Road fighting is not dead! In England anyway...

Contributed by Squersh
05 November 2008

4 November 2008 -- I'm sitting in the bright autumn sunshine by a busy road in the heart of Southend-on-Sea, Essex, England. I'm at the Camp Bling road protest site (www.campbling.org), where three years ago we first built a small tree house with a view to occupying the route of a highly controversial and hotly opposed dual carriageway scheme.

The occupation by local activists was purely a strategic one to deter central government decision makers who might provide construction funding for the local authority project, but we unintentionally sparked off the beginnings of a thriving and often lively community and counter-culture within the seaside town.

For many people who have been disempowered by local representative politics, we provide a different space to drop into: somewhere to spend time, to share stories and company, and somewhere to be part of a situation that for once is on our own terms. The action to defend the site is less abstract and much closer to home for them in comparison to dealing with issues such as climate change on a global level.

Many of the past and present occupants have also arrived via the mainstream environmental movement. Experience gained from many campaigns both won and lost over the years has helped our understanding that overall the world situation continues to deteriorate, as the issues we voiced begin to gather apace and run out of control.

On September 23rd we marked three years of community occupation with an emergency relaunch in response to environmental catastrophe as it unfolds. What started as a campaign against the road has now also become about a different view of how we see the world after our very own paradigm shift. The age of exuberance is long over, now we prepare for crash in the only way we know how – by facing up to it together.

Years ago when I worked in the auto industry, there was a marketing term known as 'white space' which defined an unoccupied gap in the market. I think about the definition often and consider that Bling has now joined the handful of others in the environmental equivalent of this phrase. Events had overtaken us and our single issue message to the point where we felt compelled to take the leap to become overtly and explicitly counter-cultural in all that we do.

Another way of saying this is that we couldn't hold back any longer for fear of challenging the business as usual mindset. Thanks to the thinking of people like Jan at Culture Change, plus our hard earned experiences from the road, we knew that the western industrialised system as it is currently configured could not and should not be saved.

So here we are; a small band of people coming together to defend a piece of the earth, and to help each other through both the good and the bad times. A flashback to the past – or just one small blueprint for the future maybe?

Whatever your passion, we hope that you find your Camp Bling equivalent.
squersh on behalf of the Camp Bling road protest: www.campbling.org / camp.bling@yahoo.co.uk

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Press release:

Camp Bling 'Save Priory Park!' road campaign

Wednesday 17th September 2008

Contact Camp Bling directly on 07866 967601

Or e-mail camp.bling@yahoo.co.uk

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

Camp Bling announces emergency relaunch on third anniversary.

'The global situation has changed dramatically since the protest site was first set up specifically to stop the road - both in terms of the overall environmental impacts and accelerating pace.' (www.campbling.org)

Protesters and supporters at Camp Bling will mark a third full year of occupation to stop the controversial Priory Crescent road widening on Tuesday 23rd September 2008 with an emergency relaunch to address environmental catastrophe as it unfolds and accelerates around the world.

The camp are set to go live with new website: http://www.campbling.org on the anniversary date, to support their objective to stop the road widening, whilst at the same time taking a dramatic new turn to discuss critical issues such as consumer culture, peak oil production, mass extinction, and the appropriate response to these and other crises. (1)

Resident Gavin said, 'we could not have predicted how quickly the world was going to change when we first set up Camp Bling three years ago. Now we feel compelled to address the fundamental need for lifestyle change during the coming crash, as western society overshoots the ecological limits of the earth.'

Latest member Paul added, 'funding towards the £13.5m Priory Crescent scheme is unlikely to be granted to the Council before 2011. A further three years defending the site will provide ample opportunity for us to begin to push a far more radical agenda. We have always walked the walk - now is the time for us to start talking all about it.' (2)

People are invited to visit both the virtual world of the new website, plus the real one of the road protest as the Blingers dig in for a fourth winter, with a comprehensive revamp and ongoing building work planned, and support therefore still very much required from the local community.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1) See 'Tipping points' page at http://www.campbling.org/ for latest background data and definition of peak oil theory.

2) Southend Borough Council latest Priory Crescent cost estimate of £11.5m presented to Department for Transport does not include £2m already spent to date.

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A modern human normally enters the world in an austere hospital, possibly experiencing birth trauma. The child is baby-sat by a TV and then later turned over to a mass education institution for further conditioning. After graduating they get to work in a cubicle until they retire and die.

From COMMON SENSE AND SURVIVAL, By William Kotke

http://carolynbaker.net/site/content/view/616/1/