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Anti-civ Gatherings: Reports from “Green Anarchist”

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2004

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Anticivilization Gathering: Weaving a Cobweb April 30th – May 3rd

This year's anti-civilisation gathering suffered slightly from less numbers than the previous year's gathering. Still there were people from a range of European countries and different groups and projects.

Last year's gathering was at a large squat called "Can Masdeu" in the suburbs of Barcelona, but this year the organisers had opted for a campsite called "Solell de les Codines" further north near Montesquiu, a village in the area of Osona, in North of Catalunya.

It's possible that the concrete manicured campsite, relatively close to a large road was not quite the ideal venue for a gathering of civilizationresistors, and this may have had a detrimental effect on the discourse.

However, it seems preferable in some ways to the disputes that occurred at last years gathering due to the antagonism of some of the inhabitants of Can Masdeu, a squat that is notorious for it's liberal politics within Barcelona. Squatters there seemed happy to cook and feed those that attended the gathering, but not to have them in the house and to charge extortionate amounts for what was in effect free food that had been foraged from bins.

One of the suggested aims of this years gathering was to build some kind of network, or to 'Weave a Cobweb' of groups and individuals in Europe in order to aid better communication and sol-

idarity. Unfortunately this failed to happen, outside of the more informal networking outside of meetings.

Discussion ranged from 'New Technologies of Control' through to debates around tactics used to fight for earth and animal liberation, with a small minority present whom expressed a distinctly non-combative and wholly moralistic approach. This minority seemed to have little analysis of power relations, there answer to civilizations assault appeared to be to go off and grow there own organic vegetables somewhere so as to make a 'positive' effort. Enough said really!

This isolationist perspective seems typical of those that seek a 'selfsufficient' way of life and fail to realize that this is not possible — we are surrounded, something Ted Kaczynski soon discovered. Others were acutely aware of the moribund nature of the 'official' anarchist movement. . One participant stated 'the anarchists and afraid of anarchy'. Something I couldn't agree with more.

There seemed to be much interest in the 'Solidarity South Pacific' campaign, which someone gave a brief presentation about and people from Italy told of the growing animal liberation movement there, where actions against the fur industry are ongoing. The film 'Surplus' was shown, an anticonsumerism film, to some extent sympathetic to the critique of civilization and which features John Zerzan as well as someone from 'AdBusters'.

Although the meetings were at times hard to follow due to lack of structure and of course the translation is hard work, it was good to meet up with people from across Europe where an interest in the critique of civilization seems to be growing more and more.

With the 'Green Anarchy in the UK' gathering here in the UK in July as well as a second gathering in the US later this year it seems hopeful that more and more people are showing an interest in ideas that take on the totality.

big a problem. When they appeared (about every other day), we mostly played off the trails, so they couldn't count us or see what we were up to. But the undercovers and informants were a little more troubling. They were definitely there, but we tried to maintain a balance of precautions without becoming paranoid or judgmental of those who dressed or acted differently than most. We should expect that whenever we are doing anything that threatens the system, they will do what they can to investigate, infiltrate, and/or disrupt our activities. But as long as we take our safety and security seriously and take the necessary actions to protect ourselves and each other, and don't act like a bunch of liberals who believe in playing fair or being honest with the state, this doesn't have to impede our activities.

This is only a broad look at the gathering, barely a glimpse of the personal and interpersonal experiences and adventures of people there. In general, most people who attended agreed that it was a very meaningful event. I want to give personal thanks to all those who facilitated workshops, the security team who gave us warnings when the forest service was coming, those who bottom-lined the kitchen and provided everyone with three great vegan meals a day, those who donated food, supplies, literature, energy, and money, and everyone who participated respectfully with an open yet critical mind.

It was obvious that there is a strong desire to do this again, and people in the southeast have proposed organizing the "3rd annual Black and Green Anarchist Gathering" in their bioregion next August (We'll keep you posted). We also talked about different bioregions possibly organizing their own local events a few weeks before the larger one.

Each day it becomes more clear to many of us that the anti-civilization tendency within the anarchist movement is taking things seriously in many regards and constantly growing as a potent dynamic contributing to the momentum against civilization.

annoying self-righteous anti-civ insurrectionary who constantly interrupts to spew the same old rhetoric...and excessive saliva).

Everyone's favorite character seemed to be Gimili, JZ's faithful companion with a battle axe and short temper for anything reformist, leftist, or even mildly annoying. Each scene would end with "Gimili feeling feral fury!" and destroying that which oppressed him (or got in his way), as the audience cheered on! Woefully, Gimili finally got it in the end when the Sphinx (David Watson) guarding the Oracle of Detroit (Fredy Perlman) gave him a trick question. But John finally makes it to the end of his journey, and learns that ideological thinking (even in fixing his glasses) is not always the best way to achieve one's anarchist goals. This magnificently performed theatrical extravaganza of sectarianism and insider humor was a treat for everyone!

Overall, people were generally helpful and enthusiastic about contributing to the temporary community, yet there did seem to be an informal division of labor occurring at times. There was a dedicated security team and a solid kitchen crew, which were open and flexible, yet seemed to consist of a lot of the same people. This was a little disappointing, but we are all trying to figure out how to contribute and cooperate after being taught to either compete or be too dependent on others to survive. Even in this regard there was growth at this gathering.

And while the group was fairly homogeneous in some respects, it was actually diverse in many ways, with the militants, intellectuals, survivalists, raw-foodists, crusties, artists, gardeners, goat herders, foragers, and tree-sitters offering an interesting mix of perspectives on the decivilizing process. However, noticeably missing, especially in a gathering of this type, were many indigenous folks, something to definitely think about in the future.

Despite taking certain security precautions, since this was an open gathering on "public land", we had to deal with the fact that we were always being watched from outside and from within. The overt pigs (Forest Service and Sheriff's Department) were not too

Review of "Green Anarchy in the UK – Gathering of the Tribes" Held at Bilston Glen Protest Site, 1–4 JULY, 2004

First of all I'd like to thank everyone for coming and helping out to make the gathering happen! I had a great time myself and everyone else seemed to enjoy it as well. I'd especially like to thank the people who turned up a couple of days before the gathering to help out. I also want to point out that this review is based on my own experience of the gathering and is a very small excerpt of what went on those days. And I won't tell you how many we were at the gathering in numbers, as that's impossible, as we're all unique and therefore can't be counted.

The first day we had the discussion "What is green anarchy? Why anticivilization". It contained, among other things, people's opinions on the differences between the anthropocentric and biocentric worldviews, the differences between green anarchy and other forms of anarchism, whether or not we're sentimentalising nature and opinions on the origins of civilization. It became clear during the discussion that some people we're addressing the totality of civilization while others just had problems with some of it.

The next day started with a "Gender and violence" discussion. We talked about how we deal with violence in our communities, how many chances we give violent people and whether we emphasize on physically fighting the system or on building communities.

The one conclusion we came to was that communication is the key to solving a lot of problems. After that some of us regrouped to have a “Beyond veganism” discussion. With a group consisting mostly of “freegans” (people who eat animal products from skips and animals who live wild), we talked about whether or not it would be possible to survive in the north of Europe on a wild vegan diet, if we would rather die than kill an animal in a survival situation, whether we want to try to become wild animals again following our instincts or if we thought morals was something good.

In the afternoon we went for a foraging walk held by a local storyteller. He shared some of his knowledge about various plants, how eco-systems work and how to tell if a woodland is ancient or not. In the evening we gathered around the campfire for the workshop “Visualizing collapse”, a discussion about how to deal with a possible future collapses. Almost everyone seemed to think that an ecological and industrial collapse here in Europe is very likely in our lifetime. So we talked about what to do in that case, the likely necessity of fighting for your own survival in competition with others and how the state and ruling class are going to treat us anarchists.

The morning after I joined some others in trying to make fire primitively. We used the bow drill method and managed to get smoke going quite fast. But then we were interrupted by one of the worst hail-rains I’ve ever experienced, and thunder and lightning along with that. After it stopped a bunch of us continued with a workshop called “Biotechnology and other advances of the megamachine”. We shared thoughts and ideas about biotechnology, nanotechnology, surveillance technology, new laws of control, the proposed new ID card for the UK, and how to fight all of this. Another division amongst us also became clear; that some of us see technology as something inherently authoritarian and unequal, and that we therefore have to get rid of it altogether, while others thought that technology in itself is not the problem, it’s how we use it. In the

made from urban scavenged materials and the tanning of animal hides.

There were lots of informal skills shared as well, like communicating with feral noises over distances and backwoods stealth training when the Forest Service came to snoop, or the various shelters that spontaneously popped up during the week, especially when it started to rain.

There was also an amazing infoshop put together by various distros in which tons of anti-civilization, insurrectionary, DIY (Do-It-Yourself) guides, and primitive skills zines were available for free.

Nighttime was a particularly interesting time at the lakes. Because of extreme fire danger, we had only two fire-pits, which encouraged folks to either play in the moonlight or get together for story-telling, reading poetry, rants, pickin’ and singin’, as well as larger discussions on topics including patriarchy, healing from civilization, and strategy. Most interesting was the radical/anarchist dismantling of identity politics as a limited, and often repressive approach to liberation (not a conversation that is easy to have in many leftist college towns).

One night towards the end of the week, the BASTARDs (Berkeley Anarchist Students of Theory and Research Development) did an amazingly hilarious shadow puppet show, mocking every single element of the anarchist milieu. As popcorn was passed around the fire, we traveled with John Zerzan as he went on a journey with his anarchist companions to find a “primitivist way” to fix his broken glasses.

At everyone’s expense, we were thoroughly entertained with spoof characters like Tennessee Toad (editor of Fifth Estate), Brenden B. Judas (former primitivist turned leftist/liberal), Whitey McGuilt (who certainly bore no resemblance to Chris Crass), Luna Earth Child, the Plateauists, the Hermit of the Long Haul, Eco-Archy, Anthro Boy, Manny the Manarchist, Donna the Doormat, White Lion (suburban Rastafarian) and Spitting Crow (an

ward theory, and those who preferred down-and-dirty skillssharing, but many people got a balance, not to mention the personal interactions, direct experiences, and play throughout the week!

Preferring to learn and practice my rewilding skills on my own or in small groups, and loving the intellectual stimulation of critical folks I don't normally get to interact with on a daily basis, I tended to stay in the thick of the discussions and debates. I really appreciated "Leftism 101" by Lawrence Jarach of Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed, in which he gave a concise history of the Left, and its typical contemporary manifestations, so that anarchists could better understand the non-liberatory political tendency they often criticize (and in some unfortunate cases, consider themselves part of). Also of interest to me were the non-ideological discussions of Primitivism, a strategic look at the destruction of civilization's infrastructure (electric grid, communication networks, economic systems, etc), and a look at some ways of creating insurrectionary communities.

I was a little disappointed with the anti-climatic discussion of the controversial new pamphlet, "Barbaric Thoughts", billed as the long-awaited smack-down between insurrectionist Wolfi Landstreicher and primitivist John Zerzan. Both sides seemed disinterested in this discussion, and most others seemed fairly timid in challenging any of the questionable ideas. Throughout the week the debate between insurrectionism and primitivism came up in numerous discussions, and most people felt that while there are rigid and dogmatic aspects of both tendencies, the ideas are connected in some very fundamental ways, and it seems that most of the differences are a matter of prioritization (to oversimplify: primitivists prioritizing origins, insurrectionists focusing more on current institutions) and not opposing in terms of analysis or goals.

It was not all talk. There were also plenty of plant walks, animal skinning, and tool/weapon making to keep any feral forager more than busy. I particularly enjoyed the baskets and lanterns that were

afternoon I participated in a workshop called "Nature awareness", where we played some games and tried walking silently.

The last day of the gathering some of us had a "Primitive shelter building" workshop, which resulted in three different very cool constructions made totally of what we could find around us in the forest. The workshop also included cordage making.

Later on we had a discussion about "Science". Some of us thought that science is just about trying to control everything and that we therefore should get rid of it. Others thought that we could use the "good aspects" of science to make the world better. We also discussed whether we should and/or need to "clean up after the industrial society", planting trees etc, or if we should leave that for nature to take care of, and if planting is not just a way of controlling nature. Later in the evening we talked about "Creating a nomadic tribe", which sprung from the great feeling of being in this big tribe during the gathering and wanting this to continue. Some people visualized a tribe travelling by vehicle between festivals, protest sites and the like, while others wanted to see a hunter-gatherer tribe walking around living of nature, fighting the system and showing another way of living.

Finally I'd have to say that getting the idea of organizing this gathering, carrying it through and experiencing it, is one of the most empowering things I've ever done!

What a Load of Crap: The Anticivilisation Encuentro, Pyrenees, April '04 by Rusty Nail

The expected Friday night meeting to plan out the schedule was sabotaged by the organisers, a Spanish anarchist group, who declared that their role as organisers was to get us to the site and now it was our conference. All very well, but they hadn't put it that way in the initial literature. We were a bit wrong-footed and ended up doing a half-arsed introductory thing and making no schedule for the rest of the meeting. Auto-organisation is a worthy thought but not at 11pm on a cold night. Yes, it was cold and to make things a little more ludicrous we discovered that despite the weather, it was illegal to burn wood anywhere in the Pyrenees in spring and the police would happily shut us down if they spotted any fires.

We entered the realm of a bad joke when some bright spark flooded the campsite with about fifty electric lights. So we wouldn't trip over on a nasty stone? So we could make sure our arses were clean?

With a start like this, it was not a great surprise that we ended up with three days of sprawling unfocused discussion, with occasionally interesting moments. A lot of people chose to leave early.

The first day we did a stupid goround again, then a few old men with beards dominated the discussion. We were introduced to the exciting notion of a cobweb of resistance. "Who is the spider?"

sit beneath, the location was ideal for people to re-connect and re-wild.

The "organizing" was very loose and open. Through various informal networks (publications, flyers, internet, radio, word of mouth), lots of people got the word out months ahead of time, while a core group, mostly living in the region, took the initiative to get the main supplies and site details together in the few weeks leading up to the gathering. The lakes were a mile and a half hike uphill from the parking lot, so some folks arrived a couple days early to haul supplies for the kitchen and temporary infrastructure. By the time people started rolling in, a top-notch kitchen, numerous shitters, and general information (signs, maps, etc.) were ready for the nearly 200 people who were there throughout the week (with approximately 100 or so at a time).

Although we contacted lots of folks with specific skills, knowledge, and opinions, we wanted to keep the schedule open to encourage everyone's participation, so we decided on loose themes for each day, both on theoretical and practical levels, as suggestions or general orientations for people to plan around. At each morning circle we passed around a board for people to schedule discussions or skill-shares they wanted to facilitate or see happen. The theoretical themes were: Intro to Green Anarchy and Primitivism, What We're Up Against (Civilization, Patriarchy, the State), Moving Beyond the Left and Ideology, Insurrection and Nihilism, Direct Action and Tactics, and Visions and Strategy. The more practical themes were: Intro to Earth-Skills and Primitive Life-Ways, Shelter, Containers, Water, Plants (food and medicine), Healing (self-care, community care, spirituality), Hunting, Scavenging, Self-Defense, and Fire and Restoration. While things generally stuck to the themes, the event also had a flow of its own, which worked out quite well. Although it was not possible to go to everything, and there were times when the length of discussions were limited by the schedule, altogether it was invigorating without being too stressful. Inevitably, there did seem to be those who gravitated to-

A Look at the Feral Visions Gathering. Uncivilizing Physically, Mentally, and Spiritually. *By Felonious Skunk*

Feral Visions Against Civilization, the “2nd annual Black and Green Anarchist Gathering”, took place the first week of August and was facilitated by various collectives of the Black and Green Network. Our goal was to help bring folks with similar perspectives into a wild environment and help break down mediation between ourselves, our world, and each other. The gathering provided an introduction to the various strands of anti-civilization thought, an in-depth forum for discussing and developing the theoretical and practical aspects of anarcho-primitivism/green anarchy, and also a skillshare for primitive skills and post-industrial/survival tactics. The entire event was centered on active participation and sharing and was, in my opinion, a tremendous success.

The location of the gathering (disclosed through our website, voicemail, and flyers only days before, for security reasons) was Twin Lakes in the Umpqua National Forest. This beautiful site in the Southern Cascades of Oregon was used for the 1998 Earth First! National Rendezvous, and was well-equipped to handle large crowds. With two crystal clear lakes for swimming, fresh mountain springs for drinking, tons of berries, and lots of huge Douglas fir, Cedar, and Spruce trees to hike through, climb, or

someone asked. The second day saw rain stop play for a bit and a welcome diversion with a film, a presentation about the OPM struggle in Papua and a fairly interesting animal rights debate. The final day saw a basic primitive skills workshop and an uninteresting Stirnerstyle pro-individualist rant from some guy who used to be a Maoist and now enjoyed being a chinstroking anarchist.

I had optimistically expected an anticiv gathering to draw out of the woodwork some people well advanced in sustainable and nonhierarchical living in practice, but I was wrong. Instead I encountered some people doing good stuff but still trapped in wage slavery ad lots of anarchists who were interested in anticiv as an increasingly trendy new concept they had read about in a ‘radical’ magazine, doing fuck all about it in their personal lives and thus with nothing to contribute to the meeting.

Thus the majority of the people came as passive lemmings rather than participants and the meetings of 20–30 people mainly consisted of one person ranting and everyone else halflistening and trying to keep warm. I was unempowered. In fact, no wonder people left early. We missed a lively Mayday in Barcelona for this.

Still, it wasn’t totally in vain: some connections were made as we warmed our hands with copious cups of thyme tea. The language barrier of English versus Spanish was dealt with fairly well. Some nice people were there. I met Italians, Catalans, Basques, Andalucians, Dutch, English, Swedish, Irish, German, Portuguese and Libyans. Any cops there must have been satisfied with the woe-ful state of our resistance. I learnt a lot about how not to organise a conference. I also saw how fucked most people will be when Babylon crumbles and falls. If there are people out there seriously planning to survive, they weren’t at this meeting. Maybe anticivilisation means many different things to different people – unfortunately we didn’t ever get to a stage where we could discuss that.

The Earth First! Summer Gathering, 4th – 8th August 2004 – Lincolnshire

To be honest I was dreading another EF! Gathering, wavering on whether or not to go, I ended up reluctantly making the trek to the not exactly ‘des-res’ location of Lincolnshire.

Arrival on site reaffirmed my belief that Lincolnshire is a county of flat farmland denuded of trees. Still as time progressed, my rather cynical view of Lincolnshire being a desert stripped of wildness was changed slightly by the discovery of Adders and other positive examples of wildness being present.

This vision of wildness, for the most part, soon evaporated like a mirage on entering the various meetings and workshops that were put on for the week. The usual array of campaigns were represented through workshops, rather like a careers fair I thought, everything compartmentalized for easy access. There was a lack of anything particularly inspiring, but of course that only represents the current sad state of affairs of the direct action scene.

Last year the organizers had planned a whole series of gathering-wide discussions which they thought were important for all those present to discuss in smaller groups. This met with mixed reactions, some thinking it was a great gathering but many loathing the gathering wide discussions, some accusing them of being ‘ideologically loaded’.

However, this year there was only one gathering-wide discussion... on the G8 and the ‘Dissent Network’ set up to organize mo-

each other and up front. Regardless, I see animal, earth, and human liberation as all vital aspects of the struggle against civilization.

What really struck me about this fest (despite my numerous criticisms here) were the folks who attended. That all of these people stayed around after the day of music to sit intently through 12 hours of speakers, films and discussion was really motivating for me. People came and took an active role and taking in a lot of information and being open. So I’d like to send thanks out to all of them, but the greatest thanks go to the organizers. This was a huge event and not bowing to the pressure of state repression can’t be underestimated. This was all done really well with a bit of variety in the speakers. Everyone staying around and taking part was a great ‘fuck you’ to the pigs who tried nearly everything they could to keep this from happening. Hopefully this is just another opening for folks to get involved and for more events like this in the future, so to quote the ever so prolific G. W. Bush, “bring it on”!

have really hit a bit closer to home for a good share of the audience. I guess if you're nicely asked to challenge your position it's easy to say 'ok' and go along, but if a nonwhite states it more blatantly then they're just "an ass". Hmmmm.

All this aside, I was really impressed by Means and really recommend folks reading his book *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, if they don't have a chance to see him in person. After Means was a rather hilarious interlude of short radical films from the Lost Film Festival. Because of time constraints we just got a few highlights of the full three hour version. If the whole thing is like the bits viewed here, I'd say it's definitely worth pursuing. A letter from Jeffrey 'Free' Luers was also read. Free is currently serving a near 23 year sentence for torching SUV's with co-defendant Craig 'Critter' Marshall. Free was one of the P.O.W.s who would be receiving the funds made from the fest. His letter was a passionate call for action and I believe it is on the freefreenow.org website, so look for it there.

Rod Coronado was the final speaker and was one of the most impressive speakers I've seen to date. He spoke about his radicalization and very explicitly about the actions that he has taken. Rod, a Yaqui warrior, exAL P.O.W., and persistent target of the U.S. government, spoke intensely about his connection with the earth and how this became the inspiration for a string of liberations and actions leaving a number of mink research facilities being reduced to ashes. He spoke about his time in prison and how the relentless-ness of the wild kept him going. A really powerful and involving talk, which was definitely a great way to end the Fest.

I should state here that I am not an advocate of animal rights or any rights for that matter. No 'justice' will ever be granted by the state and I think true liberation will only come at the complete dismantlement of civilization (not replacement). It is from this that a lot of my criticisms come and I hope that deeply entrenched dogma won't cause these remarks to be seen as straight blows, but rather as criticisms. We could all benefit from being a bit more open with

bilisations against it. Personally I thought this incredibly ideologically loaded, mass mobilizations seemingly being placed at the top of the agenda for discussion by all those present at the gathering. On probing one of the organizers on this point I was told that Dissent were the only people who asked for a gathering-wide discussion and that's why it had been timetabled as one. Fair enough, but I couldn't help wondering whether others would have the arrogance to suggest their campaign was important enough to deem such a meeting.

As it turned out many weren't interested in the G8 meeting, either not attending and finding other things to do in the glorious sunshine, or leaving the meeting when it broke into small groups. Still, many people were in attendance, so we will have to wait and see what happens with next years G8 summit.

Highlights of the gathering, besides the weather, included a very well attended introduction to AnarchoPrimitivism, which proved an interesting discussion, and an interesting dissection of the successful Bayer campaign (see previous issue of GA for more on the Bayer campaign).

Of course as already mentioned there were the usual array of campaign meetings, practical workshops and 're-pressed distribution' had a book stall, Veggies provided snacks and the 'Anarchist Teapot' provided meals.

I went away from this years EF! gathering feeling less disappointed than I had expected, but coming to the conclusion that the gathering is more of a 'direct action summer camp', than a meeting of radicals associated with the EF! Network, which lies in worse and worse tatters every year.

A meeting about the EF! Action Update was attended by a pitiful number of people, none of whom had turned up to take it on, so it seems having become increasingly irrelevant and inconsistent over the years, the EF!AU is finally dead.

Best quote of the gathering was one overheard in a workshop on 'EF! Culture' by someone saying they felt alienated by the gathering because it 'focused too much on ecology' (!).

His talk got rid of any skepticism I had almost immediately. He spoke about his life as it related to his radicalization, his experiences with whites and white 'radicals', and a number of other things. The huge part of his speech focused on a powerful critique of patriarchy. He spoke about Sioux life as anarchistic and about how male rule has taken this world for a wrong turn. He referred to himself as a primitivist and claimed to be a revolutionary in the sense that he wants to return to the beginning as hunter-gatherers.

I was among some of those who were really into his talk, but it seems a lot of the AR crowd absolutely hated it. Here's why: he spoke of AR as being a part of white privilege. In keeping with his past writings and speeches, he was straight to the point, confident, and well-spoken. For him, 'Grandmother Earth' is a series of relations. There is no split of sentient and non-sentient life, but recognition of the circle of life and the role we all play in that. AR folks seem to have a hard time really tackling this concept.

No time seems better than now to bring up an important point that I noticed. There seems to be a lot of implicit racism involved in the AR scene in specific, but the left/radical movement in general and this is something that has bothered me for a while, but my experiences at the TL Fest gave me a better perspective on it. The gist of what Means was getting at regarding liberation was not too different from what EC and I said hours before him. However, the reaction was quite different. When EC and I talked about the hunting aspect of rewilding, it seemed inconceivable for those vocal people mentioned earlier. For whites to talk about the spirituality of the earth is apparently ridiculous. In fact, one person said meat eating was understandable for some "ethnic" people. Apparently as whites and having confronted vegan ideology we were still within the 'rational' sphere and worth arguing with and 'ethnic' people are still outside of that realm. The old savage versus civilized split lives on. When Means confronted this ideology as white privilege, it was seemingly strong enough grounds to just write him off. Comparing that to Ashanti's allusions to white privilege, this one must

the system and making connections between MOVE, the ELF and the ALF. I imagine that letter may be floating around the internet somewhere or might be relatively easy to get a copy of.

Following Ashanti was University of Texas Professor/AR advocate Steven Best. Take every standard AR position and hand it to a motivational speaker and you have Steven Best. His spotty and random rhetoric tried it's best to appeal to everyone and people got caught up in the cheering 'phrase-a-long' speech. Unfortunately, this meant overlooking the details; 1) Best was flamboyantly patriotic. Speaking about the assault on our "civil rights" by way of the Patriot Act, he completely didn't question to real heritage of this nation. News flash, America was not founded on "the right to dissent", but on genocide, ethnocide, ecocide, slavery, capital, and every other form of exploitation. Best, a post-modernist Marxist somehow failed to take note of that one. 2) In suit with point 1, I hate to break it to the AR movement, but this nation isn't likely going to have a movement against speciesism. Not to forget that the past movements against oppression haven't gotten nearly as far as whites think they have. 3) I appreciate Best's attempts to spread knowledge about ALF/ELF actions, but we could spare some of the dogma! Frankly, and this doesn't just apply to Best, I'm really tired of hearing direct action as being rooted in things like the Boston Tea Party, isn't anybody else?

I can't underestimate my thankfulness for Russell Means following up to Best. Means is one of the most notorious American Indian Movement activists. He's survived 5 assassination attempts, a lifetime of resistance to the capitalist government of the U.S., has fought along side Mayans in Nicaragua against the communist Sandinista government, and more. Now, I must say that Means, having been a prolific critic of industrialism among other things, was a big encouragement to me, but I was a bit weary about possible turns he might have taken after his acting career took off and his run for governor of New Mexico.

Thoughts on the Total Liberation Fest. January 10–11, 2004. Erie, Pennsylvania.

From the very start, this immense winter project had been under fire from the Feds. Routine methods of harassment meant getting every place the organizers had secured taken away from them. This went from using scare tactics on the owners to scare tactics on their insurance agencies. Never-the-less, the organizers stood their ground and refused to back down to the pig presence. With the Feds lurking, the only option was to have as many back up spots as possible and not to give out the name of the venue until the last minute. In the end, this worked out well, even when the first venue got cancelled a couple of hours before the show started, another location was ready to go in less than two hours.

No doubt all of this and winter storms scared off a number of people who would have otherwise been there. In total, there was still over 300 people present. The first day was dedicated to music, and this for many the 'main attraction'. However, it was not mine. A lot of people are definitely reviewing how the bands did and they're more qualified than I, so I'll let people find that on their own (check out the message board at www.total-liberation.com).

Another day, another venue (and a warmer one at that). Kevin Jonas was the first speaker. Passionate and well spoken, but devoted to animal rights. He's one of the founders of Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty (SHAC), which is a rather successful campaign to shut down one of the largest vivisecting corporations in the world.

What bothered me was Kevin's seemingly ungrounded belief that there is some hope for 'justice' within the system, hitting a barrage of quotes with a tint of patriotic hope. He also spoke a good deal about speciesism, the AR belief that humans systematically oppress animals.

This is, without a doubt, true, but the concept of 'sentience' frankly frightens me. By saying that certain animals are sentient and deserving equal rights, there is also the implicit statement that other animals or life is not sentient. When you see the earth as an entire living entity and care as much for all life, this becomes a little hard to swallow. It seems the sentiency paradigm may just add more animals to the favored pet status without any real hope for total liberation.

Next was Species Traitor co-editor, Evan Cestari, and myself. An already short slot was cut shorter by rightful anticipation of harassment for my diet (I eat wild and road kill meat). We did the best we could to touch on the major points of green anarchist and anarcho-primitivist critiques, suffering all the consequences of trying to touch on a million things at once, but the point was really just to open the door. What followed was both the most amusing and obnoxious part of the day. Without having talked about my diet at all (since there was no reason for it), nearly every question surrounded my diet. This is what happens when a person who advocates a gathering-hunting lifestyle speaks before an audience of primarily straightedge vegans!

Now much of the things said were nothing new. What seems most apparent is that vegan dogma has no middle ground. If you say you eat meat or hunt, vegans can't think of anything short of eating McDonalds and riding on quads with shotguns. This, of course, is far from the truth. Advocating gathering and hunting as a part of rewilding seems to have gone straight past the more arrogant and vocal of the bunch who heard nothing more than 'I eat meat'. Despite being a bit annoyed, after the whole ordeal I realized that the vocal minority was very much a minority. Folks were re-

ally supportive of the idea, and while not necessarily in agreement, they were open to the concept and equally annoyed with those who couldn't see past the thickest of dogma.

Next up was Andy Stepanian, an exanimal liberation prisoner of war. His talk was much more personal and straightforward than Jonas, and was fully appreciable. He spoke for a bit about his own experiences with prison and towards the end offered a lot of good advice for the likely 'future political prisoners' in the audience. His central focus was on the SHAC campaign, but from a tactical perspective. He spoke honestly about what has and hasn't been effective as well as the many successes of the campaign. As much as I'm not into single issue campaigns, the SHAC one is worthy for having thus far been rather effective. I found his talk really informative and worthwhile.

Following Andy was anarchist panther Ashanti Alston. Ashanti is an exP.O.W. having been involved with the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army. In fairness to Ashanti, I missed a bit of his talk, so I can't give a complete review. He spoke mostly about his own experiences as a radical, in prison, and then spent a lot of time talking about how whites should be putting more effort into working with non-whites. I can agree that whites need to try and see the world from other positions, but I'm not sure everyone would really appreciate a bunch of white do-gooders flocking to 'non-white communities'. The white perception tends to be really paternalistic. I think forcibly challenging white privilege is necessary, but any revolutionary relationships should be more organic. Then again, Ashanti is coming from a leftist position and is rooted in organization and platforms. Coming from an anti-left position, we have different 'goals' and means.

After Ashanti did his talk, he read a letter from Ramona Africa, one of the most notorious spokespersons and ex-P.O.W. from MOVE. The letter was good though I was a bit disappointed to miss seeing one of Ramona's extremely powerful talks. The letter had to do though. Talking about state repression, the problems of