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WHEN THE KIDS ARE UNITED, THEY WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED!

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It's a cliché because it's true: your life changes when you have kids. For me, I realised something had changed when I was four months pregnant and I found myself being dragged under a police van on May Day in Trafalgar Square. Up until that point, as an activist, I had made a point of interposing my body into confrontational situations. Now I had something else to protect, a new little life. I was sure that I wanted kids, and could make a case for motherhood as a revolutionary activity – raising the next generation that will be able to sort this mess out. But now I didn't know where I stood as an activist. Where was my place in the direct action movement? Was I just meant to stay home and wash nappies?

Two years on, we travelled to Scotland completely unsure of whether the G8 protests would be a safe environment in which the needs of our child could be met, but determined that the only way to make that happen was to go there and make it happen. It's their future – another cliché, but still true.

My child is still breastfed, so there was no way that I could be arrested. Fortunately, at the camp in Stirling there were a lot of other people in the same position. The kids were having a whale of a time, going mad with paint and making banners or conducting water bomb wars. The adults got together for a lastminute.com discussion of what we were up for. We were nervous. Was this sensible? But then, is anything sensible in this crazy world?

It transpired, amid the nosewiping and breastfeeding and nappysniffing,

that we wanted to leave Stirling and travel to the G8 on the Wednesday to demonstrate. That we would travel in vehicles, in convoy, and be able to leave any flash-points *en masse*. That we would take joint responsibility for any lost or distressed children. That we would be completely open with the media and the police about our aims. That we would all carry food and water. That we would have a good time.

We decided all this on Tuesday July 5 (very lastminute.com). On the Wednesday morning we achieved the logistical near-impossibility of getting everyone into vehicles to leave site by 11am. Someone handed out gold rosettes to identify the parents and their vehicles. A badge of parenthood! We had decided that we were going to join the legal march at Auchterarder, but now the police were saying that the march had been cancelled, and were advising everyone to stay away from the area. We were also expecting the main roads into Gleneagles to be blockaded, so we were unsure of where we would end up. We had very little experience of driving in convoy, the police attempted to split the convoy using low-loader lorries, and we thought we were going to run out of mobile phone signal. This had the potential for utter mayhem.

Road blocks were in place. We proceeded haphazardly, following a double-decker bus with the Make Poverty History brand on the side. We ended up going down some back roads, approaching Gleneagles from the south. The police refused to allow us to proceed to Auchterarder. More fool them. We were now, completely accidentally, at a very strategically important point: a bridge over the motorway where delegates' cars were entering and leaving the Gleneagles site. We unleashed the children from their car seats!

Firstly, most importantly, food. Let's have a picnic. On the riot policemen's shoes. We laid out some blankets in the drizzle immediately in front of the police lines. The kids had fruit and nuts and hummus and oat cakes. The policemen had kittens! I was chatting to one of the boiler-suited mob, he had a little nine-month-old boy. I looked at him and commented, 'They don't train you for this, do they?' They knew and we knew that there was no way that they could advance their line through the toddlers. Could we move? Ooh no, not till we'd finished our picnic. Hungry children are angry children we pointed out. If they insisted we move, then I'm sorry, but they'd have to take responsibility for the children.

The police now informed us through a loudhailer that, 'You can join the march at Auchterarder.' What? They had LIED! They had said there was no march taking place in Auchterarder. What a terrible example to set in front of the kids! We were perfectly happy here in any case: we had a little samba band, there was some clowning around, a couple of small sound systems turned up. A couple of delegates' cars turned around and drove away.

After a while, we did make a not-particularly-coherent decision to leave and join the end of the Auchterarder march. If we could stay on the bridge late into the evening we would restrict the movements of the delegates. But we had



kids, and they would be soggy and whingy by evening time. There were hot chips in Auchterarder. Time to go.

The atmosphere in Auchterarder was much more relaxed. There seemed very little chance of an unforeseen baton charge by riot police, and the brat bloc informally disbanded. Our family ended up in the church hall, drinking coffee and eating scones. Aagh! All that adrenaline! All that worry! All that wondering about whether we were using our children, unnecessarily exposing them to risk! And we end up at a coffee morning, having afternoon tea. So much for revolutionary parenthood. But we, and our kids, did have a good time.