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GINGER TAKES ON THE G8

The Ginger

SATURDAY

Complete darkness. He was trapped on all sides. His ginger hair nostrils quivered as the odour of stale urine reminded him of where he was and, more importantly, his purpose. He had to get out and he had to get out fast. The rumble of the tracks below indicated that the train on which he was travelling was slowing down. Now was his chance, his chance for freedom. It was now or never, 'HELP!!! Can you help me? I'm trapped in the toilet,' the Ginger screamed, 'I've been trapped in here for twenty minutes, it's so hot I'm going to faint and the floor is yellow and sticky.' Then slowly a shaft of light appeared in the eternal night of the train toilet and the Ginger's knight in shining Scottish Railways uniform pulled the door slowly back revealing a small and offensively ugly group of Liverpool activists laughing at the Ginger's misfortune and filming his ordeal on a hand-held camera.

'Morons.' It was only Saturday, the first day of a week of anti-G8 protests in Scotland and the Ginger had got himself trapped in the Stirling-Edinburgh train toilet. If this was the extent of the competence of the activists, then even the British police were going to have a comically easy week. It was embarrassing, and it smelt of urine. Undeterred the Ginger battled on through the adversity of a privatised public transport system and into a very large demonstration around a sunny and beautiful Edinburgh.

The day itself however had a strange mood to it; people were not angry



with the G8 but almost thankful for it. The G8 were here as saviours of the world, pure examples of great and good people happy to drop a few crumbs back to Africa after raping the continent for the last three hundred years. Well the Ginger wasn't happy with it and neither were many others who felt the day (partly overshadowed by Madonna, etc. 'Making Poverty History' through the power of song and Nokia sponsorship with a little help from Bill Gates) was de-politicised.

However the day was an amazingly diverse gathering. Everyone from nuns to the black bloc people had made the effort to get out on the streets and protest. The Ginger could see the clashes of ideology and it made him smile. The day protested on, and the sun had worn the Ginger and his friend Dave down, so they slipped inside a church, hoping the high ceilings and stone would cool them off. Only after sitting in the pews for twenty minutes did the Ginger realise that Dave had scrawled 'F*ck The Fences' on his back, and though he wasn't over familiar with the Bible, he was pretty sure that a blatant anti-borders attitude had not been expressed in such a succinct way within its pages, and so they left. The Christians, bless them, were forgiving.

The eco-village

A special place for vertically-challenged people, who live in neighbourhoods named after kitchens, to come together to plot, debate and celebrate; love the earth and treat it well; despise the G8 and all it stands for; volunteer their time and energy to help create a beautiful experiment in how life could be; and by existing, surviving, and succeeding, create a headache for the greedy rich. A living proof that cooperation can create a thriving, throbbing and beautiful place.

MONDAY

In the early hours of Monday morning the Ginger sat chatting to a charming American girl on the gate of the eco-village. They were the thin unwashed line between the ugly and the beautiful; welcoming the tired activist to the site and keeping an eye out in case the ever-friendly police decide to play 'Hit the Crusty' at 2am on a rainy cold morning.

Out of the gloom of a Stirlingshire morning two yellow glows menaced towards the Ginger and the CAG (Charming American Girl). The CAG froze, but the Ginger leapt forward ready to defend the campsite with his life. The car slowed, realising that a battle with such a formidable foe would be suicide. The Ginger strode towards the car armed only with a crap torch and his ninja skills. The door of the car opened slowly and out of the darkness emerged, with eyes blazing, a tri-headed beast from the pits of hell: three Canadian tourists. Eager to pose, because at heart the Ginger loves the attention, he agrees along with the CAG to let the Canadians get a picture of 'the protesters' and then drive off into the night. Sleep sound, eco-village, crisis averted.

By this time the sun was rising and the Ginger had to leave his sentinel duties

and make his way towards Faslane nuclear base, along with three hundred very tired others from the eco-village, if they were to arrive in time for the shift change. By the time the Ginger had arrived at the first gate it was already successfully blocked with locked-on activists, massive blocks of concrete and dancers a-dancing. The police looked bemused. Walking round to the second gate there were even more protesters, food and cups of tea, and a small contingent of the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army making even the most stony-faced police mouth smile.

By this time the sun was out and warming the ground and it was time for the Ginger to lie at the feet of the police line. However the Ginger was tired. He had made the stupid decision to stay up all night, and despite all attempts to stay awake, soon found himself fast asleep dreaming of a day when governments stop building killing machines and start building a fairer world. Then he got woken up by a man with a bicycle-powered PA singing songs about the benefits of pot.

Consensus decision-making

A system which can be amazingly rewarding when compromise leads to general happiness, frustrating when decisions need to be made quickly, beautiful when everyone feels included, disgusting when used to alienate people, rewarding when people understand each other, pointless when people ignore whatever decisions are made, funny when everyone waves their hands in delight and tragic when it takes four hours to decide upon whether or not to make a decision at all.

TUESDAY

Name? 'I don't have to technically tell you my name under any law.' If you want to go down this road then you'll have to give me your name and be searched. 'Why?' Because we said so. 'But I might just be going for a walk in the lovely Scottish countryside.' We don't believe you. 'Why are you breaking the law?' Listen, it's up to you. Either give us your name and let us search you or you will not be let down this road.

The Ginger begins to comply...

Stop. What's this? 'A red handkerchief.' Why have you got that? 'In case you gas us.' Don't be stupid. Bring the camera here and film him with this red thing. 'Why are you doing that?' Because we know that you belong to different groups by your colours. 'You police are really dumb.' Watch it or you'll be going nowhere.

The Ginger continues to comply...

Stop. Why is the address you have given different than the one on your driving licence? 'Because I've moved house in the last five years.' Wait a minute, I know this address, I used to go to school on this road. 'No way...wait a minute, I didn't think the police went to school.'

The Ginger finally makes it through the thousands of police with the rest of the beautiful Pakora Collective from Liverpool and heads up to meet a disgusting prison which houses asylum seekers 364 days of the year. But not today as the police have evacuated them all, fearing what everyone wanted to happen, that



everyone turn the words ‘no one is illegal’ into action, break down the walls of the ‘detention centre’ and free everyone inside. Alas there were three police to every protester and there was a 20-metre high metal fence with razor wire at the top. But the Ginger did love the tunes of the ever-wonderful David Rovics, who was happily singing away on the stage interrupting the monotony of the speeches. Everyone cheered their support *en masse* via phone to a Zimbabwean asylum seeker on hunger strike, laughed at the police getting eaten by the obviously progressive-minded midges and realised that the further south the policemen came from, the uglier and meaner they were.

WEDNESDAY

The Ginger found himself trapped down a dead end in an industrial estate with a rapidly-advancing police line. He was wearing two jumpers, a jacket, a shirt and a vest. They were all soaked through and had begun to feel like a medieval suit of armour made a metre thick, so he moved at a similar speed to the Southport Bingo Players Over 60s Relay Team. The Ginger turned his head to his companions: a middle-aged couple from Newcastle on their first ever protest and looking as confused, soaked and miserable as himself. Realising defeat they walked towards the police line slowly, were searched, filmed, had their details taken and sent on their merry way. Then walked fifty metres and were stopped, searched, filmed and sent on their merry way. Then walked another fifty metres and were

stopped searched and sent on their miserable GET ME TO A BED NOW way. (By 'bed' the Ginger meant a bumpy field and a cold damp tent).

Alas! It had started so well! Over a thousand activists had left the eco-village at 2.45am and marched towards the M9 ready to blockade the main artery to Gleneagles. Moving in three separate groups, with over three hundred in each bloc, the body of progressive change had made swift progress through the deserted rain-sodden streets, until from nowhere tens of police vans and hundreds of police appeared out of the night and stood blocking the road ahead, armed with riot gear and a mean look in their eyes.

The Ginger was in the 'safety' affinity group with the slightly odd job of making it to the motorway first and laying out signs to slow down traffic before the blockade. This group of beautiful individuals hung about in between the first and second blocs and prepared for their task. A group who later dubbed themselves 'the suicide squad' took the Ginger by surprise by charging at the lines of police despite being massively out-numbered, and the two groups proceeded to hit each other for a while. Meanwhile the Ginger and many others ran in various directions, everyone following each other and no one really knowing where they were going. Some rocks got thrown at a bank, some tables got smashed up outside a locally owned pub and the Ginger thought to himself how moronic and backwards it was, whilst others loved the ecstasy of destruction.

The Ginger stayed with the main body, a little confused about where his non-violent ideology stood in relation to the main protest. Some of his affinity group had already gone home. The Ginger was desperate to do some political good, but disliked the attitude of the overall group. The numbers had shrunk from over a thousand to fewer than two hundred and as the Ginger was chased down a street deeper into the industrial estate, he decided to split from the group. Partly because he thought they were running into a dead end and partly because the spasms of political debate had temporarily demobilised his under-slept ginger brain. He went a different way, got stuck, trapped by the police and was left feeling a little confused and miserable...

...however as all good things are about what is achieved and not about the individual, the Ginger was in a glorious mood by the evening hearing about the blockades which had taken place throughout the area surrounding Gleneagles and the fence being torn down by the sea of protesters and all the wonderful people doing all the wonderful things all over Scotland...

THURSDAY

The Ginger was all prepared to help coordinate a party outside the gate of a hotel where part of the American delegation was staying. However, the police had arrived at 2.30am in 30-odd riot vans, scared everyone dreadless and proceeded to block the entire campsite on and off for the next two days. Which was very rubbish. And illegal.

The Ginger attended meetings to help with the running of the campsite, gathered and deposited sawdust for the compost toilets and took in the beauty of the village. The place was starting to feel like home.

However, the Ginger did escape the blockade to a brilliant reconciliation meeting with local Stirling residents and was amazed at the local support for the actions. He met possibly the nicest lady in existence, the sort of lovely, soft spoken, middle-aged, long-term peace-lover who would, after being beaten, robbed and humiliated, offer her aggressor some crackers and cheese and, most probably, melt their angry little heart. Despite being kept from getting back in by a crazy police over-reaction to a candlelit vigil to remember those killed in London that morning, the Ginger made it to bed. As he lay down he had with him a warm feeling in his head thanks to some drum and bass in a field, a bit of wine and a campfire sing song.

FRIDAY

On the way home in the lovely red bus the Ginger realised a few things: the week had taught him more about important stuff than all of the years of formal education had managed, the week had confused him more than various chemical-induced nights he'd had had had yup yup and he'd made some lovely friends, all of whom needed a wash.

The End