the finer science of anti-capitalist ecology or revolutionary theory. This is not the conscious, self-emancipation of our class but a Stalinist coup.

The opposite argument "first the environment, then the revolution" is equally flawed. First, without a strong working-class movement we have no power. The major reforms of the last century (e.g. the creation of the welfare state, universal suffrage) were not won by clever arguments – they were won by militant, organised working-class movements. The ruling class has been adept coopting the leaders of these movements and offering enough concessions to dull their revolutionary edge. However, they showed what is necessary to create real change. One of the problems we now have is that all the leaders of the trade unions think they can substitute workers power for their own powers of persuasion, they believe they can talk the bosses around. A similar feature exists in the environmental movement where self-appointed green commentators believe rhetoric can save the planet.

At the end of the day, the environmental crisis is just one of many reasons why capitalism is bad for us. Consequently, it is one of many reasons why working-class people might organise and defy their boss. To suggest that workers only ever strike for their own immediate interests (pay, jobs etc.) is to take a myopic view of working class history. Our history is littered with incredible acts of solidarity – from the internationalists who fought in the Spanish Revolution to the 20,000 strong picket at the Grunwick factory in support of Asian women workers seeking union-recognition. When we are feeling strong and we're on the move, then we reach anti-capitalist conclusions in our millions and practice the solidarity that can defeat our class enemies.

### **Don't Panic!**

Reading the facts about climate change is very frightening. It certainly appears that we might live to see the end of the world! However, the worst thing that we can do

when faced with this overwhelming reality is to panic and scheme. Within our movement, there are advocates of population control and increased state power to stop unecological consumption. Viewing the ecological crisis as a result of an unruly, greedy, parasitic humanity, they draw their own conclusions about the solution.

Others believe that this is a battle that can be won by ideas alone. The bourgeois press obscures the facts about climate change and we need to tell people what's what. We have courageous activists who are wasting away their lives in court hearings because they just want to get the issue in the newspapers. But the processes that build mass social movements are manifold. Most people do not become revolutionary fighters because they read a good book or read an article in the Guardian. The majority of people come to anti-capitalist conclusions through a process of struggle rooted in their everyday life. It is in the process of struggle that people open up to radical revolutionary ideas.

As much as we would like, we cannot will the revolution to happen by building bigger and better Climate Camp's or organising more extreme actions. We need to have faith that history will do its work – that our class will rise again. For me, Workers' Climate Action is about having consistent orientation to class struggle – being there with our revolutionary ecological politics when those struggles inevitably emerge. Ten years ago, when the anti-capitalist movement was first mulling over these questions, the workers' movement was moribund and capitalism was triumphant. The number of strike days was at a low, the unions were bureaucratic obstacles to any real action. Now we see the situation is beginning to change – workers more inclined to take action (often because they have no choice) and the ideological basis of free market capitalism is utterly discredited by the financial crisis. Capitalism is a dynamic system and the ebbs and flows of class struggle are unpredictable. But it is inevitable that given the manifold oppressions suffered under capitalism, working-class people will seek to organise together and fight back.

The experience at Vestas shows that there is a lot that can be done to initiate and support workplace struggle. Vestas had a non-union workforce in a factory that was going to be closed down without a murmur of dissent. Workers' Climate Action activists went to the Isle of Wight and, over a period of weeks, leafleted at the factory gates, spoke to workers and organised meetings. Their initiative eventually turned into the fifth workplace occupation in the UK for two decades, the heart of the struggle for jobs and the environment. The experience of this struggle has fundamentally changed the people involved into fighting class-conscious militants. At times it looked like this dispute would be the lever to securing a shift away from free-market solutions to the UK's energy policy.

This was a struggle rooted in the realities of people's lives that even now could change actual policy and send a signal to other workers that militancy wins. Though this is a kind of reformism, the securing of small victories within capitalism by workplace direct action is the way to build a mass working-class movement. It links



the revolutionary anti-capitalist theory with the here and now of people's lives.

Also, on a personal note I learnt a lot about my own political praxis as a solidarity activist. This was the first solidarity action that I have been involved in where I felt like an active participant in the dispute rather than a slightly suspect outsider. The movement that was created on the Isle of Wight was united around the idea that this dispute involved everyone. The notion of working class solidarity (that your fight is my fight) – a concept so difficult to get across when standing on the picket line in the middle of a pay dispute – flowed naturally from the politics of environmentalism. I no longer belonged to the specialist activist caste rather I was a working-class militant doing what was necessary.

There are many sections of the class that are gearing up for huge battles; oil refinery workers, carworkers, airport baggage handlers have all had strike days in the last few months. Tower Hamlets College took four weeks all-out strike action and scored a partial victory, postal workers in London look set to kick start the strike movement again. For a thousand different reasons, workers are starting to get together and stand up to their bosses. Anti-capitalist environmentalists need to be there on the picket lines making their battle our battle. We need these industries to be taken into democratic control of the workforce and community. We need carworkers to start making recycling bins (like they talked about at Visteon) and refinery construction workers to start building wind farms. We cannot simply ignore these people in the hope that they will disappear. We certainly shouldn't be trying to shut down their workplaces on activist away days. We need to do consistent work and get our fellow workers to shut down their workplaces themselves. Unless the workers in these industries take up a fight against their bosses, then the fight to save the environment will be lost. Argumentative, persuasive, uncompromising, open solidarity should become the mantra of our movement.

## A letter from a 'liberal'

Dear Climate Camp

Many people have come into climate camp not from anarchist, anti-capitalist or activist backgrounds, but because they see climate change as a huge threat and climate camp as one of the best ways of trying to stop it. However, we have grown up being told that politics is the Westminster circus of voting, laws, regulations, policies, taxes, spending and the international scene where these governments interact through organisations like the UN. While we were always aware of the alternative, grassroots 'politics' and now believe that this is the best way to stop climate change it is very difficult for us to believe that Westminster / UN type of politics cannot contribute \*anything\*.

Because of our political upbringing it's also really difficult not to resort to their types of solutions - too many people flying - tax it, people using old fashioned bulbs - ban them, people using too much gas to heat their homes - tighten insulation regulations. Even if these regulations, taxes, etc might disproportionately affect poorer people that's just unfortunate – but blame the idiots that got us into this mess!

We believe in non-hierarchy and consensus, and would like to see the whole of society operate in such an equal, cooperative and effective way, but we just don't feel that we have got time to do that first. Governments and corporations got us into this mess, and while we know the corporations won't do anything to help, we might at least be able to use the power of governments to control them and make a contribution to solving this problem.

Since Copenhagen a lot of us are beginning to doubt this, but what's the alternative?

A. Camper



## The Editors respond

While we accept that this is indeed how many people have arrived in the Climate Camp process, it is not sufficient for people to stay in their comfortable political spaces. We are supposed to be seeking radical social change, and that is a process that by definition is challenging.

There is also an onus on all involved to become aware of the principles behind the camp and where it comes from. Too often people simply project their politics on to the Camp without realising it has a deeper set of politics. This is a key source of the tension this Reader had tried to demonstrate.

We hope this reader is not simply a "them and us" criticism, but provides both background of where the Camp has come from, and if it is to continue movement building the issues it has created from itself by failing to address itself to a deeper political critique. Positions such as a belief that governments can be controlled is precisely the sort of statement that many find hard to swallow. It is fine for the likes of Friends of the Earth to say this, but the Climate Camp is supposed to be the radical alternative!

As various articles in this reader point out, the Camp demands that we are not just lobbyists, but seek to challenge the very roots of climate change - capitalism and the edifices built around it. We contend that the shying away from developing an explicit critique in favour of simply movement building has been one of the issues that has brought the Camp to its current impasse. With a critique once more in place the Camp has the potential, we believe, to move out of the narrow political space it has inadvertently created for itself, and become the broad movement it aspires to.

## The "Where Next" Minutes

*A day of discussion at Climate Camp on Tuesday 1st September 2009*

### Introduction

An outline of the camp process including the national gatherings. This day is for a range of things – navel gazing; self-assessment; where can we go from here.

### History of the Camp

Climate camp is part of a movement of humanity against the enclosure of space, air, and the planet – against enclosure by capital.

Various aspects of climate camp:

### Neighbourhoods

A way of doing things that emerged from the dissent network, in turn from the broad anti-G8 / No Borders movement in France, which was inspired by the Argentinian uprisings in 2001 where decisions were made by 'barrios.'

### Tripods

Used in Australian tree-defence campaigns in the 80s.

Consensus decision-making

From a 1970s feminist text 'the tyranny of structurelessness'. But most decision-making outside government, especially in indigenous groups, has aspects of consensus.

### Affinity groups

From the anarchist movement in the Spanish civil war which led to the successful liberation of land, and from the 1920s Mackhno-vite movement in the Ukraine.

### Occupation and land squats

we have been reclaiming land since time immemorial. More specifically from the peace camps of the 1980s and the German anti-nuclear movement.

### Four themes of climate camp – direct action, sustainable living, movement building and education.

Climate camp I was outside Drax – a group of people from the dissent network – out of Horizone ecovillage in Gleneagles outside the G8 – pitched in explicit opposition to the 'carbon neutral G8'.

G8 Varg camp in France – where neighbourhood decision-making began. The Dissent network – adopted the PGA (People's Global Action) hallmarks – principles that identified us including a confrontational attitude and a rejection of



lobbying as part of the problem rather than the solution. Also identifying ourselves as specifically anti-capitalist. PGA as a global network reaching from north and south.

Climate Camp broke from previous camps by doing this on *our* terms, and setting *our* targets rather than on the terms of or as a reaction to the G8.

### **What was the original strategy & objectives of the Camp and why?**

#### **Not homogeneous.**

Main three objectives were movement building, creating a space of resistance & capitalising real and symbolic antagonism.

#### **Why a social movement?**

Overcoming the power of the fossil fuel economy – all else were working within the paradigm – oppositional power. something on a scale of other social movements was needed. Top down solutions would make the causes of climate change worse.

#### **What kind of social movement?**

Grassroots, participatory and self-organised. Challenging consumerism, growth & capitalism. Strong anti-capitalist ethos. Slipping between anti-capitalist / anti-growth – an ongoing debate. Needed to embrace civil resistance / direct action – to challenge the 'democratic norms' which don't themselves challenge the system, and because it's not about asking others to do things.

But it is difficult to do this because of the atomizing ethos of consumer society which encourages only individual response. We wanted to reject this and come up with a collective solutions. Climate change as a social rather than an environmental issue. The Greens saw climate change as a separate environmental issue, whereas the left saw climate change as something not relevant to them.

Climate change is abstract – about the weather. We wanted to create symbolic moments of tension to break through this. This was the reason why the first camp was at Drax, Europe's biggest coal-fire station. Saying we'll shut it down was central to this idea.

Hedging our bets politically, we try and have strategic objectives on the way to our Utopian goals – stopping new coal; aviation expansion etc. We try to strike a balance between broad social objectives and immediate strategic objectives.

All of this (!) was distilled into movement building, education, direct action and sustainable living.

History is important but should be used to interrogate the present. This is our camp now!!

## **Achievements**

The broad picture. As part of a wider movement.

Achievements in terms of:

- Combining anti-capitalist agenda with effective action.
- Create a space for resistance
- Building a social movement

Small group discussions on what we've achieved relating to the above,

Feedback:

### **Creating a space for resistance**

- Creating an opening;
- inspirational – growth of the movement; sparking an ecology of diverse groups .
- formation of a radical identity through involvement;
- getting out of the ghetto? Links to NGOs etc..;
- spreading our tactics beyond the ghetto – direct action, affinity groups etc.

### **Building a social movement**

- Opening up politics to others;
- creating a space that the police can't come into – normalising this;
- self-management;
- normalising squatting.

### **Anti-capitalism and effective action**

- Capitalism being challenged in the mainstream;
- dialogue with media;
- root causes of climate change on the public agenda
- Heathrow & Kingsnorth on the backburner;
- Radicalised the NGO sector;
- concept of new coal challenged;
- police repression on the public agenda.

## **Critiques of Climate Camp - Exploring the issues**

A range of critiques exists – some are contradictory if opposite extremes; some are personal gripes.



There hasn't been space in previous camps for listening and sharing critiques. If this isn't done, people might leave the process; we might make bad decisions that are contradictory or unhelpful to overall aims. We need to think about about which of the critiques might block the process.

### **Different types of criticism:**

- block – issue needs addressing or I will leave;
- effectiveness – issue needs addressing or won't be effective;
- partisan – this doesn't fit into my world so I will criticise;
- clarification – misunderstanding/ not listening;
- personal – bugbears, or history / relationships;
- opinion – not a criticism – need to make this clear.

### **Group discussion and feedback:**

#### **Relationship with the state**

- Potential at the moment – unclear position – danger of co-optation as moving towards the mainstream – for the agenda to be taken away from us. Need to push in the other direction and create the space for resistance.
- Difference between placing demands on the state and making an accommodation with the state.
- Needs to be addressed – state is inherently linked to the problem.
- All short-term gains are state decisions so we run the risk of being an aggressive lobby group.
- Climate camp should support transitional demands e.g. Vestas etc..
- This camp isn't threatening anything – is why they're not here.
- Are we playing into police hands by not having a mass action at camp? If we shift back towards being more radical they will be able to use this as an example of their 'good' work.
- Confusion about engagement with the state – what we are pressing the state for? Using parts of the state against the state to strengthen ourselves. Using this year's camp to train ourselves up for action.

#### **Directness of our actions**

- Not much direct stuff in London. No single big-impact target – reduced to symbolic acts of civil disobedience.
- Negativity of the actions that have been taken – more positive action needed.
- We don't distinguish between direct action and publicity stunts. Both are useful, but ...
- We focus on accountable, arrest-able actions – but we can't get arrested

every day!!

- G8 & anti-road – physical interventions were successful – climate camp isn't following this.
- We need to find proportional action to the situation we face.
- We need to relate to other struggles and be part of long term ongoing mass-action.
- We need to explore the difference between types of action.

### **Inclusivity of our actions**

- Festival feel – neglect of both defence and families.
- Neighbourhoods
- We spend too much time trying to include other people rather than engaging with other struggles.
- 2 types of inclusivity – how do you get the people in the room to feel included / who should be in the room? So, who are we and what are we about?
- Unvoiced political differences at gatherings.
- Camp process is frustrating but it does work.
- Hard to get involved with ongoing process; difficult to get involved if not living somewhere permanently.
- Too London-centric. Neighbourhoods are dis-empowered – existing outside the main process.
- Perception of sense of piety and smugness of people associated with the climate camp. People looking radical rather than being radically inclusive.
- Camp experienced as a festival with punters rather than everyone seeing the involvement process – rotas etc..
- There is an illusion that having a militant radical message puts people off. We don't need to be scared of this.

### **Coherence of our messaging**

- We don't support smaller groups
- Using the mainstream media
- A lot of thought goes into the message that we do have – we need to admit that we have made decisions and stick to them.
- We're too quick to pass messaging on to the media team.
- Climate camp gives us a fake radicalism – we need to move beyond camping and change our name.
- There is confusion between stopping climate change and breaking down the state and starting again.
- How coherent can a message be in a network like this? Linking to a critique of the financial system was good. The underhand way things have to be done



is problematic – we need to create spaces for resolution of issues.

- Discomfort with the key message: consumption/ growth/ making do with less. We don't come across clearly enough to people who have very little now.

### **Perpetuation of prejudice/ discrimination**

- If climate camp sees itself as THE agency for change then we have negative interaction with those who also have agency;
- We're too focused on visible categories we discriminate against – gender etc. rather than age, experience etc.. Interventions we do make are done badly.
- Despite peoples best efforts, hierarchies are replicated within the camp. e.g. kids space with women; media mostly white middle class men ... needs to be a space where people can experiment with roles.
- More women than men cleaning the loos. Discrimination against children.
- Different chronotypes are discriminated against (those awake different times) - B society in Switzerland
- Invisible disabilities – climate camp favours those who are young and fit

### **Our diversity**

- 'We're not dirty gypsies, we're people who believe in a sustainable planet' – quote in the Sunday Times. Worries at the fact that some people didn't see anything wrong with this.
- Report-back from Brixton – our occupation of space was seen as impressive.
- Lack of clarity about what it means to block decisions – someone was told she shouldn't be here. Shouldn't pressurise people if not vegan/ want to drink.
- Issue around trusting people when organising open things. Those involved are in a social group; those not involved are not in that group.
- We leave dealing with difficult people to a small group – throughout the year.
- From the outside someone who agrees with the camp may be deterred from coming in because they don't look or feel different enough.
- Lack of working class people and people from different races.

### **The dilution of our radical message**

- We need to learn that the broad church approach doesn't work. Within the anti-globalisation movement the people fighting for the middle ground were able to get there because of the riots.

- Culture of skirting around controversies – avoiding disagreement.
- Confusion that to be inclusive we have to give an inclusive message
- Dilution bound up with clarity – making clear what the message is
- Internal dilution. Not seen as an anti-capitalist movement by all.
- Not admitting that some things don't work. We need to try more radical stuff.
- A radical fringe needs to be open – not all or nothing.

### **Informal hierarchy – small groups making decisions affecting all**

- There is one!
- We need to step aside and let stuff happen.
- Because organising is focused on national gatherings, heterosexual couples' worlds can fit neatly into that structure.
- We need to recognise that informal hierarchies are always present and address these continually.
- Decisions are often made quickly by email so participation depends on whether you're online at the time or online at all. Part of the problem is how quickly we need to make decisions.
- Some informal hierarchies are based on experience of using the process – we need to have less experienced people there.
- Informal hierarchies often come into existence to get stuff done. We need to be clear about how we are empowered / accountable.
- We need to stress the importance of teaching others about our role – more time for skill-sharing
- Too much workload? Is this the best way to do it? - this is why informal hierarchies are created.
- No clarity of decision-making process – how can we make it clear?

### **Unsustainable activism / division of labour**

- Our current process isn't appropriate for where our movement has grown to.
- We don't recognise that activism is unsustainable – need to train others up before handing over.
- We need to integrate activism into everyday lives.
- Silver command wants to facilitate sustainable activism!!! We want to stop runaway climate change.
- Taking personal responsibility for not taking on too much. Need fun and rest. Just as important – get beyond the work/ play divide.
- We don't have structures set up to support ourselves long term.
- Group sustainability – we need to look at how we get people in to do this.
- There is a macho culture around capacity – stress and massive capacity



- should not be seen as a good thing
- Activism is a mystical division of labour – climate camp as a skill source or tool kit to take to others to exchange with them. We can't do the job ourselves.
- Hidden process from the beginning – method of secrecy is negative to our movement.
- We need to find a way to make sure that neighborhoods are working groups.
- We need to push jobs out to others rather than sucking them up ourselves.

### **Large-scale one off events are draining energy**

- Creative people in a non-creative process – not the best place to put people's minds to.
- This comes from a period where we had to make our own space as opposed to capitalism. This is changing – we should be responsive to society cracking open.
- Camp shouldn't be relaxing and fun for one group while others do the work.
- Climate camp cares too much about its message – missing what we actually want.
- We need to be thinking about multiple one-off large scale events.
- Have to travel to get here.
- We aren't practicing what we preach – not sustainable ourselves.
- Too much time talking about how to sustain 'us' rather than our politics.
- Haven't reflected enough.

### **Engagement with workplace & community struggles**

- Other aspects of our activism are seen as peripheral rather than integral to our movement. How can we do this?
- We need to be embedded in the community for our movement to grow.
- Difficulty in recognising that we're actually doing these things already but not under climate camp banner.
- Problem with seeing us as the agency rather than as part of a broader constellation of struggles – need to look at workplace struggles and see how they are constructed – ecological approaches spill over.
- Best way to answer the criticism on diversity.
- Need to broaden out to other transnational movements including the movement around migrancy. Climate camp needs to engage with these movements.
- We need to be more responsive in the immediate term. Need to be able to respond to local issues as the 'cracks open up'.

- It's hard to teach others about workers struggles – need to skill-share on this as a good way to go strategically.
- We need to change the jobs we do to create the world we want to see.

### **Group discussion reflecting on the above – how can we move forward in relation to these criticisms?**

- The desire to solidify at regional level; to have regional rather than national events bearing in mind that this is difficult to do – strategies to negotiate the gaps re. Travel / only email contact.
- Us going to other groups rather than trying to get them to join us.
- Continuity with the camp – more permanent land occupations.
- Embrace buddying for tasks.
- National process isn't helping local solutions. National spokes council.
- Too much to travel to all meetings. We need to regionalise working group tasks. Rotate places doing each job.
- What we're doing today is the way forward – creating space for discussions.
- Bringing the camp to local campaigns works well - working with local communities.
- We deal with 'others' differently – challenge our own prejudices.
- National gathering once every 2 months; neighbourhood gathering every month.
- Radically change the way we make decisions.
- We need to document and skill-share
- We need to formalise how we introduce people to the movement
- Continue workshops throughout the year
- We shouldn't over-analyse ourselves
- Changing the name!

### **Afternoon structure**

1. Directions and objectives, e.g. Disengage from capitalism
2. Forms methods and tactics, e.g. Create an alternative economy using chick peas as currency
3. How will we organise to make this happen? e.g. suspend gatherings and set up permanent camps in each neighbourhood.

### **Where are we now?**

Facilitators recapped the camp's four aims; upcoming forums – climate swoop; COPI5; e.on f.off; Bristol Co-Mutiny.

Connected groups include Plane Stupid, Climate Rush, Climate Justice Action,



## Directions and Objectives

Feedback from small groups discussions on directions

### Group 1

- Localise and expand through strengthening neighborhoods.
- In doing this we need to have an anti-capitalist framework
- We need to connect with other struggles.

### Group 2

- Focus on just transition.
- Open new areas of contention.
- Get lots of people taking action.
- Orient ourselves to work alongside other struggles.

### Group 3

- Empowering local communities.
- Continue to build a diverse grassroots international movement to stop governments companies and the military from destroying the environment (using direct action).
- Need to analyse the cause of climate change.

### Group 4

- Provide space locally for radical ideas to spread and local communities to organise. Not as missionaries but providing space for people to develop radical ideas.
- Increase our diversity – make this a central aim.
- Don't lose national campaigns.

### Group 5

- Global solidarity.
- Building a commons – this would incorporate climate change.
- Social Justice.

### Group 6

- Create space for more action, radical and every day.
- Other ideas: questions that need to be resolved – climate camp an umbrella or regional organisation? Camp could become forum space rather than single thing.

### Group 7

- To explicitly state that we are building a better society that does not cause climate change and is resistant to it
- Decentralize.
- Diversify (but don't dilute).

### Group 8

- Confront the capitalists and the state's use of climate change to restructure capitalism.

### Group 9

- Create space for debate.
- Build a strong movement.

## Large group shout-outs around the themes emerging

- Anti-capitalism?
- We need to stop being afraid of our own politics;
- educate people so its less scary;
- debate the alternatives;
- show that capitalism is physically impossible.
- How do we build a strong movement?
- Work with other movements;
- speak to people in other countries we've never spoken to before.
- How do we build locally?
- Speak to local people we've never spoken to before;
- gather on common ground;
- show films.
- Increase diversity?
- Ask people to get involved;
- join up our struggles with ones that already exists;
- Spaces for debate?
- Reclaim land;



- squat buildings;
- more extreme radical action to move the debate forwards;
- spaces for action?
- occupy a building in every town centre;
- occupy the factories.

## Group discussions on each of these areas – feedback

### Anti-capitalism

- identifying ourselves as anti-capitalist/ anti-authoritarian
- climate camp having a narrative referring to the commons as discourse
- roots of climate camp are or were quite explicitly anti-capitalist
- climate camp tackling the root causes of climate change i.e. capital
- need to make anti-capitalism explicit again?
- agreed we wish to tackle authoritarian tendencies that emerge
- movement away from focus on climate change
- we need a clear vision

### Building a strong movement

- we need to emphasise neighborhoods as building blocks
- suggesting twinning neighborhoods with others around the world
- hallmarks or values should be defined – we need to go to the heart of what we are doing
- physical presence in every neighborhood permanently?

### Diversity

- similar to building strong movements
- diverse messaging for different communities
- expose media
- work with other movements
- better internal communication – take on what people are already saying
- outreach all year round

### Localisation

- create spaces within communities
- mapping local areas before infiltrating!
- understand the needs of the community and work with this
- mixture of permanent presences

- engage with local environmental groups
- more power to monthly planning meetings so more action and outreach connected to these
- link up local solutions
- day of local action

### Space for action

- facilitate formation of affinity groups
- incorporate into existing structures
- buddying up
- building a network of trainers and targets e.g. through crabgrass

### Debate

- internal and external debate
- creating time or space (physical or political) for this to take place
- many structures exist already – workshops and gatherings
- using existing social centres / new physical spaces such as shop in Gillingham / Transition Heathrow project
- making use of media – again both external and internal

### Social justice

- working with other organisations
- challenging current forms of education
- looking at kids area in camp – more of a role for education
- acknowledging climate camp is about education
- policy solutions climate camp might favour

### Connect with other struggles

- workers struggles mainly
- engage with struggles outside the flashpoints – relationships with unions etc
- plan the engagement rather than just rushing in
- build up lines of communication with international groups



## Processes to do these things

### To discuss in groups:

- decision-making processes
- national and neighborhood space
- working groups
- how we communicate

### Current process overview:

We have monthly national gatherings moving around the country to try and include accessibility. Facilitators are arranged by those putting on the gathering; process group tries to make sure it goes smoothly. The camp is made up of different working groups to tackle different elements of the camp. All have remit, budget, email address & need to participate in gatherings.

This year, there's been a South-East bias to national gathering locations. Scotland and Wales have had their own camps and Bristol are about to put on different event. So these neighbourhood have self-decentralised. This time last year at Kingsnorth we said we'd stop it being built. Different projects within the process have been a challenge to manage – e.on f.off and international etc.. Also, working groups are now also meeting outside national gatherings. The finance process has also been very challenging this year.

International group working towards building for Copenhagen and building links with international camps. Part of the CJA, going to meetings in Copenhagen - participating in the wider network. Its been difficult to get going as we need more people; and difficult to have meetings when we're split around the country, but we have been using skype. It is a complicated process. We are connected into an international process – meeting of all climate camps is planned at Copenhagen.

### Group discussions ... feedback suggestions:

- splitting up national process work and working group work
- turning national gathering into spokes meeting
- coordination of local and national process
- twinning
- working groups to be allied with neighbourhoods
- internationalisation of the movement
- outreach through the year
- we need more time to talk about this! Conference to thrash out ideas. Accept that consensus takes a lot more time.
- separate political & organisational gatherings?

- make use of the spokes system – build neighborhood system like that.
- keep the mix of geographical areas in working groups
- more skill sharing at neighbourhood and national gatherings
- working groups should make sure people are working where needed
- all neighbourhoods to be involved in working groups
- more stuff back than discussed!
- Climate camp to be replaced by regional autonomous groups. UK national meetings as skillshare / discussions.
- use consensus for political rather than administrative decisions. Too bureaucratic. Some working groups too big?
- more time for debate like we had today. Have internal discussion and open this out to other groups at an urban convergence rather than a camp.
- have a strategy day once politics/ aims have been sorted out.