

RESISTANCE

Power surge

Activists scrub the grubby face of globalization clean

For many, coal represents the new, grubby face of globalization. From Bristol to Bangladesh, the extraction and burning of coal is increasing faster than you can say 'carbon-capture technology'. But thankfully, so is the resistance, as the recent direct action 'climate camps' – which took place on three different continents – have demonstrated, with sackloads of exuberance.

This July, more than 1,200 people descended upon the Carrington coal terminal in Newcastle, Australia. Of those, 37 were arrested for boarding trains and lying across railway tracks, while others formed a human sign nearby which read: 'Cut carbon now or never.' This follows similar actions last year when 11 activists were arrested for attaching themselves to coal-loading equipment at the Newcastle site.

Aussie campaigners have also turned up the heat at Swanbank power station near Brisbane. Four Greenpeace activists abseiled down the side of a 140 metre-high smokestack, painting the words 'go solar' on their way down, inspired, perhaps, by similar hard-hat mischief in the Czech Republic last year.

Over in the States, 13 women were arrested in June for blockading the headquarters of coal giant Dominion – part of the escalating action against the destruction of the beautiful Appalachia mountain range in West Virginia.

In Britain in August, thousands converged on Kingsnorth in Kent – the site where energy giant E.ON wants to build the first in a new generation of coal-fired smog-belching power stations – to demonstrate their determination to 'leave the coal in the ground'. They threw down the gauntlet, by vowing to blockade permanently any attempts to build it.

It was on 1 April that word of coal's infamy really began to spread. As *Currents* reported in our June issue, activists from around the world celebrated 'Fossil Fools

Day' with hundreds of autonomous actions ranging from the simple to the subversive.

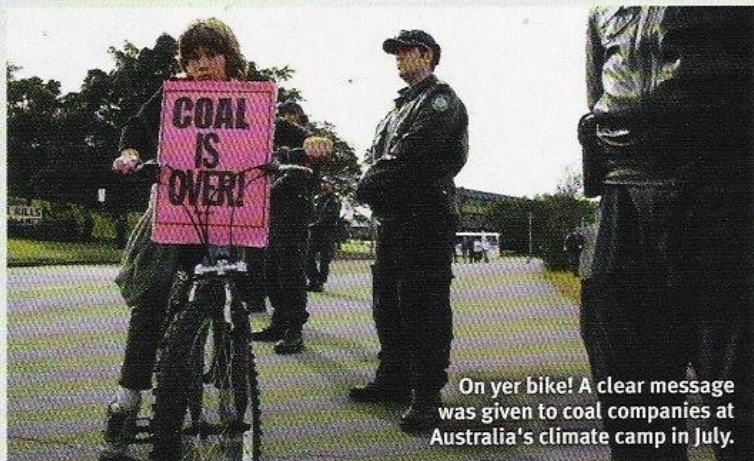
In New York, for example, 25 activists sought to draw attention to the financiers lurking behind coal's rapid expansion plans. Dressed as billionaires, they blockaded the headquarters of Citibank to protest against its large-scale investments in coal-fired power plants.

What's more, the pressure is paying off. Earlier this year, the Save Happy Valley Coalition in New Zealand/Aotearoa celebrated two years of occupying a site earmarked for a new opencast coalmine near Westport. The longest-running environmental occupation in the country has meant that the aptly named Happy Valley remains unspoilt and safe.

Activists in Wales are also celebrating. They shut down one of Europe's largest opencast coalmines by chaining themselves to machinery and blockading the Ffos-y-Fran site.

Far from being just this season's latest activist trend, anti-coal has become a formidable movement thanks to its simultaneous diversity and continuity. Coal does indeed represent the new face of globalization – the globalization of dissent! And while decision-makers promise so much and deliver so little, there's no-one left to fill the gap but us, the activists, the Polyfills of modern society.

Sam Martingell



On yer bike! A clear message was given to coal companies at Australia's climate camp in July.

CONOR ASHLEIGH