



it's all about the benjamins,
BABY!



ENVIRONMENTALISM
has been
RECYCLED



notes on capitalism and ecology



The living systems which support life on earth are in serious threat due to human activity. Scientists, activists and others have spent the past half-century screaming about this to seemingly deaf ears. Now, with the multiplying consequences of climate change (not to mention the massive poisoning and irradiation of the global environment) boiling up like stormclouds from the horizon, the “inconvenient truth”

has become commonplace. Phrases from the ecological movement are now heard from the mouths of government officials and industry leaders; environmentalists are going to lunch with senators and starring in reality TV shows. Meanwhile, ice melts and tumors grow. Some respond to the unfolding disaster with numbed apathy; other urge us to “DO SOMETHING!” But what are we going to do, on whose behalf and why?

An obvious place to start is with the “human activity” mentioned in our first sentence. This is often given as the source of the ecological problem. But it’s not hard to see that since human beings have existed for millions of years and (contrary to the pop science of First World enviros like Jared Diamond) until recently have not caused any massive catastrophes, this explanation is missing something: the relations between humans, specifically the authoritarian social structures and capitalist economies that have taken over the world in the past few millennia, creating our present reality of pollution, exploitation, impoverishment and misery for people and the land.

The Sierra Club’s recent documentary “*Wild Versus Wall*” on the ecological effects of U.S. border policy is a good example. While the SC’s position on human migration across borders is “neutral” (despite the attempts of Earth First! founder Dave Foreman, *Whale Wars* star Paul Watson and others to create an anti-migrant stance), the video shows people scaling the wall as evidence that it “isn’t solving the immigration problem.” *Whaaat?* It’s killing hundreds of people a year. What do you want, some kind of FINAL SOLUTION? Later on some idiot in a suit pleads with the government to go ahead and “secure” the border, just “in an environmentally-friendly way,” with high-tech surveillance equipment. Another example: the Pentagon’s 2003 report on climate change “and Its Implications for United States National Security” which points towards new strategies of social control in a world thrown into intense social and ecological chaos.

Many people who sincerely care about human sustainability and harmony between all species are being taken in by “green” politicians and businesspeople. They would mobilize us for the sake of our own survival, but it’s only their control they want to sustain. They *are* the threat to our survival, always have been and always will be until there is a radical change in relations among humans. As these texts point out, any environmentalism which ignores this is useful only to those who want to continue the rule of the elite, despite limited ‘resources,’ changing climate and the rest. Those of us who want to get rid of them, and who really want a healthy situation on planet Earth, could benefit from studying the plans being drafted today for tomorrow’s “eco-friendly” world domination.

—*Sticks and Stones*, APRIL 2009

Appendix: June 16, 2008—Santa Cruz, California (anonymous communiqué)

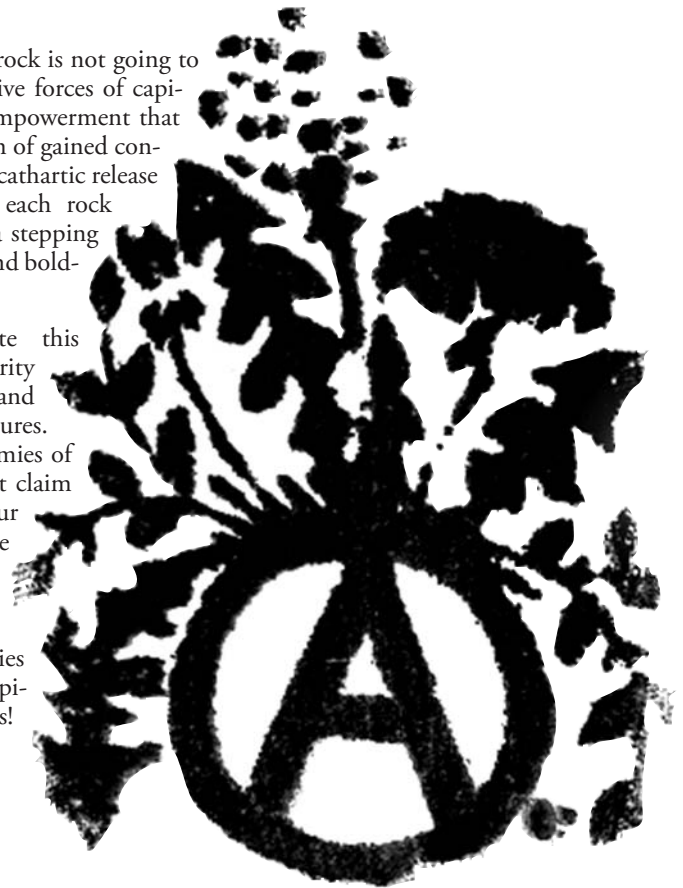
Inspired by the recent actions of solidarity happening in Santa Cruz, we decided to actualize our discontent and outrage at the disgusting lie that green-capitalism tells us: that there is such thing as sustainable industry. Thus our local green-capitalist home furnishing center, “Greenspace,” got a landscaping rock thrown through its window.

And how great it felt to hear the giant plate glass shatter along with the illusion that commerce is invulnerable to our attacks. It was so easy it makes us giddy to think that such an act is infinitely reproducible.

Not an hour out of our lives was wasted. A pair of gloves and a couple medium-sized rocks (along with a burning desire to cease our everyday acquiescence) is all it takes.

Certainly a rock is not going to stop the destructive forces of capitalism, but the empowerment that comes in the form of gained confidence as well as cathartic release is priceless. Let each rock thrown become a stepping stone to greater and bolder actions.

We dedicate this action in solidarity with the Earth and all its living creatures. Don’t let the enemies of life on this planet claim to you that your dollars can change the destructiveness of industry. Call them out on their blatant lies and fight until capitalism lies in ruins!



selves to apathy and inaction, or we take action where we can, empowering ourselves and giving ourselves hope at the level at which we can actually make a difference. We take control of our lives, building a present which we can live in. And when this comes under attack, we resist harder, knowing that it is something that we have created, and that if it is gone we have nothing to lose.

Faced with something like climate change, we don't accept how it is defined for us from above; we learn to understand it in terms of what we already know. We've seen ecological destruction by now, we understand the imperative of defending what we still have. We live in a society of domination and control and so can recognise the potential for authoritarianism disguised as ecology and so brace ourselves to resist it. We notice that the many fronts of capital's war force people into movement and so accept that our communities will have to change. We watch the world becoming ever more unpredictable and realise the need to be able to react quickly to new threats, which requires strong relationships between us and a continual desire to understand ourselves and the world around us.

Truth is not attainable: objectivity will always be an illusion. Reality, on the other hand, understood as what we see when we stop deliberately blinding ourselves to what is going on around us, is an option. In a society where so many people around us choose to leave the blinkers on, this kind of reality is maybe the first vital step to freedom.

We don't lack information, it's just hard to accept. In the same way that it becomes easy to pretend that sexual abuse is not taking place in your immediate surroundings, it is also easy to believe that activism can save us from climate change. But in neither of these situations does the purposeful ignorance actually take us forward. Only engaging with what we know is there, including our own fears and inadequacies, could really lead to a practical and honest vision of possible ways out.

There is no future: whether due to climate change and peak oil or the general social and ecological disintegration that is so clearly happening all around us. Smash things up and burn them down because we know we need to eliminate them from our world—not because it's some democratically agreed campaign objective. Learn new skills for sustainable living because we thirst for knowledge to reclaim our lives, not as a demonstration project photo-op to show the journalists.

It's a totally serious proposition: leave climate change to the people who invented it—scientists and businessmen, politicians and NGOs. It's not for us. Let's instead take control of our lives, resist the new roads and airports when we can, but also recognise that whatever happens to the climate, the world is changing for the worse faster and faster and we are always going to be facing new attacks. To survive them we need to be strong in ourselves and in our communities. We need to live out our anger and act out our desires in the present and not let ourselves be controlled by someone else's apocalyptic vision of the future.

—found at NATTERJACKPRESS.CO.UK

CATASTROPHE PSYCHOSIS



For a long time now there has been a terroristic blackmail in act leading to more and more recourse to the policeman-like logic of emergency. The media carries out the task of upturning problems and using the apocalyptic images of the imminence of catastrophe pushing great masses of people to mobilize to avoid it. One should ask oneself what lies behind the picture presented by the media of the impending nightmare of ecological catastrophe. This is presented as a problem to be resolved beyond the realms of social relations or class conflict.

We have strong doubts about the show of good intentions made by politicians of every kind and color (including the environmentalists) and their sudden interest in the population's health. We think that behind the bombardment of news concerning the ecological red alert in the areas of high industrial concentration where atmospheric pollution safety levels have been amply surpassed, there lies another far less noble battle: a battle for power between the old capitalist-industrial class and the new ascending one constituted of the public and private bureaucracy in view of the position the latter have reached within the technological apparatus of capital and the state.

We know that the image of catastrophe, in this case the ecological one, emotively pushes the mass to fight beyond any motivation coming from their own specific condition of exploitation, not so much for social change but to save their own threatened survival. That pushes them to adopt the reasoning leading to the conservation of the present social order.

The planet is dying, we all know it. It is full of poison and lacking in oxygen because of atmospheric pollution. The rivers are biologically dead; lakes and seas are reduced to dustbins; a greenhouse effect is produced by the raising of the levels of carbon dioxide thanks also to the massive work of deforestation of one of the main lungs of the earth, the Amazon forest.

Growing drought is causing the extension of vast new deserts, and we are assisting in the tragedy of peoples and animal species on their way to extinction, sacrificed to the logic of profit and dominion. Every class that aspires to domination brings with

it its own world and its own logic. The ascending bureaucrats are using ecology to accelerate the process of taking over the old world.

But what can that cause in the mass, increasingly terrified by the possibility of catastrophe and interiorizing the logic of emergency, if not total adhesion to the repressive codes of behavior dictated by cybernetic power. With scientific punctuality it is inviting millions of proletarianized individuals to participate and mobilize alongside the institutions to create and institute new organisms of control and to sanction new authorities under the thrust of a new democratic radicalism.

Beyond its immediate drama, the Chernobyl nuclear accident gave capital and all the states the chance to coldly experiment elements upon which to apply the repressive projects of control and consensus, precisely by exploiting the idea of a permanent state of emergency.

The emergency intervention therefore does not resolve the problem but serves to install control in order to eliminate conflict over the social territory through the blackmail of duty to collaboration between classes. All the emergency measures that are presented as being necessary for the general social interest, in actual fact give way to a process of privilege and submission given the inequality of existing material conditions.

The greens and environmental associations are not looking for a solution to the problem of pollution but to a capillary and spreading control in order to make it a source of profit. One discovers that the least polluted parts of the cities are areas destined to the higher social strata; the poor get square meters of cement and waste dumps on the outskirts.

It is time then, instead of giving acritical praise to such forces, to unmask their role as the new social pacifiers who are going beyond the spectacle rigged on the blackmail that “the planet must be saved at all costs”, to lend themselves to managing existing alienation in an alternative way, but always based on exploitation and oppression.

We think that the struggle against the domination of human over human is the only basis from which to start. It is the only one capable of attacking those responsible for the destruction of both the planet and social wealth. We must aim concretely towards the liberation of humanity and nature in the global sense.

The greens and environmentalists are so-called ecologists whose aim is not a clean ecological planet; their politics are a green apartheid that wants “green islands” destined to the comfort of the privileged. The international environmental associations are the multinationals of “ecology”; capitalism revised and corrected following the damage done by its preceding phase of maximum industrialization.

The social struggle in the ecological sense is valid only if it strikes the relationships of dominion, the structures of capital and the state, showing its subversive force that contains the prospect of a new world, not the alternative management of the old.

—*Insurrection*, SEPTEMBER 1989

sage of hope that they were wanting to hear at a time when their ideologies seemed more moribund than ever.

The theory goes that in an increasingly confusing post-modern world, reality is no longer a concept worth worrying about. Thus theoreticians who should understand capitalism well enough to know better, write that a global basic income or free movement for all is an achievable goal. They may not believe it themselves, but ostensibly want to inspire others to believe in it, claiming that the ‘moments of excess’ generated by such utopian dreams will give rise to potent movements for change.

Maybe that’s the theoretical rationale for hyping climate change. It is certainly a suitable testing ground for the politics of manufactured hope, being so alienated from our actual everyday realities. But whilst the new movement politicians—facilitators not dictators—watch their movements grow, there is still a case for living in the real world.

We are living through various crises—ecological collapse, social disintegration, technological control—and we need all our powers of observation and trying to understand in order to survive and resist this onslaught. Stressing about the coming apocalypse, and pretending that it can be solved by goodwill and wishful thinking is just a distraction from this.

No future

Sometimes being a little more honest, and acknowledging how desperate and hopeless the situation we are in actually is, can actually be more inspirational than convincing yourself of the possibility of salvation. It won’t attract the people with most to lose, those who don’t want to be any more than concerned citizens. But who needs them and their self-sacrifice anyway, we can build something more genuine.

Over the last 50 years at least, the most interesting counter-cultural currents have always developed with a background assumption of desperation. When your world is shit then you learn to live for the moment, living immediately and creatively. The beat generation and the original hippies sprang up in a time when everyone knew that the world could be senselessly destroyed by some lunatics pressing nuclear buttons. Punk grew from the city streets where the acceptable options for urban youth were not worth following. Travellers, road protesters, squatters: all these potent movements share a common supposition of “NO FUTURE”—that we have no place in the society that is offered up, that nothing good can happen other than what we create for ourselves here and now, making islands of sanity in a world gone off course.

No future is not just limited to subcultures, it exists throughout society. Many many people don’t see the point of the modern world any more and have no interest in worthy schemes to save it. The non-believers almost certainly outnumber the believers, just they don’t shout about it so much.

I’ve no wish to glamorise despair. But to realise our alienation and impotency at the planetary level can lead us in various different directions. Either we resign our-

It seems there is something of this in the British Climate Camp organisation—their posters reassure us “YOU ARE NOT FUCKED” in big friendly letters, another flier backs it up: “WE’RE NOT TOAST YET.”

This really doesn’t seem to fit in with everyday experience, to such a degree as to be totally ridiculous. Clearly we are all totally fucked in so many ways—fucked in the head, living in a fucked up society that’s fucking up the planet for no hope of change. Apart from the nauseating language which evokes the gung-ho spirit of plucky brits in the blitz, the claims made are blatant deception. Why would someone write something like that? Even the numbers are made-up: the organisers of the climate camp 2006 claimed 600 participants, which is quite a lot, yet the publicity for 2007 says “thousands” participated in the previous camp.

What, they may argue, is wrong with creating a bit of optimism? In such a hopeless situation people won’t be inspired to act if they don’t have something to cling to. It’s just a little white lie between friends. The ‘last chance’ story is not entirely without foundation after all: if we believe the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change then we might be alright if emissions are cut by 60-80% over the next 30 years.

Greenpeace try to convince us that it’s the “last chance to save the earth” in order to bolster their corporate profits; when activists make similar claims it’s because they’re trying to build social movements. That’s why there’s so many glossy fliers hyping up the event, telling us it’s going to be really cool, inflating the number of participants and so on. The truth is not as important as the effect the words have.

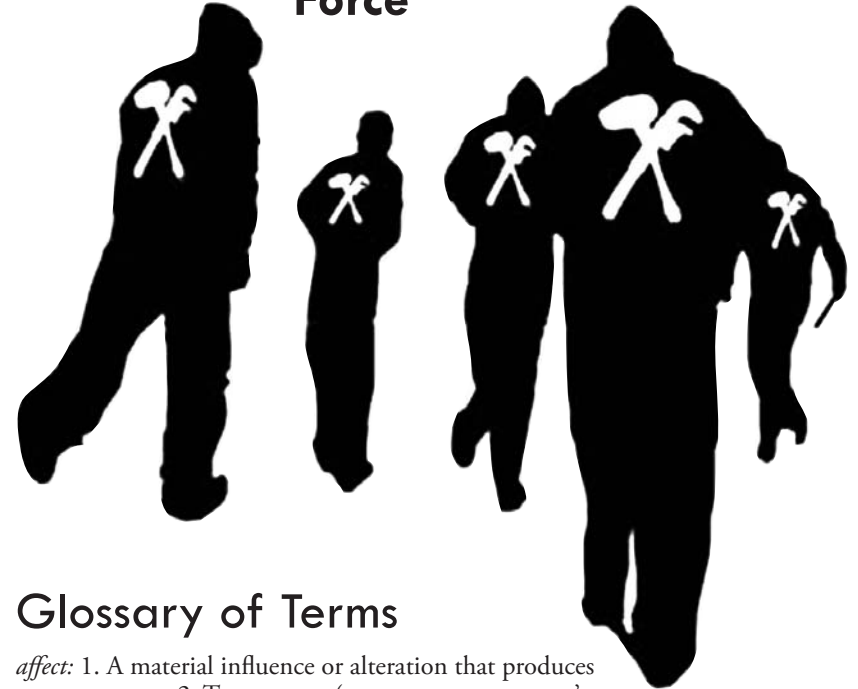
The theory is that big problems need big movements: so the climate camp aims to attract as many people as possible. All are welcome, it’s all democratic, consensus decisions between hundreds of people, everyone has an equal voice. If the local MP says he supports the climate camp then that’s surely a good thing, isn’t it—the cops are less likely to evict, and it gives legitimacy to the camp so more people come.

One of the aims of the climate camp is popular education, and I guess it is interesting to provoke discussions between people from different backgrounds and with different presuppositions. On the streets and runways, however, the forms of action can only become more stage-managed and less interesting. Climate change is so global, so vague yet all-encompassing that the ‘broad church’ approach can only depoliticise, appealing to a lowest common denominator to the point of blandness.

It’s surely the dream of those who get off on being leaders of social movements—it alleviates the frustration of seeing your world collapse about you to see a friendly movement leader telling you that there is something you can do. So they lie to the masses, hoping that their movements grow.

There is a growing and disturbing trend that has been lingering around radical circles over the last few years, based on the theory that blind positivity can lead to interesting and unexpected successes. Michael Hardt and Toni Negri’s books have provided some of the theoretical bases for this, and it has been taken up by some who want to unite the masses under the banner of precarity, organise migrants and mobilise for summits. For many coming from the left wing tradition, it has been the mes-

Earth First Means Social War: **Becoming an Anti- Capitalist Ecological Social Force**



Glossary of Terms

affect: 1. A material influence or alteration that produces empowerment. 2. To act upon (as a person or a person’s mind or feelings) so as to provoke a response; influence. *Affective struggle changes those struggling, as well as the world around them.*

effect: The power to produce external results. *Her protest had no effect.*

desire: A productive force; the information that circulates through bodies and produces action. *We don’t have desires, we are produced through and as vessels of desire.*

social war: The narrative of “class struggle” developed beyond class to include the complexities and multiplicities of all social relations. Social war is conflict within all hierarchical social relations.

This is another contribution to the ongoing discussion about evolving Earth First!—perhaps beginning again, from a different angle.

I intend to present a modest argument in favor of an Other Earth First!. What has made EF! powerful is not a particular ideology but rather a network structure based on affinity and, in most cases, cultural codes, rituals and customs. It follows that evolving EF! will continue to stand on and operate within that infrastructure. However, there are new maps we must examine and difficult topics that demand our immediate attention. The first and foremost is a question of we: Who are we? The second is a question of our current world or conditions: capitalism, the global ecological crisis and its social consequences. The third is a notion of possibility and uncertainty: How we will contribute to not simply defending ecosystems, but also to circumventing green capitalism and tendencies toward fascism with a green angle, and how we will usher in a total transformation of society?

It is not my intent to argue in favor of collapsing ecological struggle into a broad movement of movements. *Au contraire*, ecological struggle is special but only as a social force¹. A powerful ecological struggle against industrialism and capitalism is the only social force that can prevent the catastrophic future of eco-fascism, and that can attack and destroy the reigning system of capital.

While it is clear that the global ecological crisis we've struggled to prevent is becoming a component of daily life—something mentioned in the news, over the phone with family, in passing with acquaintances—our current modes of struggle are making little headway, either in mitigating the constant expansion of capitalism, or in reaching the hearts and minds of a significant portion of the population. Unfortunately, this is predictable.

Currently, capitalism produces the conditions under which we act. Capitalism, not EF!, currently has the intelligence and labor-power to fantasize about and reorganize society. It is no wonder that when we point at the world on fire, a product to temporarily extinguish the flames becomes available or a movie with laughable solutions is made. However, ours is a problem of neither capacity nor consciousness, but rather of memory and imagination. When polemicists on the topic of civilization, such as Derrick Jensen, inform us that we will never be a popular movement, the myths of our lack of power and of our need for heroic true-believers become more palatable.

Although these myths about how the world works are seductive and consistent with the popular narrative of defeat, they prove incorrect when we more deeply exam-

¹ By social force, I mean a social phenomenon that is intentionally directing society. While in the past "social movement" would have sufficed, today, very few movements have genuine power or agency. Rather, they simply are allowed to exist because what they produce has little to do with totally transforming society.



pen anyway, as there are many more good reasons to do them than just because of climate change. And people who want to make their towns sustainable are quite adept at jumping on any bandwagon that can increase the scope of their projects: look how much mileage was made out of Agenda 21, a fairly insipid document that came out of the UN greenwash summit in Rio in 1992. Good on them for their opportunism, taking advantage of the agenda set by institutional groups to promote their projects. There's nothing wrong with this at all, but it is clearly distinct from defining a radical agenda for ourselves.

But if we understand climate change as a global and multifaceted problem, does that not encourage us to think more holistically—everything's connected to climate change, it's not just a single issue? Well it does seem to encourage this to some extent, at least in terms of resource use, as the need to simultaneously challenge your lifestyle and resist growth of the oil machine. Campaigners against a new road may remind people that climate change is one good reason among many not to build more roads, people living in a low-impact community in the woods can use it as an argument to convince locals of the necessity of their existence, those fighting migration control can describe how ecological destruction is forcing many more people away from their lands. A lot can be linked to climate change, but not everything.

The mess we're in is more complicated and far far worse than the over-consumption of resources burning up the planet.

The climate justice movement also has some important points to make in its analysis of climate change: the rich are disproportionate in causing the problem, the poor are the first to suffer. This may inspire rage and fury, but the problem is the same: on a global scale, where is there room for those at the bottom of the pile to act? As the anger subsides into resignation we realise that climate change was no more than an instructive tool to explain injustice to those who don't have to deal with it on a daily basis....

A GLOBAL PROBLEM OF PROBLEMS NEEDS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS... OR NOT.

Climate change appeals because it threatens global ecological collapse, and that's something that the activists feel everybody should take an interest in. It's made more interesting when it is combined with peak oil, the logical-extension-of-economic-theory which says that the rising cost of oil extraction will destroy the economy. So there's huge scope for brooding conversations about the fate of the planet.

"Which will hit us first, economic or ecological collapse?"

EVERYONE HAS A STAKE IN THE APOCALYPSE.

Such a grand threat can provoke a range of attitudes, the most common being the missionary position:

"We have one last chance; together we can save the world."

ine the world. Capitalism is not merely a political-economic order but an edifice developed throughout history to structure all human relations. Despite all its anti-social pretensions, capitalism is a social structure. This means that the nightmares of capitalism are not caused by special individuals but by a complex system of social relations. The hypothesis of an Other narrative is this: Given the right circumstances, a complex system of social relations could materialize our dreams.

Capitalism may have just about every power relation to defend and enforce it. However, it is important to remember that it was our labor and knowledge that imagined and constructed the geometry of the gears, the logic of the advertisements and the cartography of deforested land. Furthermore, it is our urge for utopia, not that of bureaucratic systems, that has always provided an alternative.

EF! would do best to reimagine what becoming powerful might feel like. It would benefit us to experience our power intimately embodied in spaces where capitalism is being called into question. This means we would not continue to exist as a mere protest movement but rather as criminals experimenting with ways to survive. We would notice that a similar fabric runs throughout society, connecting us not solely to other predominately white social movements but also to many people who survive without compromise in this world on fire. We are not individuals acting on our moral impulses; we are a social force becoming aware of its power. Becoming powerful is a matter of making our story a place to inhabit—making our story material. We dream in the face of nightmares, not as an escape into an alternate reality but as a weapon to change this one.

Who Are We?

Within activist circles, the question of "Who are we?" causes vertigo. Some attempt to define themselves not simply by what they do but by how they do. This is an interesting divergence but ultimately a meaningless one. Can we be described by a technique?

Sadie's SFB defends her anti-political assertion. "I am not an activist," she claims (see *EFJ* March-April 2008). "I don't think I ever was. Arsonist, yes...." She alludes to an important point. As activists we express things to those who manage the state, not to those exploited by the state. Activism is the division of labor that specializes in social change. When we engage in activism, our struggle is transformed into "issues," becoming political capital for politicians. From this perspective, the poodle-assed behavior of Al Gore and the Sierra Club is not surprising. How will more militant tactics redefine ecological discourse if we are still communicating through political means? Even if we eschew the activist label, our communiqués are not an affirmation of our power as much as thinly veiled pleas for inclusion in the political discourse.

Presently, we are working toward only a radicalized version of the solutions presented in *An Inconvenient Truth*. Gore says, "You, individual, can use more compact florescent light bulbs, reduce your carbon dioxide emissions and recycle." We say, "You, individual, can ride a bicycle, eat trash, give up things and even punish those who don't." Although we have added a more militant moral character to our argu-

ment, the story remains the same: Individuals making moral choices will transform society. What's hidden within that narrative is an assumption that history and social change have been made by individuals. But we are not one story; we are a multiplicity. We are not made up of heroes and bystanders; we are the combination of those who created capitalism and those who are oppressed by it.

The Individual and Activism

The (Western) individual is the protagonist of Western civilization, a construct of values developed during the Enlightenment and a story set into motion by the rise of capitalism. The individual expresses a person disjointed from the social; it produces a story where freedom is individual choice and individual agency.

The EF! tradition contains an affirmation of the individual and utilizes an activist methodology of social change. Even during the times when rowdy rednecks who really appreciated wilderness were putting the fictions of Edward Abbey into practice—a golden age for some—EF! was not able to birth itself outside of politics-as-usual. Instead, it attempted to develop political capital and credibility through publicity stunts and public land proposals. Over time, the sociality, camaraderie and affect that were cultivated through a collective practice of sabotage, were replaced by the urgency and moral impulse for direct action, which became increasingly a specialized practice of our heroes alone. Eventually, the urgency and moral impulse that demanded, “Something must be done!” pushed us back to sabotage, but this time it was the underground component of a dwindling movement. Like the Weather Underground component of the 1960s anti-war movement, our friends and co-conspirators who spray “ELF” on burned-out developments still essentially practice nonviolent direct-action activism. Direct action gets the goods and all, but shall the rest of us just watch or fill “support” roles? We have exhausted ourselves as individuals specializing in social change; we need collective confrontation.

What would attention to the needs of the environs that we are attached to be if it were not framed as “individuals making ethical choices”? And what would our we be if not activists? Furthermore, what if we was based on our experiences, identities and desire, rather than simply on what we currently do?

History is not only the history of class struggle. Let's be clear: If Marx and the classical anarchists were right, and there was an easy answer called the proletariat, our task would be much easier. We could take a long look around, notice the simple fractures in society and recognize ourselves based on our class interests. Those of us who work, and who work to avoid it, would see ourselves as the majority of the global population. We could simply raise consciousness and get organized on class lines to fight capitalism, not merely as a structure that exploits us but also as a structure that threatens all life on the planet. We could act in our own self-interests to destroy capitalism and construct utopia. I would personally be less stressed out about alienating my friends and would probably spend far less time at cafés obsessing over radical ecological theory. Clearly, it would be better for everyone except an incredibly wealthy one percent of the population, who would lose everything they've placed meaning

those with power have. People who in their everyday lives choose to live in an uncompromising, disobedient and anti-authoritarian way, end up militantly calling for the implementation of the compromised, authoritarian Kyoto protocol or campaigning for some new global agreement even more controlling and far reaching, believing that only states and corporations are sufficiently organised to be able to react in the time-scale necessary.

It is meaningless for those at the grassroots to shout that “SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!!!!” because Al Gore will do it anyway, and people will always listen to Al Gore more than they will listen to any of us. The only thing it is good for is to make you feel that by shouting, you were actually doing something. “SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!!!!” is a knee-jerk reaction to the prediction of global doom, which was anyway a manufactured threat. Lots of things should be done, but is it not better to just get on with doing them in places where the “SOMETHING” can actually make a concrete difference?

From climate change to climate action

Climate change has become very fashionable over the last few years, in north-western Europe at least, and especially in Britain. The newspapers carry stories about climate change every day, people talk about it when they talk about the weather, every heatwave, every heavy rain, is a sign of impending doom. It's the case in grassroots movements as well, summer 2007 sees the second annual ‘climate camp’ in Britain, trying to build on the winning formula of the temporary-eco-village-cum-resistance-camp in the anti-G8 mobilisation in 2005, and a culture of ‘climate action’ has grown up.

I don't know what to reply when people from other places ask me about this climate movement that has grown up on the island. Quite often they don't really get why people would put so much effort into climate change when there are so many more immediate and tangible topics which could result in more effective struggles. But not having been part of it, what can I say? Usually I give the generous explanation that appeals to me: that emboldened by victories over the road-building and genetics industries, there are people around who have the utopian belief that it is possible to stop all carbon emissions at source. If this is the case then I certainly wouldn't want to dismiss or condemn such a commitment out of hand: while idealistic beliefs may seem slightly naive, they also have the potential to keep us vital and rebellious, and without that what have we got? But having said this, the activist culture which surrounds this new movement is not without its problems.

Interesting also is the resourcefulness of certain struggles and communities when they appropriate climate change as an excuse for doing what they were doing anyway. An example of this in the UK is the idea of ‘transition towns’ where people take advantage of the widespread concerns about climate change and peak oil to give legitimacy at a mainstream level to initiatives which would otherwise be marginalised to the ‘alternative community.’ The things they talk about—renewable energy projects, permaculture, local currencies, straw-bale homeopathy clinics—would probably hap-

us, and are quite prepared to do the same with the ecological crisis. It may be our last chance to stop climate change, but is this a future that anyone wants to see?

BUT COME ON—SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!!!!
HOW DO YOU FACE UP TO THE END OF THE WORLD?

“Climate change is the biggest threat facing the world right now, so therefore should be the focus of all our action.”

Such a statement could equally come from an official resolution of the G8 heads of state at one of their summits or from someone who has been outside that summit with the black bloc throwing rocks at cops. The difference is that the politicians who have seized some degree of control over billions of lives may actually be able to have some sort of (albeit superficial) influence in the matter. Those of us at the grassroots are really quite limited in what we can directly do, as challenging climate change from below would require the participation of all the world’s communities. So the “SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!!!!” attitude changes very quickly into “SOMEBODY MUST DO SOMETHING!!!!,” and people tend to look out of desperation to the greater leverage that



in. However, our struggle is more complex than the demand for better material conditions. This does not change the fact that we are also workers under capitalism, it simply means our narrative and direction cannot embrace easy answers to complex questions. To develop class struggle beyond its limits we will locate social war.

As a matter of strategy and rhetoric, some have started using the term “climate justice” in reference to the global ecological crisis. Although this is largely yet another savvy way to gain political attention, it does reflect an important development. It hones in on the social consequences of the global ecological crisis. It gestures to an anti-capitalist ecology as a social struggle, and it is in this gesture that we can extract meaning. Although what begins as an effort to connect to more people is deflected by our own use of activism. What if we can illuminate the inclination to think in terms of the social instead of the political? It is this inclination that entices everyone who chooses petty crime and subcultural identity—who chooses the army as a way out and who chooses religious formations—over a political identity.

We must recognize ourselves as a part of those who will be impacted by the social consequences of global ecological crisis and who already are impacted by capitalism. Only then can we imagine what it would look like to be a part of a social force that is not an expression of a moral impulse, but a need for survival and desire for utopia. What if “climate justice” meant seizing the means of distributing clean water and producing clean water systems in autonomous zones? What if environmental anti-racism meant the liberation and destruction of prisons? This is what will occur when we examine the realities we are attached to but arm them with fantasy.

Political identity and its limited effects have reached their expiration date. What little autonomy we carved out by producing EF! as an activist approach is being taken from us. Whether we call it “climate justice” or whether we relate our notion of we to a philosophy of biocentrism, we are still failing to draw lines that are based in reality. Reality: We will die without clean water, and we will go to prison if we get caught breaking the laws that we are going to break—laws we must break if we are going to survive. Reality: Extinction of most life on the planet includes the ecosystems that we rely on and are intimately attached to. Reality: We are components of capitalist society, which transforms everything into capital including our relationships, desires and self-interests.

We are currently the *we* of our *conditions*; we seek to cultivate a *we* of our *direction*.

The *we* of our conditions is the *we* of a position within a capitalism, but it is also the *we* of the capitalism itself. If we are not the *we* of activism and not merely the *we* of arson, then what use are the communities we associate with? The point is not to denounce our communities, our identities, but to reveal the true power of those communities and identities if they were liberated from the hand of politics. We are alienated, isolated and disempowered when we are no longer at the Summer Rendezvous, the gathering, the potluck. We are weak without a community of support.

However, the weakness, sadness and alienation, are where we spend most of our time and where most of the human population spends its time too.

If we deconstructed our old selves, our old communities, what would we have left? Social relations, customs, rituals? Exploitation at work, structured gender relations, racialized power, reproductive systems of control, so many prisons? Thus, we will not have class struggle as our objective but social war. What if we recognized ourselves as the *we* of our conditions, and then attempted to meet and communicate with others who share similar conditions? What's more, what if we attempted to not merely understand ourselves as a community of capital but to direct our struggle in a way that is intended to make us powerful? This would cause us to inhabit social war—with a clear understanding of our experience as a component of a total system of social relations. Social war can then become both the fruit and the path of an anti-capitalist, ecological social force. Once we've cast off the shell of our political identity, a real *we* will be illuminated. Only then can we talk about rewilding and going feral. It is precisely there—when our *we* is a mirror to the rest of the human population—that such “escapism” becomes a real force.

The only *we* of our direction is made up of those of us who are searching for an Other *we*. It is this Other *we* that makes social war its object, that will appropriate all knowledge from all existing culture and that will also be appropriated by the aesthetics, sciences and social environments produced through culture. The *we* of our direction—an anti-capitalist and ecological direction—becomes powerful when it is attached to realities. Thus, the *we* of our direction is biocentric because it understands itself as inseparable from its conditions. Our anti-capitalist, ecological social force is the union of our need to exist on the Earth as participants in an ecosystem and the desire to edit, transform and play with what being human means.

The *we* of our direction is both a parallel structure, existing within our current conditions, and an adversarial structure that seeks new conditions. Today, one sojourns to Cascadia, to Katúah, to the Sonoran Desert to feel at home, to feel powerful. Tomorrow, we will recognize ourselves in the centers of the cities, as well as in the mountains. The evolution of EF! must traverse these new paths.

Seizing the Means to Produce Existence

If we intend to genuinely change society, we must have space to experiment. It follows that our task is to locate the cracks in capitalism and exploit them—to materialize our social force, both through actions and insurgent gestures, while laying down physical foundations. As the economy begins to melt down, the need for inhabitable

Take a quick glance at all the un-ecological actions that are being done in the name of climate change: forests are cut down and people evicted from their land to make way for carbon-sucking fast-growing monoculture plantations, nuclear power stations are being reconsidered, new efficient cars and aeroplanes are being produced, rivers are dammed, and plans are made for huge geo-engineering works to increase the planetary albedo (the amount of sunlight reflected by the earth) or the amount of ocean algae. All of this makes perfect sense in the number-logic of climate change, but actually makes no sense at all.

Eco-devastation cannot be reduced to a set of numbers—to do this has more to do with preparing climate change's niche in the logic of capitalism than understanding how to minimise the stress our civilisation is placing on the planet's ecosystems. If we accept this ecology-by-numbers then new oppressions such as the seizure of land for new plantations to store carbon begin to seem reasonable, even if only as necessary evils. If monoculture plantations score higher on the green scale than old-growth forests, then it seems that 'thinking globally,' as the old slogan goes, is not going to get us out of this mess.

CAN SUCH AN ALIENATED CONCEPT LEAD TO ANYTHING OTHER THAN DESPAIR OR DISEMPOWERMENT?

“The planet is dying and the only way to save it is if 6 billion people become conscious of what's happening and co-operate, taking action for positive change.”

Well maybe it's what's necessary, but it's not a thought that leaves much to be optimistic about. As one individual amongst the six billion, what are you going to do? *“I guess I'd better go and install those low energy lightbulbs then...”*

Here's a scare story: the Iberian peninsula may well dry up and become an uninhabitable desert due to climate change. How many years left before the apocalypse? Twenty? Fifty? The reality: we don't need to wait so long. Already it is drying up because of intensive water use for intensive agriculture. Forest ecosystems may be changing due to changing climate, but they are also changing because every year property developers go and deliberately burn them down to build a new development of holiday flats or plant a eucalyptus plantation. These threats are far more tangible and immediate than climate change, and a parallel story could be told for any part of the world. Nothing is ever straightforward, but these real, concrete situations that directly affect our lives are much easier to get our heads around and effectively resist. When they are so omnipresent, why look to the distant spectre of climate change to motivate your anger?

Here's an even scarier story: Think for a moment about how and by whom the necessary drastic changes could be brought about to do away with the global oil economy. The easiest to imagine would be some sort of highly authoritarian state or institution, as the more control an organisation has over the population, the quicker it can implement changes. It could obtain popular legitimacy from the resigned belief that it was the only option to prevent crisis. In short—some sort of eco-fascism. States are already creating the global threat of terrorism to increase their stranglehold over

down in peer-reviewed journals; instead they construct a formal, passionless, dead theory of climate change. Even when researching the impacts on people's lives there is nothing personal.

They're all hard at work shaping and honing the climate change concept:

POLITICIAN: *My party has the policies to protect both the climate and the economy!*

CAR COMPANY: *With 40% lower carbon emissions than the average SUV, if you choose our car, you're really doing your bit!*

HIPPY CAPITALIST: *Holiday in a luxury yurt this summer, only £300 a week with free reiki session!*

JOURNALIST: *...which makes it the windiest November since records began. Tune in next time for another thrilling episode of freak weather fortnightly!*

OIL COMPANY #1: *It's all a lie. Global warming will not happen!*

OIL COMPANY #2: *The crisis is upon us. But oil (sorry, energy) companies are the only players who can act quickly enough now. So you're gonna have to trust us.*

The oil burns, the forests burn, the sun shines, the world turns. People eke out a living, institutions consolidate their power. Climate change leaves the atmosphere, the forests and the icecaps behind and becomes twisted and mangled by capitalistic institutions and ends up a creation of their market needs. Our perceptions of it cannot be isolated from their manipulations, and if we use their concept then we run the risk of simply serving their agenda and reproducing their world.

BUT HANG ON A MOMENT! I should point some things out for all those people reading this who can only remember snowfalls from when they were a kid, or whose home was washed away by floods such as have never been seen before. Please don't stop reading. I have to be clear that I'm not trying to claim that the climate isn't changing. I refer to climate change as a myth not because it is false or wrong, but because it is so mediated and modified as to be a fiction. If I point out that capitalistic societies need to create apocalyptic threats, then that is certainly not the same as saying that severe problems don't exist.

Unecological...

If we understand ecology in the way that both academic scientists and traditional societies do, as a set of complex relationships between the components that make up ecological systems then the theory of climate change quickly strays from being an ecological concept... Some concept of ecology remains when trying to model the effects of a changing climate on particular ecosystems, but very soon the globalised nature of the concept requires that everything is made quantifiable: kWh, tons of CO2 emitted, price per ton, mean global temperature rise, \$\$\$\$. Suddenly we have moved from a concern for the unpredictable changes that may occur in ecological systems and their impacts on our societies towards an ethereal and highly alienated apocalyptic paranoia. We are reduced to simply counting the calories.

spaces will grow. We can open up the doors of possibility by literally opening up doors to locked buildings and by producing autonomous territories with ecologically sustainable systems, giving permaculture teeth. When our "nice" projects are recognized more objectively for what they can achieve, we can begin to really understand their power. An Other EF! understands quite clearly why the old EF! Rendezvous occupied national park land: sociality and social war.

An anti-capitalist, ecological social force needs money and resources. We are not yet connected through a network of hook-ups, petty crime and embezzling. We need structures in place that both produce portals into our world and bring in cash. Each issue of the *Journal* needs nearly \$10,000 to go to print and pay expenses. If we intend to keep this as our mouthpiece, then we need to come up with creative and destructive solutions to keep it funded. Moreover, imagine what other tools we could have at our disposal if we had solutions improving both the *Journal's* material conditions and improving ours as well. One of the primary achievements of the radical labor movement at the beginning of the 20th century was its ability to provide an option of survival that allowed its participants to exist in capitalism but also against capitalism. If one was fired due to participation in a strike, one could travel to another node of the union and find work, as well as affective struggle and camaraderie. Similar things can be said about those who eat trash, ride bikes and reuse objects. We need to take seriously our input in EF! projects. They are the deeds and opinions not only of our humble editors nor of the loudest, craziest person at our gatherings. We can produce knowledge and reveal our experiences but only if we appropriate these tools collectively.

With an attention to our senses, a multiplicity of environs may spill out of the containers of our political identities and emerge inside the doors of nonprofits in the West, the free states of the Northwest, the publications of the East and West Coasts, the abandoned epicenters of yesteryear's industry, and the cafés and culture-production factories of today. These are some focal points of social war, and this is where we will begin the process of seizing the means to produce existence.

The wisdom that compelled those who act in the night to leave the single-issue campaign or protest shouldn't go unnoticed. Our social force is not the sum of urgent calls to defend this or that place, or to protest the next big thing. However, this is not to say we would do best to leave such places to those who are still held hostage by politics. An anti-capitalist ecological social force is interested in power. Therefore, we will manifest our force in places where we are powerful and where we have the capacity to achieve our objectives. The old saying, "A losing battle is the only one worth fighting," no longer enchants us. We must point to the burn-out and depression of those who were trying to lose the battle of anti-globalization and to the banality of the current anti-war movement. We will riot when we can destroy everything we wish to. We will blockade when it interrupts capital. We will test our capacity and power without regard to those who say "hurry up" or "slow down." We will do as benefits us.

No Compromise

Those who cheer on the consequences of collapse, those who would foolishly sign peace treaties with pragmatism if it offered a more sustainable entrée, and those who will be the next Julia Butterfly or the next German Green Party², we will politely show to the door. “No compromise” still has meaning.

The future is uncertain. On the one hand, life on Earth and the human species as we know it are already being fundamentally altered and may simply go extinct. On the other hand, life may survive and proceed to an even more terrifying nightmare. Both futures determined by capitalism will result in a world where people must fight one another for access to resources. It sounds so familiar. It is these futures that an anti-capitalist ecological social force will circumvent. Conversely, it is an Other future that our social force will precipitate.

Circumventing Fascism and Destroying Green Capitalism

Green capitalism is the process by which the economy will attempt to reconcile its desire for constant expansion and extraction of resources with the finite ecosystems that all life relies on. At first, as we’ve seen, it will raise a green banner, but in the end it will exclaim, “Long live death!” Green capitalism will not be possible without a fascist element³. Already on the horizon, the *nouveau riche* are getting organized. Many are developing for themselves eco-mansions—ones that look, smell and feel like plantations. Neoliberalism is the *corporativismo* preceding this, putting into place a diffuse global state that is no longer the main actor in producing culture and controlling the economy⁴. It is no coincidence that many clean water reservoirs are now owned by Coca-Cola and Pepsi, following the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The transfer of all access to life-support resources to the rich and the inability of a significant portion of society to survive without capitalism has been set in motion. There are more prisoners than

² The German Green Party, although coming out of the anti-nuke and anti-war movements of the 1970s and 1980s, has aligned itself with the extreme right, and actively suppresses radical ecological discourse. As the governing party in 1990s and 2000s, it deployed troops in defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization programs it was created to stop.

³ Fascism is often the shock-troop of capitalism. When there is a crisis that causes instability in the social order, fascism will be instated. Because it already exists within certain confines of the state, such as the military, it will have more ease in its re-emergence into popular support. The Minutemen were considered public enemy number one only a decade ago, when the state was ridding itself of the militia movement. Why now, are they lawfully deputized? And what will the green-shirts look like? Who will they be in a decade?

⁴ Corporativismo (Corporatism) was the economic structure put into place to reorganize Italy’s economy when Mussolini came to power. The corporation is a model to “incorporate” all interests into, superceding both private individuals and public interests. The corporate structure in fascist Italy was used to maintain a capitalist system by expanding the power and definition of the state to include everything. Contemporary neoliberalism maintains the state but expands capitalism to include everything.

panic of a coming apocalypse may not really be the most interesting direction in which to move.

Don’t believe the scientists!

The way climate change is sold to us is a myth, like so much of the modern world. At the very least, it is a concept that has been developed so entirely within the paradigm of capitalist science that outside of this it makes no sense. It is useful to remember this before getting too worked up about it.

Climate change starts life as a scientific theory, but is accepted by many who would in other moments be highly critical of science. Science is not ‘pure’ or ‘objective’. It is subjective and profit driven. It needs results and the more dramatic they are the more funding will become available to the research teams, the more prestige to the individual researchers. And the more urgent and imperative the climate change problem is made to seem, the more money flows in. Individual scientists are surely sincere in their desire to make a difference, that’s why they went into climate not biotech. But nevertheless they are subject to market pressure: they translate their findings into climatic apocalypse to persuade others to act but also to ensure the importance of their work is fully realised and remunerated.

These same arguments may be used by oil companies and others with an anti-ecological agenda, but they use them because they know they ring true in the popular consciousness.

It’s not just scientists: there must be millions of people making a tidy sum out of the climate change panic wave: politicians, consultants, carbon traders, ad execs, journalists, ‘green’ businesses and NGOs. Millenarian paranoia, like any other engineered fear, creates growth opportunities. Look how many billions were made out of persuading the world that their computers needed to be ‘millennium compliant’. All these people, professional, well-paid, defining for us what is climate change. Whether well-intentioned or not, they are all tied to their respective institutions, and must act according to the role of these institutions within capitalism.

NGOs, for example, market fear. It is their product. The more people worried and distressed by the threat of climate change, the more money flows into Greenpeace’s bank accounts. Their job is to hype the crisis, big up the apocalypse, and then reassure the public that our future is best left in their hands. As an antidote to fear they sell hope, the belief that a solution is possible. They choose words carefully when marketing climate change to us. “*Last chance*” sells better than “*no chance at all.*”

This is distinct from the role of the scientists who try to be impartial observers, unaffected by their research and not affecting it either. They write reports in the passive voice to remove themselves from the equation. Uncertainty is acknowledged, but veiled so as not to detract from the authority of the text. Emotions have no place and this warps the story somewhat. Maybe sometime a researcher cried over the destruction they witnessed through their work, maybe what they saw made them so angry they went out at night and put a spanner in the works. But none of this is written

**YOU
ARE
NOW
FUCKED**

The end is nigh.

No longer the sandwich-board slogan of the local eccentric, climate change has brought the apocalypse into the mainstream. It may not be directly impinging on our lives just yet, but don't be fooled, it is just around the corner and it's coming to get us. All of us.

But do we need an apocalypse to shock us into action? Is the world not in a bad enough state anyway? What if burning oil didn't damage the climate? It would still pollute the oceans, provoke resource wars, create wealth and poverty, fuel automobiles, chainsaws and tanks, be the raw material for plastic bags and Barbie dolls. If cutting down forests didn't reduce the planet's ability to store carbon, it would still cause the extinction of species, the eviction of forest peoples and extinguish the pleasure that the rest of us have of being in a green and healthy environment. So why all the fuss about climate change? Yeah, OK it is a big deal. But the world-view which fixates on climate change as the big issue is certainly incomplete, and at worst blatantly dishonest. If it is to be the basis for action, then the agenda of climate change should be critically examined, as fomenting

farmers in the US; there is more production of culture than food. Green capitalism will be complete when we are neutralized and the first car that runs on salt water is sold. It is our task to make this impossible.

We are still capitalism's most important infrastructure. While it is true that massive self-reductions of consumption have contributed to destabilizing and precipitating a crisis in the economy, it also true that our deeds have little meaning without a social context. To cause a crisis in green capitalism, a significant portion of the culture-producing population must refuse to be a market demographic but also work to undermine the influence of green production. This means producing memes—contagious ideas based in a shared experience—against green capitalism.

But it also means stealing products and destroying green capitalist manifestations—for example, looting Whole Foods or destroying hybrid cars. It means developing techniques such as fare-dodging, shoplifting, seed-sharing and collectivizing survival practices in the workplace, as well as smashing the false harmony of current green techniques by illuminating the fractures within green sciences and green design. These acts may seem fantastical in the present, but the crises already in progress are producing the conditions where people will very soon think in more elaborate terms about their material conditions. Because there are already mechanisms at play that provide fertile ground for pro-capitalist and pro-fascist political programs, it is important that an anti-capitalist ecological social force articulate itself in rhythm with such changes.

It has been noted before that conflicts at and because of borders should beckon our unwinking eyes (see EF!J September-October 2006). Considering capitalism's tendency toward fascism, this is an important site of conflict. The Minutemen point to an already existing discourse within our society—one that is framed in ecological terms. If we can prove the meaninglessness of borders, then we can reduce their appeal to those who have made the mistake of viewing the geography of the Earth through nation-states. Moreover, we can undermine the next fascism's use of borders and anti-immigration as selling points, and constitute our anti-capitalist ecological social force as concretely anti-fascist.

Because of the existing distribution of resources and production of knowledge, food and water will be the most contested, followed by social spaces and inhabitations. Many within EF!J have accumulated some very helpful special knowledge. However, this is usually used for accumulating capital, maintaining a nonprofit status or impressing friends. This knowledge must be liberated from its current form. An anti-capitalist, ecological social force will have the means to produce knowledge, and it will seize ways of distribution. In our workplaces, in our subcultures, in our many environs, we should produce and share this knowledge. We need our day laborers and our baristas to be connected with our beet-harvesters and Conservation Corps workers in a circuit of information.

The Anti-Capitalist Ecological Social Force Becomes Material

To become powerful, we need to locate in that circuit a kernel capable of seizing and maintaining space. Revolt is not a military operation but a social affair. However, this does not negate the very real necessity that space plays. We need social spaces, places for us to get organized, places that can sustain life, places worth calling home. In the metropolis and in the mountains, in the small towns and in the desert, we will produce a village within the city and a city without walls. We need material structures and thread to weave them together. The material structures will, at first, be social centers, radical neighborhoods, appropriated land, but will transform into autonomous rebel communities, archipelagos of revolt, and experiments in food and water acquisition that develop beyond organic farms and water conservation. The thread to weave them together will be our capacity to cultivate portals of communication that say, “We need this, do you?” in rhythm with our material and existential conditions that have been only recorded so far over beer or coffee, or in blogs and journals. As we grow more powerful these portals will become faultlines on a planetary scale—connecting us to older worlds and ones yet to exist.

With ink and dagger, curse and irony, cheer and uncertainty, we will continue to walk and converse—breaking bread, asking questions, making love, growing old, and contributing to the overall creation and reproduction of life on the planet. We are always seduced into walking; it’s the fabric of our creative urge, the thumping of our hearts, that directs us to accelerate, to become robust and networked. It is likely that no matter what happens, we will continue to experiment with living.

The constitution of EF! as an anti-capitalist ecological social force is a matter of the magical tendencies that link all humans as social critters. But furthermore, it is a matter of our new desire, liberated from politics and put into motion as social war. Social forces will destroy capitalism and deindustrialize the planet, but we will not stop there. Let our stories intoxicate us with a profound meaning. Let us seize the means to produce existence. Let us usher into being an age of uncertainty, leaving behind the old world and opening up the doors to all possibilities. We want bread, blood and roses too.

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