

I have to come out and admit it; the Greenbelt Festival campsite is my spiritual home. I no longer feel at ease in a church made of bricks and mortar or gothic buttresses. I resist being caged.

And I want to quote from the Greenbelt website, "Greenbelt speaker Alastair McIntosh grew up on the Isle of Lewis and is now a fellow of Scotland's Centre for Human Ecology. He is author of *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power*, described by Bishop James Jones as 'life-changing,' by George Monbiot as 'world-changing,' and by Thom Yorke of Radiohead as 'truly mental.'"

And what does Alastair McIntosh say ?

"To really embark upon an activist campaign – to pin your colours to the mast and say "I stand for this, these are my values, I stand in solidarity with these people or with this cause" – invariably draws you into the need for profound inner examination, a spiritual psychotherapy and in so doing constant reconnection with that source of energy and inspiration."



I suppose the signs were always there. I got into trouble for taking a day off school to go and lobby my MP with the World Development Movement, although not old enough to be a voter. I got a right royal roasting in the School Director's Office – I had forgotten to get permission to go.

A few years earlier I was asked to make a report about two people that inspired me. I chose Elizabeth Fry and Martin Luther King. Later, I was inspired by Oxfam research on world development, by Appropriate Technology engineers, radical feminists, Anti-Apartheid and peace and justice campaigners. To begin with I didn't follow through I pursued a career in Information Technology. But Integrity pursued me and eventually I had to pick her up and carry her.

It was only a matter of time before I became a proper grown-up activist.

Make Poverty History, Sustainable Development, Fair Trade, Trade Justice,

Flavour & Fe Campaign Activism

Environmental Protection, Climate Justice, Fair Society, Wealth Levelling, Alternative Energy, Organic Farming, Prison Reform, Amnesty, Reconciliation, Equitable Money Systems, Small Scale Technology, Weapons Reduction, Health and Education...for me all the causes stream into one...Peace working for a just and stable human civilisation on a beautiful and thriving Earth.

I want to follow the New Commandment to love one another. I am still learning how to love. I wasn't given a middle name at birth; I want to be able to earn one. I would like to be known as "Peacemaker".

Patience and persistence are what I trust to make serious long-lasting change. I know I have to change myself as well as encourage others to reflect on their own changes. I'm not interested in being a very public person – my approach is low-key "infiltration" as opposed to grandiose expansive gestures, showcase media events or developing big personalities. I feel that networking and genuine involvement are more important than a nicely designed brochure – friendship can win hearts and minds.

In the last few years, I have realised that the biggest nut to crack is energy management worldwide, and so I am involved in different groups that are campaigning and educating in the fields of Climate Change, Energy Control and Renewable Energy.

We must use less Energy and Resources. And share more. There are truly "Limits to Growth". This affects everything from how much we spend on products and packaging to the kind of food we eat; from where we shop to how we treat our waste; from how we travel to how we heat and light our homes. Even how we build our homes and lay out our roadways.

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To campaign and educate about Energy requires two basic understandings as far as I can see. First, that people need to wake up and smell the Fairly Traded coffee for themselves and take some

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time to reflect and decide, and make the changes in our own lives. And second, in order to overcome our individual differences and points of focus, we need to build strong, flexible communities to be able to have a serious influence on our society at large.

For this second reason, I am prepared to work with anybody who broadly shares my concerns and focus, and these days that is almost everyone.

Every single sector of Civil Society, and every department of Government, and every Local Council, many churches and other community meetings, and quite a few Members of Parliament, are turning to focus on Climate Change and Energy issues.

As a pacifist I resist demonising "the opposition" because in the area of sustainable futures, nobody is an enemy

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by Jo Abbess

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Alister McIntosh



as I believe we all need to work together as allies. For this reason, I try to work with people of all political and spiritual persuasions, cross-pollinating by bringing people into contact with each other who would not normally be on speaking terms, and building sustainable bridges. I am trying to develop my networking skills.

I have been learning how to "facilitate" "workshops", instead of "teach" at "seminars". I have been learning how to reduce my energy consumption and interest people in checking their own carbon footprints. I have been making decisions and talking about them: I no longer fly in aeroplanes; I have not bought a car. I compost, resist, refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle.

Recently I was involved in organising for the Campaign against Climate Change, in preparation for the international Climate March in London in December 2005, networking with as many groups as possible that showed an interest. And

so we have the Socialist Workers, the Unions, the Christians, the Anarchists, the Christian Anarchists, the Marxists, the humanists, the researchers, the journalists, the Green Party, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Green Liberal Democrats, Christian Ecology Link, Quaker Green Action, the Mennonites, the Evangelicals, the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Pagans, the Eco Warriors, the Anti-Capitalists, the Goths, the Treehuggers and all.

There were around 20 people who wanted to speak at the Rally on 3rd December 2005, representing a true rainbow coalition. The only contentious issues were whether one of the Conservation Conservatives and the London firebrand "I am not an Oil Trader" George Galloway would be invited to ascend the rostrum. I think he prefers appearing on television, anyway.

It was a highly successful day, including the Prayers for the Planet service at Hinde Street Methodist Church after the Rally. Even when it rained it didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the marchers to demonstrate our strong public call for definite political action on binding Carbon Targets.

I was a march steward, trying to assist with public safety and order. After a year or so of deliberate networking, I knew

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people from most of the groups that attended, so this helped me to be informal with the crowd management, and it was mostly very good-natured.

The next steps in campaign activism for me include working with Stop Climate Chaos in one capacity or other. The first organised event was on 1st March 2006. I worked with an educational group producing computerised graphical resources. I also plan to keep reading and talking and listening and writing for my regular Climate & Energy Report. Plus, I will keep taking part in conferences and community groups all around the country. I like travelling by train – it's enforced relaxation.

Finally, a few quotes, the best piece of theatre I saw in 2005, "My name is Rachel Corrie", a play by Alan Rickman based on the astounding and most moving words and life of a young American woman bulldozed to death trying to protect Palestinian homes from destruction by the Israeli authorities :-

"I've had this underlying need to go to a place and meet people who are on the other end of the portion of my tax money that goes to fund the US and other militaries."



What Rainer Marie Rilke advised about the urge to be a writer, I take as advice for the urge to be a campaign activist:-

"No one can advise or help you – no one. There is only one thing you should do. Go into yourself. Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depths of your heart, confess to yourself whether you would have to die if you were forbidden to write. This most of all, ask yourself in the most silent hour of your night, "must I write?" Dig into yourself for a deep answer. And if this answer rings out in assent, if you meet this solemn question with a strong, simple "I must", then build your life in accordance with this necessity; your whole life, even into its humblest and most indifferent hour, must become a sign and witness to this impulse."

Mayer Hillman, sustainability policy thinker on the patience required:-

"I know from experience that ideas need to be floated and then get taken up. I'm not deterred by rejection."

Harald Zindler – Greenpeace, on the psychology of activism:-

"The optimism of the action is better than the pessimism of the thought."

Jo Abbess

