

extinction rebellion

The day in Parliament Square started like any other: a little quiet, and with some politically inclined speeches – this time addressing the day of International Peasant Solidarity. As police appeared to be moving in on their usual targets of **Oxford Circus** and **Waterloo Bridge**, **Parliament Square** sent what rebels they could spare to reinforce the other sites.

By 6:30, the roadblocks were stretched thin – and it was then that a concentration of police unlike any this week arrived, marching in a seemingly unending column and circling into the square. Word was instantly sent out to the other sites, but it looked like the back-up so urgently dispatched would arrive to find a square emptied of rebels. The massive police-force began removing rebels from three of five roadblocks, arresting an estimated 50; the displaced blockers regrouped for a final stand, lying down close together – and it was then the XR Samba Band arrived.

Rallying and reinvigorating with the rhythm of their drums, the band led the remaining rebels in a circle of the Square, growing in size as they went before slingshotting onto the bridge. For all the police's numbers, comparatively few arrests were made; whether this was due to the newfound size, mobility and dynamic of the crowd, or due to nearly 400 prior arrests flooding police capacity, remains unclear.

What *is* clear is that Parliament Square was held, against all probability. Having out maneuvered police, a group of 10 rebels retook the southeast corner; at 1:00 am this update went out internally:

"Now retaken all 5 roads at parliament square. The whole square belongs to us again. Hammock between the traffic lights and hot food from Hari Krishna van. It's one o'clock in the morning and we're feeling good!"

Just as hope began shining in Parliament Square, a shadow was falling on **Waterloo Bridge**. Since Monday night's incredibly close call (down to the last 15 arrestable rebels) the 'real garden bridge' has blossomed into a hub of high spirits. Sporadic waves of arrests throughout today were met with singing, clapping and cheering – and this writer can testify to the quality of Waterloo Bridge's kitchen.

The upbeat, loving atmosphere was jolted by the ominous news coming from Parliament Square; bridge-based rebels were sent to reinforce the square. Not long after this, the police declared their intention to clear the bridge wholly that night, announcing they had orders to make indefinite arrests until the job was done.

Calling for courage and solidarity, an announcer reasoned that the police's urgency was likely due to the coming bank holiday, which is expected to swell rebel ranks even as it takes officers off the streets. An impassioned and determined crowd drew up its seated ranks, waiting for the first wave of arrests. Musicians led solidaristic songs and held a vigil.

And very few arrests were made. As for PS, the reasons aren't yet clear. The crowd's high morale (again rooted firmly in music) and big numbers (around 100 sitting down in the road) were likely factors, together with the remarkably high concentration of media; a related speculation involves the police running out of vans!

Whatever the reason – at 2:30am Waterloo Bridge remains, as the chants went, "everyone's bridge". Around 11:00pm, the stalwart crowd was rewarded with a serenade from Nick Mulvey.

The endless party continues in Oxford Circus. There were three waves of arrests over the course of the day, with police now taking more of a mingling approach: weaving through the crowd to hone in on individuals, and for the first time approaching those at the foot of the iconic pink boat (from which vessel Chris Packham gave a heartfelt speech).

This greater proximity had some unexpected effects. Around the middle of the day, the crew up on the deck(s) were told of a police complaint with regard to the music – apparently they weren't playing enough 60s stuff. Negotiations via the XR police liaison led to the crew accepting a request for Faithless, Insomnia, on the condition that the four officers behind the collective request would then dance to the solid gold classic. The conditions were accepted, as was a separate request for the Beatles. (In a related vein, at around the same time (1:00am) in Parliament Square, not long after its retaking, some rebels were having a kick-about with an officer, drawing 'Christmas truce' comparisons. This continues a heartwarming trend of human connection exemplified earlier this week when a policeman-druid welcomed the Earth March in Hyde Park. We remain

mindful of the systematic violences still ingrained in the police force as an institution; at the same time, we happily recognize that they're fellow humans doing their jobs.)

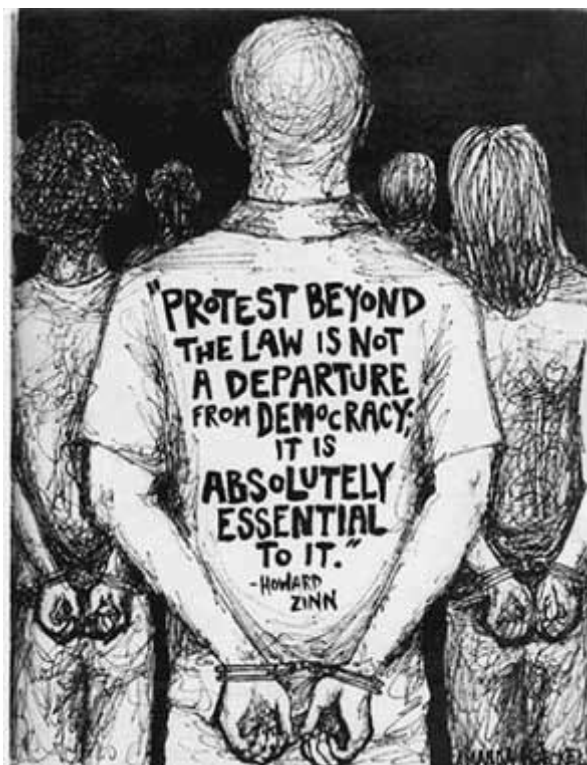
It wasn't all fun and games that day: the police threatened to confiscate the Oxford Circus (OC) kitchen unless it was moved. The decision was made to relocate the facilities to the Marble Arch site down the road. Not long after this displacement, the ex-OC kitchen had cooked a whole batch of meals which were then bike-couriered back up to the Circus! At 1:00 am, the party was still very much ongoing. XR Youth also held a die-in blocking the entrance to the H&M on Oxford Circus, protesting our obsession with consumerism and the devastating environmental impacts of the fast fashion industry.

The Marble Arch Monster continues to push down its roots. Along with sheltering the fugitive OC kitchen, and branching out with regular contingents to reinforce the other less secure locations, those at Marble Arch have found the time to hang many more banners, extend their range of tents, and begin a treehouse! Less tangible but equally fruitful developments include the expansion of the stewarding team, the improvement of the welcome tent, a solid musical line-up, and a healthy rate of donations.

Three rebels obstructed the overground tube at **Canary Wharf** station today, remaining in place for about an hour before being taken away under arrest. In a press release, explanatory context was given, underlining the need for all members of society (especially many of those working in Canary Wharf, we might posit) to 'pause' and reflect on the scale and severity of the ecological emergency.

Not long after the protest at Canary Wharf, four rebels, including a Labour councilor, glued and chained themselves to the **fence outside Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's house**. Describing him as "the best hope this country has got" in facing the ecological crisis, and asking the the Labour Party to go further than declaring a "climate emergency."

Looking to support the rebellion in a low-chance-of-arrest, organizational role? Look no further than **Parliament Square**. We're encouraging all budding rebels to start their journeys here: while all of the sites offer inductions, Parliament Square offers by far the most space and least noise, and (barring rare and implausibly ineffective mega-columns of police like today's) comparatively little distraction. Inductions take place at 11:00 am, 1:00 pm, 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm. See you soon!



As we entwine ourselves into **Waterloo Bridge** (metaphorically but also literally – our lock-ons are always ready!), we're eager to make sure the space continues to blossom into our beautiful vision of a better world. This a world with less space for cars, and more space for music and food and togetherness. But perhaps most importantly, it's a world filled with greenery. We'll give a warm welcome to potted plants of all shapes and sizes: your plant will enjoy untrammelled access to sunshine, clean air, good company, and 24-hour skate-ramp access. Please bring any plants that you can to Waterloo Bridge!

International Highlights: New Zealand

In **Wellington** rebels dressed as cows rampaged up the steps of the parliament building, mooing and spilling 'sour milk' while chased by their 'peasant farmers.' As well as contributing to the XR support of International Day of Peasant's Struggle, this action highlighted the detrimental effects of intensive animal agriculture; New Zealand's "white gold has turned to sour milk!"

Yesterday rebels turned off the water and chained themselves to pipes at Environment Canterbury offices, to protest water management practices in Canterbury as well as the broader crisis. Their action paid off: councillors have agreed to discuss declaring a climate emergency at their next meeting. Well done XR Ōtautahi!

Australia: Rebels in Adelaide were removed by police after occupying the lower house of the floor of parliament for more than an hour.

Canada: In Québec six rebels chained themselves at the doors of the Prime Minister François Legault's office, including 82 year old Serge Mongeau.

Germany: German rebels took their action indoors today with a die-in at supermarkets in Berlin, symbolising how there won't be any food on an extinct planet.

Sweden: Swedish rebels are continuing their actions this week, blocking road in Gothenburg.

France: For the International Day of Peasants' struggles, rebels in Paris handcuffed themselves in front of the entrance of the ministry of agriculture. After the arrival of police, they finished their action by a die-in. They wanted to highlight the harmful effects of the agricultural system and how climate change is tied in with it - the food shortages in the world, the difficulties farmers face, and the destruction of biodiversity.

Belgium: Today in Namur, farmers and allies gathered in front of the Parliament of Wallonia, a few weeks before the elections, to demand a coherent agricultural policy that supports family and peasant agriculture and doesn't destroy our climate. They planted potatoes together as a reminder that farming is for everyone!

United States: Rebels in New York are occupying roads in front of City Hall, climbing lampposts and dropping banners. Over 60 protesters were arrested. XRBoston were inside the Boston Globe lobby asking the Globe to tell the truth about the climate!

Humans of XR: Zoe 33 and her 2 year old rebel Max at Marble Arch. "I'm here because of my daughter. I want her to live on a planet that's not going to be completely destroyed."

Meet Peter, 70, from Birmingham, who got arrested at Oxford Circus for protesting, but that didn't stop him from rebelling today! "I got arrested last night at Oxford Circus. I'm here because I take what the scientists say seriously and they say we've only got 12 years left." Great to have you back today Peter!!

And another double act: Laurie 32 and Tsega, 4, from The Netherlands/Eritrea. "I am here because I feel that there's now a turning point. Something needs to drastically change. Our politicians are ignorant about these issues & we wanted to stand in solidarity with people."

Do, 21 from Croydon, brought along Sir David as a special guest. "I've just rocked up, I'm here because I'm down for the revolution and I'm down to stop pollution!"

These dramatic events in **London** today ended in a resounding success for our brave, resilient and kind-hearted rebels. It's easy to write about events, numbers and happenings – and today's no exception, as we tenaciously held onto all four of our now cherished sites. But what might escape observation, despite being so much more important, is the way we do such things.

Non-violence and consideration are not just abstract ethical commitments – they're a constant practice which must be renewed and maintained, and they're essential to the success of our movement. Despite very little sleep and great emotional exertion on the part of so many rebels, we're absolutely (non-violently) smashing this practice. This can't be overvalued!

Back in the quantitative realm, we're apparently blowing up on social media: our membership has been growing by 3,000 a day, our Facebook at some points by 1,000 an hour. We've also been making waves on non-social media, as XR member Robin Boardman gave Sky News presenter Adam Boulton a total schooling in non-violent communication.

One reason cited for today's imposing police actions in London is the approaching Easter bank holiday: just as it takes officers out of their helmets, so will it swell our rebellious ranks. We're now just one day from this watershed moment. Better yet, **XR Scotland** is reaching the UK capital this morning, bringing fresh and experienced rebels to help bolster the ranks of our now long-held sites.

Our tactics are working. Our values are holding. Have no doubt: even if we all go home tomorrow, the world as we know it has changed.

xraffinitygroups@gmail.com.