

Beware, 'green' danger ahead

By Andrew Montford, The Spectator, 6 February 2015

For the best part of half a century Greenpeace's constant campaigning on environmental issues has been an almost unmitigated success. Its effectiveness has brought it both astonishing wealth and almost unimpeded access to decision-makers. During this time, it has had what amounts to a free pass from the media, its claims and methods rarely questioned by credulous environmental correspondents.

The wheels finally coming off?

But are the wheels finally coming off? Looking back over the last few years it's easy to get that impression: an organisation that once seemed untouchable has found itself having to answer some very sharp questions about the way it behaves and operates.

As far back as 2010, Gene Hashmi, Greenpeace's boss in India, found himself at the **centre of a worldwide uproar**, after publishing what appeared to be a warning to the group's opponents: 'We know where you live. We know where you work. And we be many. And you be few.'

Lord Ridley threatened with beheading

Reasonable people might have waved it all aside as an aberration. But if they did, then their minds would surely have been concentrated by a disturbing incident a few days ago when somebody, writing in the comments section of the *Guardian* website, threatened the Conservative peer Lord Ridley with beheading. Subsequent inquiries **suggest** that the perpetrator was a Greenpeace activist and sometime *Guardian* writer.

But it is not just these hints of violent undercurrents that have started to take the gloss off Greenpeace's reputation. Just a few weeks ago it hit **the headlines again** when some of its activists caused irreparable damage to the Nazca Lines World Heritage site in Peru as part of an extraordinarily irresponsible publicity stunt. And as Greenpeace's leadership moved heaven and earth to keep the identities of the perpetrators out of the hands of Peruvian law enforcement officials, we could almost see the group's reputation crumbling before our very eyes.

Anti-capitalist Greenpeace lost fortune in foreign exchange speculation

And it doesn't stop there. Who can forget the uproar when it was **discovered** that these pillars of the anti-capitalist movement had lost a small fortune in foreign exchange speculation? Or that a Greenpeace director was **commuting to work** in Amsterdam by air from the tax haven of Luxembourg?

Hypocrisy among the green fraternity is nothing new, but word that Greenpeace is also willing to play fast and loose with the facts is now starting to get around. In January, Professor Anne Glover, a former chief scientific adviser to the EU, stood down from her role, after a number of groups, **including** Greenpeace, successfully lobbied for the post to be abolished. On Tuesday, Glover told *Today* programme listeners that many of those within the group know that the things they say about genetic modification of crops are untrue.

Campaigns against genetic modification of crops

As if to emphasise the point, a former boss of Greenpeace UK recently **admitted** that in his time in office, while he was running campaigns against genetic modification of crops, he actually believed that a blanket ban was not appropriate.

While Glover was talking about the GM debate, her remarks would have applied equally well to many of Greenpeace's other campaigns, such as those against the oil and gas industries. It's not as if the public hasn't been warned that this is how Greenpeace (and, for that matter, many of the other major green NGOs) operate. As far back as 2007, after another Greenpeace publicity stunt, the science writer Martin Robbins described the group as: *'an NGO that thinks it is acceptable to lie to the public, to lie to bloggers and journalists, and to then intimidate writers with threatening emails warning of legal action.'*

Privileged access to ministers

Yet despite this, environmental groups like Greenpeace still enjoy privileged access to ministers, with Ed Davey in particular having a regular slot in his diary to hear their views. One shudders to think what they are telling him.

And the unquestioning attitude towards green groups is not without cost. As I noted in a recent **report** for the Global Warming Policy Foundation, environmental policies are having devastating unintended consequences, particularly on the poor and the developing world. Perhaps if difficult questions had been asked *before* the world implemented some of Greenpeace's cock-eyed policy ideas – **biofuels** for example – a great deal of human misery would have been avoided. Let's hope that people in positions of power take notice of what Professor Glover is telling them.

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