

The Night Before the Action

July 5, 2005

Tonight the camp was all abuzz, people coming in,, lots of people going out to avoid the possibility of all being blocked in tomorrow morning. It was full of the excited energy of masses of people preparing for action—once again another tactical nightmare, a few thousand of us up against fifteen thousand police. No one naively expects this to be easy—it may not even be possible, but we have to try. So the day is spent in meetings and trainings. The meetings are finally running more smoothly. We have a small collective of direct action trainers and facilitators who have taken on the task of making the meetings happen and finding good facilitators for them. They are also offering trainings and helping affinity groups get together. All over camp, circles of people are meeting, small affinity groups deciding their plans, bigger clumps of people working on action plans. The odds are against us but the energy is sweet.

Yesterday Juniper, Lisa and I went out to Faslane to support the blockade there.

There's a longstanding campaign against the nuclear weapons that the British Government keeps in Scotland, the trident missiles on submarines at the Faslane base. The peace camp at Faslane has been there for something like twenty-five years, and the annual blockade is something of a ritual, very nonviolent, well organized and quite peaceful. We went to the south gate, alongside a beautiful sea loch, where a happy crowd was dancing in front of the locked gates. A small group of people were locked down on the road, lying down with their arms in big tubes. Inside, their hands are tied to carabiners clipped to a metal pin, so that the police can't pull them apart. They would have to be carefully cut out of the tubes, taking much time and prolonging the blockade. But no police are trying to evict them: they've closed the base for the day, and people are dancing and celebrating. A group of women dressed in white kimonos, perhaps commemorating Hiroshima and Nagasaki, walk up and stand before the police.

Clowns in army fatigues, part of the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, dust the shoes of the cops. We move on to the north gate, where a similar crowd is dancing and drumming.

But we can't stay, because we have responsibilities back at the camp. We're still putting in greywater systems and fixing ones that have gone wrong. The clay soil we're on is clay but no soil and does not drain at all. Every soakaway pit becomes a pond.

Juniper, fortunately, is an engineer and hydrologist. Patrick, another engineer, offers to help. We manage to relocate some of the kitchen soakaways to places where they can be piped or drained away, but others need to be redug or enlarged. We've got a digger machine, basically a mini-bulldozer, for a second day, and one of the high points for me was taking a turn on it and learning to work the thing. I can see why every boy in the camp was following Fuzz around, begging for a turn. It's a real sense of power.

We've got a couple of systems working well; others will become storage ponds and I

call a friend to bring down duckweed to float in them! Even the problems do have their educational side, however. I call a small meeting, asking for a representative from each barrio, each neighborhood, to take on responsibility for maintaining the compost toilets and greywater in their area. Because the ditches fill up, people have to watch how much water they use. Because we've built compost toilets, we have to actually think about what happens to our shit, and who is going to deal with us. "We're spoiled, normally," a young woman tells me. "We don't usually have to think about any of this." "It's anarchism in practice," I tell them. "Being self-responsible at a very, very basic level." In that moment, watching the realization dawn on them that water has to go somewhere, and shit has to be dealt with somehow, I feel that all the work and stress of this project has been worth it.

Meanwhile we're getting horrible reports from the Carnival for Full Enjoyment in Edinburgh. Police have attacked demonstrators with horses, people have been injured, there's a riot going on. Finally our friends return and we get the full story. Some of these later prove to be rumors, but there have been altercations and injuries, and a few arrests. But the clowns, I'm told by a friend, shifted the energy and helped calm the crowd.

At the end of the day, Catherine and I do a training for an Irish group who are protesting a Shell oil refinery to be built in County Mayo. Five local farmers have refused to sell their land, and been jailed by the Irish government. Some of the contingent has stayed home to support them. The others, who are here, organize and demonstration and possible occupation of the company headquarters. They are a mix of ages—lots of youth but a good sprinkling of the middle-aged. One of the pleasures of this particular mobilization is that it does span the generations—the average age is probably late twenties and there are many people in their thirties, forties, and even a few of us older than that!

But there's all along been a chaotic, slippery quality to the energy of this project, something that resists plans and timetables and logical organization. Maybe it's the fairies, hanging around the hawthorne tree. By the end of the day, we have plans, multiple plans, plans so complex and overlaid with fallbacks that even if we're infiltrated, I doubt the cops can understand them. We barely do. There are small affinity groups off on secret missions. There are others who want to plan an open blockade, something that everyone can join on to: but they can't quite bring themselves to announce when and where it will be, as the police will undoubtedly shut it down. The mass action sort of devolves into an action of small groups, and someone else plans a truly mass action but still can't bring themselves to announce exactly when and where it is. There are times when I love the camp and everyone in it: it has a sweet energy and is truly a glimpse of a world we could create. There are other moments when I swear I'll never do this or anything like it again. Like late at night when we're all having our pre-action melt downs. Suddenly all the plans seem completely chaotic—but then, chaos is what we're trying to create, and when chaos is your goal, you've got all the forces of the universe with you. I'm just going to put my trust in some other kind of order, some forces that are working us, and hope.

We do rituals—weave a web of connection, go out and tie strings of yarn to the fairy tree. But we can't quite ever find the right time, or communicate the right message or

form the right plan to draw in everyone who might want to be there.

So now it's late, and I'm going to send this off, catch some sleep, and then it will be time for the action. Please envision our web holding strong, and send us some energy through it, and some luck!

-- *Starhawk*

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Starhawk is an activist, organizer, and author of *The Earth Path, Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising, The Fifth Sacred Thing* and other books on feminism, politics and earth-based spirituality. She teaches [Earth Activist Trainings](#) that combine permaculture design and activist skills, and works with the [RANT trainer's collective](#), that offers training and support for mobilizations around global justice and peace issues.