

SQUALL

radical quality journalism

may / june 2000

- Cannabis
- Wierd weather
- Exodus
- Anti-capitalism



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DIGGING AT ROOTS OF CAPITALISM

With a samba band pounding tight beats, a mobile maypole was erected outside the Houses of Parliament as Guerilla gardeners greened up Parliament Square on Mayday. It was the biggest Reclaim the Streets inspired event ever as thousands of anti-capitalist activists poured into central London and got busy with their sacks of compost, trowels, seeds and plants under an obliging sun. LET LONDON SPROUT said one banner. THE WORM'S TURN said another.

Although police had soaked the square with water the night before, it only made the turf easier to lift and relay on the road. The freshly exposed soil was then planted up with a variety of herbacious borders. and water features. The brand new Indymedia UK team set up a tent and activists filed their stories to www.indymedia.org.uk.

Up in Trafalgar Square thousands more gathered and a fracas kicked off with the

riot police during which a McDonald's was thoroughly disgorged. As the riot cops appeared, a trumpeter struck up the theme from 'Star Wars'. Every time they attacked the trumpeter played 'God Save The Queen' before the police hit him in the face with his instrument and then confiscated it.

At around 4pm more riot police began blocking the exit roads from Parliament Square and it became apparent that the same tactic, used to corral protestors on Euston Concourse for four and half hours last November, was being deployed again. Namely that protestors are sealed in, held for a long period of time before being individually processed and photographed. However, with the samba band thumping a tight battucada, the crowd stuck together, broke through police lines and were free.

Those in Trafalgar Square were less fortunate and were individually processed after along wait.

THE STATE IT'S IN

*A view over the UK
from SQUALL central*



Ian Hunter

SMOKE SIGNALS – Pot debate comes to the boil

What a breath of fresh air it was when Alex Salmond, head of the Scottish Nationalist Party, stirred the political stagnancy last year when asked by an interviewer whether he'd ever smoked Cannabis. "Yes," he replied. "But I never exhaled."

Until recently, truthful or even topically humourful comment about drugs has been an endangered species on the political circuit. Besides the odd wry comment from the likes of Salmond, very few politicians have been prepared to utter what the majority refuse to publicly acknowledge; that the UK's tortuously out of touch drug policy is both fallacious and entirely unsuccessful.

The only air circulating amidst this parliamentary stagnancy has been from Paul Flynn,

the Labour MP for Newport West, an ardent campaigner for the legalisation of Cannabis and a wider overhaul of the drug policy. Evidently more interested in public health than in career promotion (a rare creature in political circles!), Flynn is to present a private members bill before parliament later this year advocating a radical overhaul of the UK's national drug policy. It has little chance of reaching the statute books without government support, but there's no stopping Flynn's efforts to provoke a more relevant debate. In March he announced he would ask British MPs to support the licensing of Amsterdam style cafes where users can buy and smoke their joints legally.

His familiarity with the issue Europe-wide has led to his selection as a rapporteur to the

Council of Europe's Social Policy and Health Committee which is currently examining drug policy in the two European countries it considers to have the most "repressive" drug policies, the UK and Switzerland.

There's little doubt that Flynn stands out a mile from the rest of his cowering colleagues who shy in the shadows fearful of the kind of management reprimand which has imprisoned the tongues of intelligent political voices for years.

Until recently this dearth of decent debate has been punctuated only by the odd medical expert or senior police officer who, frustrated by the obvious lack of policy success, have stepped out of line to advocate a different approach to the zero tolerance policy inherited and championed by Uncle Jack Straw and Labour's lackey drugs czar, Keith Hellawell.

And yet seventy six per cent of those imprisoned for drug offences in the UK are incarcerated for Cannabis offences, and according to a recent Europe-wide survey, more people smoke Cannabis in the UK than anywhere else in Europe. So there was little doubt that the pot debate definitely needed a stir and at the end of March it finally got one.

Two years ago, the Police Foundation appointed an eleven strong team of high-level academics and social professionals to conduct an independent inquiry into certain aspects of UK drug policy.

The committee - part sponsored by the Princes Trust - included a chief constable, an assistant chief constable, a barrister, a headmistress and four professors in Neuropharmacology, Moral Philosophy,

Economics and Social Work. Their lengthy investigation included a visit to Amsterdam, a European city much maligned by right-wing hysterics but one which boasts an impressive record on dealing with hard drug abuse. Committee member John Hamilton, Chief Constable of Fife, described Amsterdam as having a "relaxed and unthreatening atmosphere". You might imagine he'd wish the same of Fife.

When General Barry McCaffrey, the current US drugs czar, castigated Holland for the social consequences of its liberal drug policy, the Dutch responded by publishing a series of comparative statistics on their US embassy website. In every one of them, from incidence of drug use in minors to murders related to drug offences, the Dutch fared far better than the US.

McCaffrey muttered a retraction of his accusation when pressed on the subject during a press conference he conducted on a recent UK visit but in the midst of our painfully muted public debate, his retraction went entirely unreported in the mainstream press.

At long last however, the Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 published its media splashed report on March 28 2000 and prized the gag from the mouth of the debate.

The Inquiry concentrated specifically on the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and therefore did not take in all aspects of drug policy. But its recommendations include significant shifts in the legal classification of drugs, the wider implications of which will prove difficult for the Home Office to ignore.

According to the committee's chairperson, Viscountess Runciman: "We have concluded

that the most dangerous message of all is the message that all drugs are equally dangerous. When young people know that the advice they are being given is either exaggerated or untrue in relation to less harmful drugs, there is a real risk they will discount everything else they are told."

In response, the report recommends that drugs should be legally reclassified in order to reflect their social impact. That Ecstasy and LSD are not as harmful as Crack and Heroin and therefore should be relegated to Class B status rather than class A. And that Cannabis should be reduced to a Class C drug, with police officer's directed to only fine or caution those found in possession.

The provocative nature of the committee's recommendations compounded a similarly radical report published recently by Cleveland Police. Backed by Cleveland's Chief Constable, Barry Shaw, the report notes: "There is overwhelming evidence to show that the prohibition-based policy in place in this country since 1971 has not been effective in controlling the availability of, or use of, proscribed drugs. If there is indeed a 'war on drugs' it is not being won; drugs are demonstrably cheaper and more easily available than ever before. If prohibition does not work, then either the consequences of this have to be accepted or an alternative approach must be found. The most obvious alternative approach is the legalisation and subsequent regulation of some or all drugs."

However, in the first few days after the publication of the Inquiry report, the Home Office issued flat rejections of its recommendations and chose to ignore altogether the strong suggestions put forward by Cleveland Police.

But then something unusual happened in the land of Britain; something which Jack Straw's playsafe to the grey galleries could not ignore. The media supported the Inquiry's recommendations to an extent hitherto unwitnessed in the UK. Unbelievable though it may seem, the official newspaper of the right wing old boy network, the Daily Telegraph, published an editorial headlined "An experiment with Cannabis" which called.... wait for it.... for cannabis to be legalised!

"People like substances that alter their mood," its editorial observed. "And only strict puritans believe that they should never use any of them. A cup of coffee, a glass of wine or beer, even the odd cigarette are among the legitimate pleasures of life. Are drugs fundamentally different?..... The government should draw up plans to legalise cannabis - generally accepted as the least dangerous of the drugs that are widely used - both for its consumption and for its supply."

The Police Review was equally emphatic: "The sizeable community who use soft drugs recreationally..... want a change in the law which reflects what is already happening at social gatherings, small and large, every night of the week. It is dismal that this reality, reflected in the report, carries no weight with the government and its disappointing drugs czar, who..... appears to be performing a huge U-turn on the more enlightened approach he adopted as a senior police officer."

When the Daily Mail joined both the Telegraph and the Police Review in proposing a wider debate, Jack Straw was left like a beached whale. The following day he admitted for the first time publicly that there was, after all, a "coherent argument" in favour of the legalisation of cannabis. However, without explanation or further discussion. he is still

electing not to agree with the argument, however coherent or well informed.

Nevertheless, the fact that the traditional right wing media are criticising the government's misplaced puritanism on drugs is a sea-change indeed. Jack Straw, who once ran for student union presidency with the laughable election slogan "Not respectable but respected", looks increasingly isolated from the very media he's been pandering to in a fervent quest to be indistinguishable from his Tory predecessors.

And what's more his attitude seems to rub off on anyone associated with him. Take the very disappointing drug czar, Keith Hellawell. As a chief constable back in 1994 he observed: "The present policies are not working. We seize more drugs, we arrest more people but when you look at the availability of drugs, the use of drugs, the crime committed because of and through people who use drugs, the violence associated with drugs, it's on the increase. It can't be working."

These days, however, he draws a salary greater than the prime minister's and paid for by all of us, and what we get for our money is a man who is prepared to belie his own experience in order to play along with Straw's pitiful ministry. Neither respectable nor respected. And certainly not by his fellow MP, Paul Flynn, whose humourfully astute website at <http://www.paulflynnmp.co.uk> makes clear what he thinks of his party colleague at the Home Office:

"My spy in the Home Office has revealed the truth of Jack Straw's agonising over Pinochet.

'He tortured thousands, Home Secretary,' his advisers told him. 'Serious stuff.' said Jack. 'But he's an old man and it was a long time ago.'

They said, 'He killed hundreds of thousands of people.' 'Nobody's perfect.' said Jack. 'In government you have to take some hard decisions.'

The advisers played their ace. 'We think that here in Britain he took some medicinal cannabis for his back pain'

'That's dreadful,' screamed Jack. 'Pack him off to a Spanish dungeon.'"



Squanagrams

**rearranging
'Keith Hellawell'
gives:**

**like hell the law
he" ill the weak
he'll kill the awe**



PARK PEPPERED WITH SERGEANTS AS 'TERROR' HITS ISLINGTON

An eclectic mix of activists including Bruce Kent, Mark Tomas, Billy Bragg, Rob Newman, Joe Bod and a multitude of others gathered at Highbury Fields in London on April 30 to register their protest against the upcoming Terrorism Bill. Encouraged to represent the wide diversity of people who may be included in the new definitions of terrorism, activists dressed up for a photo-call reminiscent of the Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band album cover. The gathering took place on a weekend

of profuse anti-capitalist activity which has seen a weekend conference, numerous actions, musical events and the big Guerilla Gardening action on May 1. Police swarmed every one of the events and expended a lot of film.

Activists pictured above at Highbury fields chanted "We all live in a failed democracy" to the tune of Yellow Submarine before dispersing to prepare for Mayday's naughtyculture event.

For a full analysis of the Trrorism Bill check Raising Terror, Squall download no. 2

NESTLE SPOONFEED MAKES CAMPAIGNERS SICK

Child care conference accepts Nestlé sponsorship

A big childcare conference partly sponsored by the Department for Education and Employment has accepted sponsorship from Nestlé.

The Childcare Revolution 2000 conference in London on the March 9 & 10 will be addressed by Margeret Hodge MP, Minister of Employment and Equal Opportunities, Harriet Harman MP and Labour's fave black broadcaster, Trevor Phillips. Campaigners are up in arms over the insensitivity of allowing Nestlé, who are widely criticised for their powdered milk marketing strategies in the third world, to put its logo on publicity material purporting to point the way ahead for a better approach to the care of children.

Marketing Week recently referred to a damning Advertising Standards Authority ruling against Nestlé, as a "a first-class public relations disaster... which effectively brands the global corporation a liar, insofar as it claimed to have marketed infant formula products ethically."

Nestlé spend over \$7 billion each year on the worldwide marketing of its brand name and products.

For info on Nestlé and all its works check Baby Milk Action at www.gn.apc.org/babmilk and the Mark Thomas Comedy Product at http://www.channel4.com/mark_thomas/intro.html

COLONEL SMACK TO BE BANGED UP?

US army colonel admits to involvement in heroin smuggling from Columbia

A US army colonel formerly in charge of running the US military's operations in Columbia faces only three years in jail after admitting that he covered up his wife's heroin and smuggling and money laundering activities.

Colonel James Hiett who played a key role in trying to bank the profits from the operations is expected to plead guilty in a federal court in New York on April 17. Prior to his admission the US army criminal investigation division had cleared Colonel Hiett of any knowledge or involvement in his

wife's activities.

The latest admission follows previous revelations of CIA involvement in cocaine smuggling out of Colombia and is likely to prove highly embarrassing to the US government who have recently approved a \$1.6 billion aid package to Colombia. Officially the money is designed to help the Colombian government fight the drugs trade but it is widely acknowledged by Human Rights groups as being a move to help the Colombian government fight left wing guerillas in the country. **See page 13.**

PILGRIMS PROGRESS CANCELLED

Christians lose out to Oxford Street shoppers

A Christian pilgrimage which has taken place annually for the last 100 years is to end after this year because its passage along Oxford Street disrupts shopping. The Tyburn pilgrimage began in 1909 and commemorates 105 Christians hung drawn and quartered during the 16th and 17th century.

Oxford Street shop owners have consistently complained that the pilgrimage causes disruption to customers and affects their days profits.

The two mile walk begins at the Old Bailey (the former site of Newgate Prison) and passes along Oxford Street (once known as Tyburn Lane) before finishing at Tyburn Convent at Marble Arch in London where bones, bloodstained clothing and some of the hair of the martyrs are kept.

A Met Police Spokesperson acknowledged that this years pilgrimage would go ahead but said they had been informed it would be the last.

Mother John Baptist, a 77 year old nun at Tyburn Convent, said: "It is dreadful news. It is very startling. I don't know what we can do. We will just have to see how powerful our prayers are."

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Information



Explorer

KOWTOWING TO THE CHINESE

Foreign Office instructed police to go heavy pro-Tibet protestors

Heavy handed policing during the visit of China's premier, Jiang Zemin, late last year resulted from Foreign Office instructions suggests a new Scotland Yard report handed into the Home Office in early March 2000.

The report handed into the Home Office in early March 2000 calls for all minutes of meetings between police and Foreign Office officials to be minuted and is widely acknowledged as a thinly veiled criticism of the Foreign Office's attempt to distance themselves from the draconian policing strategies for Zemin's visit.

As the notoriously sensitive Chinese premier paraded through London and Cambridge last year, large numbers of pro-Tibetan flags and banners were confiscated and protestors were masked from Zemin's sight by strategically positioned police vans. "There were countless incidents of our supporters having flags and banners confiscated or being blocked from Jiang's gaze by police vans being parked in the way. It was more like being in China than in Britain." A small minority of people carrying

Chinese flags, on the other hand, remained unaccosted. In the civil liberty outcry which ensued, the Foreign Office categorically denied it had instructed the Met Police to wield a heavy hand, despite acknowledging they had conducted eight meetings with police about the visit. "Human rights demonstrators were allowed to make their point in the context of the police doing the best they could," said Foreign Office minister, John Battle. "They [the police] were not under any special instructions at all."

However, the Metropolitan Police are fuming over the way they were fingered for blame by a Foreign Office hell bent on not upsetting the Chinese or being held responsible for suppressing its own citizen's right to protest. The Free Tibet Campaign has decided to sue the Metropolitan Police for their illegal handling of the protests. The first court case is due in May 2000.

More info on SQUALL website features section and from the Free Tibet Campaign at <http://www.freetibet.org>

The letter below was received by the McLibel Campaign offices in London at the end of April.

For the Attention of the McLibel Support Campaign,

Thank your for your fax from about a year ago. I am sorry to take so damn long to reply. If you saw how much mail I get you would, hopefully, understand.

How did the appeal go or is it still being dragged out like the court case was. Unfortunately, I can't offer any financial help at the moment because I'm under corporate attack myself... As you may or may not have heard the former members of my old band, Dead Kennedy's, are now suing the shit out of

me because I would not let them put our song, "Holiday in Cambodia" in a Levi's commercial.

They're claiming I ripped them off on royalties but that isn't true. They're just greedy and out for revenge. I can't believe they've tured into people as low as this. So if anyone wonders what's going on in this area, please spread the word.

Meanwhile, best of luck to you, Helen and Dave and the supporting crew. Burn an effigy of Ronald for me. As the millenium dome melts.

Jello Biafra

BAD SCIENCE DISEASE

Government scientific advisers riddled with corporate connections

A scientist with connections to a leading organophosphate (OP) producer, has been appointed to the 'independent' committee responsible for advising ministers on the safety of veterinary medicines.

Dr David Ray, of the Medical Research Council has been appointed to the Veterinary Products Committee (VPC), a quango populated by academics and farmers, whose job is to scrutinise the safety of animal medicines before licences are issued.

In 1995 Ray conducted research that discredited a theory, put forward by Somerset farmer, Mark Purdey, which linked BSE in cattle to the organophosphate phosmet. Ray's MRC Toxicology unit was, at the time, receiving funding from Zeneca, the makers of phosmet.

Joanna Wheatly, an organic dairy farmer who has campaigned against 'intellectual corruption' in the licensing of agricultural pesticides, said she was "appalled" by the appointment. She compared the difficulties faced by farmers campaigning against OP poisoning to those of Gulf War veterans. "We're trapped in an incestuous situation," she said.

Ray claims the interests he has with pesticide producers will not affect his judgement on the VPC. He admitted that Astra (now merged with Zeneca) still fund a research post in his unit, as do the pharmaceutical giant, Bayer. "There are two ways to get bad pesticides off the market, ban them, or get the companies to develop better pesticides," he said in justification of his industry links. When asked what other interests he has, Ray told SQUALL to check his declarations in the VPC Annual Report (he was formerly a member of the committee's Appraisal Panel for Human Suspected Adverse Reactions). He is listed as having no industry interests.

The VPC have an additional roll of monitoring suspected adverse reactions (to the chemicals they have approved), which, according to Wheatley, makes the committee both "judge and jury". "They're hardly likely to condemn a product, they themselves declared safe, as dangerous," she said.

The VPC's code of conduct says it's desirable

that members have "an understanding" and "practical experience" of the pharmaceutical industry. Food Safety Minister Baroness Hayman, is reported to have told the committee that she recognised the need for 'experts' with links to industry. Less than a quarter of VPC members have no declared financial interest to the pharmaceutical industry. Professor Karl Linklater holds 16 commercial consultancies with pharmaceutical producers including Intervet, Novartis, Roche and Shering-Plough. (When approached about their funding sources, the Scottish Agricultural College - of whom Linklater is Principal and Chief Executive - refused to co-operate, citing 'commercial confidentiality'). Pfizer have two consultants on the committee as do Grampian Pharmaceuticals.

Hoechst, SmithKline Beecham, the Wellcome Trust and Merck, are all represented in the declarations of interests of VPC members. A similar picture is painted by the declarations of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) who advise the government on CJD and BSE, and the other committees set up under the Medicines Act to ensure pharmaceutical safety.

Richard Young of the Soil Association said: "The VPC remit is to promote the use of veterinary medicines. In reality we should be trying to use as little, not as much, as possible."

According to Young, the Thatcher government withdrew state funding for research into medicines that were nearing a marketable state. Leaving only industry funded research or no research at all. "There are very few academics who aren't in some way beholden to industry," he said.

- During the 1980's, when the academic/ industry grip was weaker, a VPC sub-committee (JCAMS) attempted to scrutinise the merit of antibiotic livestock feed additives. When hindered by the VPC the committee's chair, James Howie, wrote to the then MAFF Minister, Peter Walker, who immediately disbanded the committee.

CANCER SPRAY

Seattle tear gas found to contain carcinogen.

Seattle Police responsible for beating, gassing and incarcerating demonstrators opposing the World Trade Organisation Ministerial conference in November have admitted using a cancer causing chemical against the peaceful protesters.

Seattle Police Department 'Material Safety Data Sheets', recently obtained by the Washington Toxins Coalition under the US Public Disclosure Act (the equivalent of the Freedom of Information Act we haven't got), reported that the tear gas used during the week of November 28 1999, was mixed half and half with the solvent methylene chloride.

Methylene chloride, used industrially in paint stripper, is classified as a Category 1 carcinogen by the UK Health and Safety Commission. The American National Library of Medicine's Toxnet website lists symptoms of exposure to the chemical as: "Lethargy, mental confusion, headache, tingling of the limbs, acoustical and optical delusions, liver and kidney damage, increase risk of spontaneous abortion, coma and death."

Russell Sparks, a student from Bellingham, Washington who was tear gassed on December 1 told SQUALL: "I felt like I was on fire. A middle aged man near me passed out, eyes open, shaking, dry heaving, twitching at the shoulders. I tried to help but my eyes were burning."

Article Two of the Chemical Weapons Convention specifically excludes chemicals used in domestic situations, making it legal for governments to chemically quell riots as

they see fit.

A Seattle Police spokesman told SQUALL that aside from their handguns, "all the weapons carried by the police are non lethal". Further comment has been suspended until completion of an internal review of the week's operations.

Leon Eski who traveled from Sussex to oppose the WTO, said: "I was gassed and sprayed at least four times totally unprovoked. After I got home I was short of breath for a week or more, experienced pains in my kidneys and developed mouth ulcers."

Dr Ray Jones, an Open University toxicologist, said: "Methylene chloride will go through the skin quickly and into the blood stream. It is very soluble in fat. Many carcinogens don't take effect for ten, twenty or thirty years, by which time it would be impossible to trace the cause." Jones added that the body would metabolise the chemical into formaldehyde - an even more toxic category three carcinogen. "Spraying methylene chloride onto someone is very irresponsible," he said.

Def-Tec, the Wyoming based company which produced many of the chemical weapons used in Seattle, denied its products had any safety problems.

The Seattle Police Department (SPD) received serious criticism over its handling of the protests. Residents of the city's Capitol Hill district complained of gas choking them in their homes. One woman was reported to have miscarried her baby, and SPD Chief Norm Stamper resigned.

U'WA TWO TELL OF GORE'S OXY MORONS

Two of Columbia's threatened U'wa indians visit UK to highlight US-backed destruction

Two members of Colombia's U'wa tribe, who are perhaps best known for their threat to commit suicide if Occidental Oil carve up their indigenous lands, are to visit the UK in April as part of a wider US and European tour. Their struggle has gathered global attention recently partly due to international days of action against Occidental's biggest investor, Fidelity (US).

The U'wa, a native Colombian tribe, are engaged in a tense standoff with US based Occidental Petroleum (Oxy) over the drilling of the Gibraltar 1 oil well. The U'wa, a deeply spiritual people who believe that oil is the "blood of Mother Earth", have repeatedly stated that they "are willing to die" to keep oil drilling off of their ancestral lands.

More than 2,500 local farmers, union members, and students have joined thousands of U'wa and other indigenous peoples in non-violent blockades and protests near the well site to stop Oxy's project.

The heavy military presence around the oil project has already led to violence against peaceful indigenous peoples. In the last month, many have been injured and at least three have died. The situation remains very tense and is exacerbated by a civil war in Colombia between left wing guerrilla's and right wing militia's backed by the Colombian Army.

The US government have just sanctioned £1.6 billion worth of military training and hardware for the Colombian military and the British army is helping train their soldiers. The US say the aid is designed to help fight the cocaine trade but it is widely acknowledged it will be used to fight left wing guerillas. Both the US and the Colombian military claim that one left wing guerrilla force (FARC) are benefiting

financially from the Colombian cocaine trade in regions they control. However, Human Rights groups say that the right wing militia's are far more involved in the cocaine trade than FARC and that these militia's receive direct support from the Colombian military. The American money they argue is another example of the US meddling in Latin American affairs in order to keep left wing forces out of the political picture.

The U'wa say this civil war often rages around power installations and that the oil drilling on its traditional lands will attract violence and destruction to their area.

Adding to the complexity of the situation, US vice president, Al Gore, has enjoyed a corporate sponsorship of Oxy throughout his political career. He controls up to \$500,000 of Oxy stocks and has received \$20,000 a year for almost 30 years from reserving mining rights on land which he owns. An option Oxy have never taken up. Gore's father made a great deal of his wealth while working for Oxy and its ex-chairman, Armand Hammer. Gore Sr. sat on the Board of Oxy for twenty-eight years. Since Gore was elected Vice President, Oxy Chairman Ray Irani has given more than \$400,000 to the Democratic Party. Furthermore, Gore's "reinventing government" initiative resulted in the sale of the Elk Hills Naval Petroleum Reserve to Occidental in 1998. The unprecedented closed bidding process was the largest privatization of federal property in U.S. history, one that tripled Occidental's U.S. oil reserves overnight.

For information on the U'wa and the complex shenanigans which threaten their lives, land and traditions check:
www.ran.org and www.amazonwatch.org

VATICANCER RADIO

Vatican attempts to thwart cancer investigation

The Vatican is refusing to entertain an official investigation into the possibility that its communications transmitters are causing cancer. Italian doctors examined 7,500 deaths over six years in Cesano, the northern suburb of Rome where a cluster of Vatican radio transmitters broadcasts to the world. The official investigation was ordered after the study revealed the incidence of tumours to be 30 per cent higher than the national average.

However, official paperwork sent to Vatican representatives by the investigating magistrates was returned on the grounds that the Vatican's extra-territorial status renders it immune from judicial prosecution.

Concerns over the health affects of electromagnetic radiation have reverberated for years but have never been firmly proven or disproven. A recent report commissioned from

12 "independent experts" in the UK concluded that mobile phone masts were no cause for health concern. However, scepticism remains after the inquiry's conclusion were announced at the same time as the UK government trumpeted the £22 billion its made from auctioning off mobile phone licences in the the UK.

Despite concluding there was no harm from mobile masts, the Stewart Inquiry still recommended that emissions from the UK's 20,000 masts should be brought down to the European standard and that the tens of thousands of new masts should not be cited near schools.

Meanwhile in Italy, the investigating magistrates have approached their Foreign ministry so that some deal with the Vatican can be negotiated which will allow their investigation to go ahead.

WOE ZONE

Large hole detected in ozone layer

An international group of scientists measuring the earth's Ozone layer have recorded a two third decrease in the earth's Ozone layer over the Arctic.

Attributed to the consequences of man made pollution, the losses mean that the Ozone layer over Europe - which protects the earth from the sun's ultraviolet radiation - will be thinner over the next few weeks leading to more of the kind of global warming which has been breaking up both Arctic and Antarctic ice shelves.

The most dramatic ozone depletion occurs over the Antarctic, where British scientists observed a hole the size of the US and as deep as Everest in 1985. The latest ozone depletions come as a result of man made pollution nearly forty years ago and is sounding alarm bells for the future. For a thorough investigation into global warming check 'Gaia's Slap' on page 20.

• **One of the largest** icebergs ever recorded has broken away from the Ross Ice Shelf in Antarctica. The iceberg is over 183 miles long and 22 miles wide, covering an area the size of East Anglia. It is the latest Antarctic breakaway thought of be occurring because of global warming.

• **Another British meteorological record** was smashed in April when over 136mm of rain fell across England and Wales, the most precipitation for this month since records began. It is the 62nd major meteorological record to be broken over the last twenty years and a further measure of climactic changes brought about by global warming. At the time SQUALL DOWNLOAD went to press the Met Office had only released rainfall figures up to April 27th, but the breaking 136mm which had fallen to that date soars above the 62mm rainfall average for April.

NO COMFORT FOR CAMBRIDGE TWO

***Two social workers still in jail for not 'grassing up' their homeless clients to the police.
Photo: Richie Andrew***



Campaigners gathered in London on March 25, 2000 demanding justice for two social workers jailed in 1999 for incredible reasons.

Ruth Wyner and John Brock, now known as the 'Cambridge Two', were sentenced for five and four years respectively under Section 8 of the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act for "knowingly allowing" the sale of drugs on the premises of the Wintercomfort homeless drop-in centre in Cambridge. Wyner, a 49-year-old mother of two was the director of the centre and Brock, a 49-year-old father of two, was Wintercomfort's manager.

They were arrested after a five-month police surveillance operation which eventually resulted in the conviction of eight drug dealers. The judge ruled that as those responsible for the running of the drop-in centre, Wyner and Brock had failed to do all in their powers to stop the use of drugs on the premises, although it was accepted that the extent of the dealing was not known by anyone - including Wyner and Brock - until the completion of an extensive undercover police operation which included hidden CCTV cameras. The judge further accepted that the two social workers had taken no part in the drug dealing but gave them large sentences because in his words they were "unwilling to use any reasonable means that were readily available... to prevent the prohibited activity."

During the trial Wyner and Brock told the judge that breaking confidentiality agreements

with homeless clients and passing on information to the police would go against their remit and even put themselves at risk from reprisal attacks. To add insult to injury, Ruth Wyner has now been asked to provide her expertise in the social care system of the prison in which she is incarcerated. Her new prison job requires client confidentiality and in effect repeats the work that got her locked up in the first place.

The precedent set by the Cambridge Two's convictions have wide implications, with any charity worker involved in caring for the homeless and countering drug abuse - ie doing their job - is now at risk.

- **For more info, check the specially dedicated website at www.cambridge-two.com.**
- **Also check the SQUALL website's frontline communique section for words written from HMP Highpoint prison by Ruth Wyner and John Brock on how they feel about the situation**
- **Give money to help the families and the campaign contact Dr George Reid on 01223 338627 for details.**
- **Write to John or Ruth:
Ruth Wyner EH 6524, HM Highpoint, Stradishall, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 9YG
John Brock EM4946, HM Highpoint, Stradishall, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 9YG**

PRAISE FROM THE LORD



Over the last eight years, the Exodus Collective of Luton have held around 13 free raves on land belonging to the Marquess of Tavistock, owner of Woburn Abbey, two international golf courses and 135,000 acres of Bedfordshire land. Then Lord Andrew Howland, the Marquess's son and estate manager, decided to enter into negotiations with Exodus. **Tim Malyon** talks to an aristocrat whose discovered that it's better to talk than phone the police.

Andrew Howland: We're gonna try and find a site that we can all agree on - I would say that's where we are. I don't know what sites they're looking at. When I do we can have a look at it.

Tim Malyon: Are you in principle wanting to offer Exodus a site or find a site that would be suitable for them?

AH: They have their raves - that seems to be a given. In an ideal world I'd rather that they probably didn't do them at Woburn. I wouldn't have any problem saying that to Glenn Jenkins. But if they are gonna do them, which I think is established, and they are going to do them on or around Woburn, I'd rather find an agreed site rather than have sort of contretemps with some of the tenant farmers and potentially disrupt the golf course. So we'll try and find an agreed site that they can enjoy the use of, I think they're talking three or four times a year. But it's really provided they get planning permission. I'd like to support their planning application on an agreed site if we can find a site we can all agree between us.

TM: So you'd be the licensee?

AH: No, they would, it'd all be them. They would be the licensee and they'd have to be licensed by the local authority.

TM: But you'd help them in trying to obtain that license as the landowner?

AH: Ya, if we can find an agreeable site, which is agreeable to all sides, which hopefully we can.

TM: When you went to last year's Free the Spirit Festival organised by Exodus, what were your feelings about that?

AH: I would say very peaceful, relaxed, happy, all the children running around and the parents happy, content, confident that they were safe. It was great to see. On the down side, the thing that would concern me would be the mess. But no problem with it. Fun and interesting to go and see. Something I hadn't seen before. And then the other day I went to look at their housing project and that was very impressive, what they'd achieved there.

TM: In what way?

AH: In the way that they had got together, seemed to work well together and created some very nice places to live in, very sensibly, for very small amounts of money, using be it rent money that they get from the government, or their social security money or whatever, they pooled it and created some very nice places to live, wonderfully warm, and seemed to work very well.

TM: So the kind of reputation that's been ascribed to them, of being sort of lazy layabouts, that didn't fit with what you saw?

AH: I think they've achieved a lot there. Certainly the impression I had of raves, which I haven't been to, - I've been to a festival, I haven't been to a rave - but raves and what goes on at

raves, I would say, even though I haven't seen one, but talking to them I would say I had a very different impression of it before than I do now having hopefully seen a bit and learned a bit.

TM: For your land you'd be thinking of that in terms of the festival or in terms of raves?

AH: I think they want a site for, I think, they're talking about arranging raves during the decent weather, hot, hopefully summer months. They'd probably be talking about a number of sites, of which maybe one would be somewhere at Woburn, and which they might use two or three times in the summer, from what I understand.

TM: So that would be just for raves, not for the festival that you saw?

AH: Yup.

TM: Do you think this is something that other landowners should follow your example on?

AH: I think if they have a problem with raves, it's more sensible to try and get together and solve the problem rather than take it on confrontationally. I don't know whether Exodus are different from other people who have raves. I suspect they are, because of the culture of free festivals and free raves, I would imagine that's pretty different. I don't know, maybe in your research you found out that there are lots of people like that, different groups of people, but I would think the free element of it is quite rare.

TM: Do you see this as something that could potentially be for the public good?

AH: I think anything that gets rid of confrontation and creates more understanding and people looking at things that are different, I don't know about the public good, but I'd say for the people concerned if you take the confrontation out of the system, that's for the positive good of people involved in it.

TM: What about their views on marijuana and marijuana smoking?

AH: I mean you've got plenty of scientists that say that it should be legalised, you've got MP's I believe who say it should be legalised, I know that my mother's got a great friend who's got Multiple Sclerosis, and the doctors talk about it, but it's illegal. I think in terms if they want to smoke marijuana, I'm not a doctor, I can't argue the rights and wrongs - I smoke cigarettes - of marijuana versus nicotine versus alcohol. I think the thing that everyone's frightened of is that marijuana leads to very dangerous things. But again, I've always thought that raves involved the selling and dealing of hard drugs. They have told me that is not the case, yes they condone the use of marijuana but if people are seen taking anything stronger, harder than that then that is not condoned. And if they are seen dealing in anything then they are asked to leave. I'd think there are enough people around that could ask them to leave and they would leave. Going to the festival, the way they have things like the 'price police' and things like that, that was enlightened.

TM: What, keeping prices down?

AH: Yup, okay they don't charge people to come in, but then to go round and make sure people are not being ripped off, it all seems very good.

TM: Is there anything else that you'd like to say?

AH: People have said to me, you're being forced into doing this. In some ways yes, but I'm actually willingly going along with it now. I'd actually like to hopefully achieve something. It would be nice to achieve, it is different, and without having been to a rave, having seen and met Exodus, it's very impressive to see what they've achieved.

TM: One of the things that I've been really impressed by with Exodus is the way that they've integrated young people into the collective that are otherwise generally speaking outside of society. Do you have any knowledge of that?

AH: A couple of weeks ago I went over there (to HAZ Manor). This is not meant to be rude in any way, but so often nowadays we take things at face value. And because they might have long hair and dreadlocks and pierced noses and things like that, instantly you react away from them. When you actually sit down and talk to them they're just the same as anyone else, with very good values. And it's fascinating. They were talking about the parents who reacted against their children going to something like Exodus, complained to the police that they'd been caught up in a cult, the police saying no, it wasn't a cult, the parents coming to see their children at HAZ Manor then actually going around and spreading the word in a positive fashion. So it's very impressive.

TM: Yes, absolutely, it's amazing what they've done there I think. When I first went up and saw them, I was not exactly suspicious, but I wanted to know what was going on. And now over the years that I've been up there, I'm sure there are no secrets being hidden from me. The way that they deal with money seems to me to be very much above board - everybody knows what's coming in, everybody votes on what's going to get done, whose room they're gonna do next, I think they're quite amazing.

So I think it's really good what you're doing. And I say this to anybody who puts their neck on the line.

AH: You can get shot at and be accused of being naive believing what they say. But I do. And I'd far rather do that and be proved wrong - it's not clever to be proved right. They want to give it a whirl, I want to give it a whirl, let's see if we can pull something off. So we'll keep on trying.

FRONTLINE COMMUNIQUE

Knuckleheads with nightsticks at 20th and Ist

Anti-capitalist direct activists from all round the world descended on Washington DC in April to disrupt the World Bank and International Monetary Fund from cementing their plans for an economic world order. In a series of contemporaneous reports from the frontline, **Si Mitchell** got into the thick of it. Here's the last of several reports filed to the SQUALL website.

Day two of actions against the World Bank and IMF saw the teenage shock troops of global resistance once again beaten down with billy-clubs and zapped with tear gas, in the heart of the planet's power capitol.

Before Washington's workforce (most of which were advised by police to stay home because of the actions) had hauled their sorry asses out of bed, DC cops were roaming the downtown area in cars, vans and tanks scooping up anyone who looked like they might have a problem with corporate domination.

Masked activists dodged an early morning deluge of rain and tear gas before a three thousand strong contingent turned up and forced the old bill to back off. One inspired individual managed to stop a speeding police car by diving onto the road in front of it. He got a mouthful of the spicy stuff [Pepper Spray] for his troubles. He was also pretty lucky, one woman was hospitalised on Sunday when a motor-cycle cop ran over her legs.

Fired up by a significantly increased police presence and an even greater resolve to tell the world that "capitalism sucks", the crowd snaked around causing some hefty traffic chaos, before making a b-line to where the World Bankers were holed up. A heavily armed police line blocked them at James Monroe Park on the corner of 20th and one. The crowd tried to force their way through, teenage girls on the frontline were beaten down with clubs and CS sprayed at point blank range. The SQUALL militia endured a minor scuffle with DC's finest before an unmasked sergeant appeared to diffuse the situation.

"Hey, it's you guys from England. I mighta known you'd be here." It was Palanski, an affable asshole we'd tussled with on the barricades a few days previous.

Attempts to vault the line were met with similar thuggery. Unidentifiable cops were hounded with chants of: "Put your badges on".

Undeterred in their quest for arrest and the opportunity to join Jane Fonda and her anti-Vietnam line-crossers in the jailhouse of righteousness, around six hundred of the gathered mass struck a deal with a reluctant police chief to arrest them. Assorted Europeans had some difficulty getting their

heads around the concept of jail cell solidarity, but an extra dozen school buses of people to process, no doubt clogs the system. Reports from the inside are saying that ninety per cent of those arrested are being carried into court limp and being arraigned as John/Jane Does (ie no names, no compliance).

"I spent twelve hours with my hands plastic cuffed to my fucking ankles," said Jay Hope, an activist from Texas who was arrested at the Mumia rally on Sunday and had only just been released. "No water, no attorney, lots of bullshit. It sucked."

Hope said police came into his cell and asked: "Right who's got money and who hasn't? Those who could afford the fifty dollar, effective caution, fee walked. The rest stayed and went to court. Justice - it ain't free in America."

By late afternoon the donut-munchers were starting to pick off scattered Blac Blockers sheltering from the rain. Now, it would appear, you don't just need a black face to get fucked over by the forces of law and order in the US, black clothing will do.

As well as police, activists were seriously hindered by the corporate media circus that has expanded with cancer-like growth over the last few days.

"Can you put your umbrellas down," shouted ABC's representative at a bedraggled sit down crew. "The media can't see the action." The words Fuck and Off came firing back from several corners.

As night falls in the tumor that is Washington small actions are still going off in a variety of locations. Police, Fed spooks and FCC (radio licencers) who came to bust a pirate station that's been broadcasting during the protests, were given five minutes to leave the scene by a 400 strong posse of activists that arrived as they were about to grab the gear. They got in their cars and went.

The success of the actions has been debatable, with both cops and the mobilisation organisers claiming victory. Like the WTO in Seattle, these two machines of global greed [World Bank & IMF] have at last been dragged from under their stones. The light is on them, their response is talk of reform. There is no room for reform. It's time to burn the fucking temples down.

GAIA'S SLAP

ATMOSFEAR IN THE 21st CENTURY

For years the world's big polluters poured scorn on the existence of global warming. But with sixty one British meteorological records broken over the last 20 years, climate change and global warming are now an officially acknowledged cause for major concern. In an extensive new investigation, **Neil Goodwin** unearths the raw truths which compromise our planets' future habitability.

Red sky at night, so the saying goes, is a shepherd's delight. But ask any gardener or farmer and they'll probably tell you that the ancient folklore which has underlined our expectations of the Great British weather for centuries is looking increasingly dodgy.

In fact over the last twenty years, 61 major meteorological records, from warmest November to wettest June, highest temperature to fastest wind, have been broken in the UK. How many times do we overhear conversations about late frosts and early blooms, or the discovery of another exotic insect hiking across a British windowsill?

The world is now experiencing the early symptoms of climate change, a process which is set to transform the world's weather beyond all recognition during the next century, and one that will severely test the human race's ability to adapt and survive. The Met Office has predicted an increase in Britain's average temperature of up to 3° C by the end of the next century, and a sea level rise of between two and 10 centimetres.

"It doesn't seem that much of a difference when you compare it to day to day weather variability," says Prof. Phil Jones, from the Climate Research Unit. "But our estimates of how cold it was during the last Ice Age - that it was about somewhere between 5-6° C colder than today, means we're talking about a rise

that will have occurred between 1900 and 2100 of about nearly 3° C, which is half way to an Ice Age but in the opposite direction."

Natural disasters are increasing at a terrifying rate, both here and abroad. In 1998 the world suffered more than twice as much environmental damage as during the entire decade of the 1980's, at a cost of £142.4 billion. According to the Worldwatch Institute, 54 countries suffered from floods and 45 from severe drought.

The polar ice caps, which are particularly sensitive to global climate change, are melting at an alarming rate. In Antarctica, which has experienced a rapid temperature rise of 2.5°C over the last 50 years, the ice shelf known as Larson A has already collapsed into the sea, while huge cracks have begun to appear in Larson B. Almost 2,000 square miles of Antarctica's south eastern tip has melted throughout the past year, and an iceberg larger than London is currently drifting towards the Argentinean coast.

Like its European neighbours, Britain has experienced its fair share of floods, droughts, coastal erosion and gales. The total cost of weather claims in Britain for 1998 was £663 million, with some sections of the Midlands being hit by severe flooding three times. Last year began with the worst floods to hit North Yorkshire in 68 years, and continued to throw

up extraordinary natural anomalies such as invasions of jellyfish, and plankton blooms the size of Cornwall.

Throughout the past ten years Britain has endured four out of five of the hottest years ever recorded over a 330-year period. Scientists from the University of East Anglia have observed that this warmer weather has radically altered the migratory habits of birds such as swallows. Trees are coming into leaf much earlier. Increasing numbers of 'alien' insects and spiders have colonised southern England including termites in north Devon, which feed in huge numbers on timber and can cause havoc to homes, and the rotund, black and brown spider (one of the "False Widow spiders"), a bite from which can cause considerable pain.

Even the Great British cod'n'chips is under threat. A 4°C rise in winter North Sea temperatures during the past six years has disrupted the breeding patterns of cod and whiting, causing stocks to plummet and prompting the EU to slash catch quotas for 2000. At the same time, exotic species such as red mullet, octopus and even Great White sharks have started to inhabit British waters.

Far from lending our climate a pleasant Mediterranean feel - a misconception based on the prediction that Southern England will become frost-free by the end of the next century - some scientists are warning that climate change could plunge Northern Europe into a mini Ice Age. Melt water from the Arctic could, they say, weaken and eventually shut down the Gulf Stream which draws up warm salty water from the tropics. A testament to the present effectiveness of the Gulf Stream in warming British waters comes from the fact that Britain shares the same latitude, but mercifully not the same icy winters, as Newfoundland on the Canadian coast.

The idea of Global cooling may seem decidedly unhelpful to those of us still grappling with the

concept of Global warming, but whatever its final manifestation, climate change is set to transform every aspect of British life, from how we travel to what we wear, from where we live to what we eat. Business as usual, the politicians are now saying, will not be an option.

"I would say that we are being hit by five related issues," says Sir Crispin Tickell, the government's advisor on the environment. "The first is human population increase, which, in spite of figures starting to come down in certain places, is a major hazard. The second is degradation of land surfaces. The third is shortages of water and the pollution of water. The fourth is the destruction of bio-diversity, so that we no longer have the natural services that we have hitherto enjoyed for free. And the last is climate change."

Despite the best efforts of a tiny but noisy band of climate sceptics, such as Richard North and Dennis Avery, who continue to muddy the waters, the Government now accept "the very real threat" that climate change will represent in the 21st Century and has begun to face up to what it describes as "difficult choices".

Last October, the Environment Agency, which estimates that 1.3 million British homes are currently at risk from flooding, launched a £2 million flood awareness campaign called FloodLine. Speaking at the launch was the Rev. Graham St. John, who was one of ten thousand people affected by Britain's most devastating flood which hit Northampton in 1998, killing two people and destroying 2,500 homes and businesses.

"What can you say to the couple I was only speaking to last week?" he asked the assembled media. "Aged 80, they'd spent eight and half-hours perched on top of their kitchen work surfaces waiting to be rescued. She was sitting on the cooker. Her husband was sitting there with his legs dangling in sewerage-strewn freezing cold water. There was no escape from it."

The Government has also initiated a number of studies into the effects of climate change on a regional basis across all sectors. These include Wales, Cornwall, Scotland, East Anglia, the North-west, and the Southeast. As their findings emerge, our understanding of the extent to which climate change will transform Britain during the coming century will become more sophisticated.

The North West became the first region in Europe to complete such a study. It recognised that climate change is already a fact of life. Sea levels at Liverpool, it said, have been rising by one centimetre per decade and average temperatures have been increasing consistently since the 1960s. It pinpointed potential benefits from 'global warming' such as lower winter heating bills and higher incomes from tourism ('café society'), as well as detrimental effects such as coastal erosion ("managed retreat is a serious policy option, but will be controversial"), the increased likelihood of flood and storm damage, and a possible future difficulty in obtaining re-insurance cover. It underlined "the very real need to prepare for an uncertain future as climate change continues".

A £25 million government ad campaign was launched to encourage us to 'do our bit' by car sharing, recycling household waste, and taking a shower instead of a bath. In stark contrast to the scare tactics employed by the Tories over Aids awareness, New Labour's approach seems to be to tickle us into a more responsible attitude towards the environment. In one ad a woman careers down stairs on a death slide and proceeds to turn down her central heating.

In March 1999, the Chancellor Gordon Brown announced Britain's greenest budget, with 17 measures designed to tackle our over-dependency on the car, a major source of carbon dioxide and an essential nut to crack if Britain is to meet its target of a 20 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2010.

Of these measures, the introduction of a six per cent road fuel duty has proved the most

controversial, whipping up the full fury of the Road Haulage Association, and bringing hundreds of blockading lorry drivers onto the streets of London,

Eight months on, however, Greenpeace blew a hole in the government's green credentials when it won a High Court action against them and ten oil companies over their failure to protect whales, dolphins and other marine species from the impacts of oil exploration on the Atlantic Frontier.

"We exposed the contradiction at the heart of Government policy," says Peter Melchett, Executive Director of Greenpeace UK. "Their environmental policy says we should cut down the use of fossil fuels to protect the climate and wildlife, while their energy policy tells the fossil fuel industry to go and dig as much oil as they can regardless of the consequences."

In October 1999 the Met Office issued a grave prediction that if the international community fails to curb greenhouse gas emissions large parts of South America and southern Africa could lose their tropical forests by the 2080's. Eighty million people, they say, could be flooded each year due to rising sea levels, and some three billion people could suffer from increased water stress.

However, according to Peter Bunyard, author of 'Gaia in Action: Science of the Living Earth': "The radiative thermodynamic physics of the greenhouse effect are such as to cause a long delay between the emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and the time when the effects on the climate actually manifest themselves. Hence, the CO₂ that society emits into the atmosphere today will only act on the climate 50 to 80 years in the future. Conversely, the climatic changes that we are experiencing today are occurring in response to the CO₂ we emitted during the Second World War." Therefore, measures to prevent severe ongoing climatic disruption cannot be taken soon enough.

American cars and industry currently belch out 25 per cent of the greenhouse gases which cause climate change, yet American society only amounts to four per cent of the world's population. Perhaps it's no surprise therefore, to learn that the US government is most resistant to international agreements designed to limit the level of greenhouse gas emissions.

So, as the world wakes up to the realities of climate change, a key question emerges: Do the politicians of the rich North have the will to risk political suicide by forcing their populations to curb lifestyles based on selfishness and greed?

"The Age of Consumerism has lead us to Climate Change," observes Sir Sonny Ramphel, the former Commonwealth Secretary General. "To roll back the dangers, we have got to undo some of the worst aspects of consumerism. And that means a change in lifestyles. The politicians who, in democratic societies, go to the polls promising the moon and the stars, conscious that they cannot fulfil them, are not about to turn around and say 'What I promise you is less of the same'. Until we develop the moral stature at the political level to the people of the rich world, we really will not be facing up to the challenges of Climate Change.'

Like Sir Sonny Ramphel, Dr. Mick Kelly, from the Climate Research Unit, senses the need for "a new kind of politician - a politician that's concerned about the next generation. How our children will fair as we move into the 21st Century."

But as society moves beyond a purely preventative approach to climate change, and steps up the process of actually dealing with the symptoms, there is, he recognises, the potential for an entirely new set of political challenges. "The challenge now is can we actually protect the whole population, even though that may prove very costly? Do we have to take difficult decisions about levels of protection which may mean that we leave some people exposed simply because it would cost

too much to provide them with an absolute level of protection? So these are questions we have to address."

No one can accurately predict the socio-economic effects of climate change. However, as Hurricane Mitch, the Orissa cyclone, and, more recently, the Mozambique floods have so ruthlessly demonstrated, many thousands will undoubtedly lose their homes and lives. Whole countries could become uninhabitable. Once again, food shortages could exacerbate an array of historical tensions and resentments. Water wars, environmental refugees, and the spread of diseases such as malaria and dengue fever could cripple entire continents.

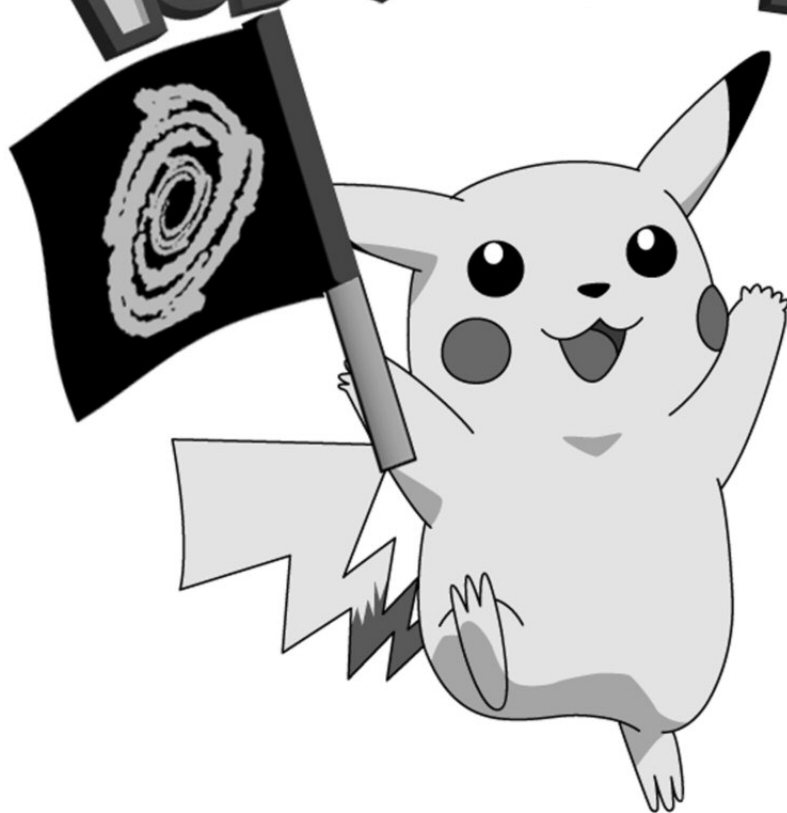
So what, if anything, is your average person supposed to make of it all? Given the extent to which the debate around climate change has largely been conducted above our heads with liberal sprinklings of scientific gobbledegook - not a lot, says Charlie Kronick, from the Climate Action Network.

"If any global issue has been dogged by the democratic deficit, it's climate change. People you don't know, are telling you things you don't understand, about a problem you can't be sure you have, and instructing you to do things (like drive less or use less energy) that you feel that you can't achieve. It is soul destroying, dis-empowering and has encouraged a complete opt out on the part of the public."

He continues: 'Climate change as an issue has been dominated by the experts, whether from government, the scientific establishment or environment groups. To have any relevance beyond this ghetto, it will need to register within real communities, with real people, who are willing to make real change happen.'

For a fuller version of this article which includes statistics on major climactic events in the UK since 1980, log on to the features page at www.squall.co.uk.

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