

Think Global - Act Local with Friends of the Earth

by Bleddyn Lake

'Think Global, Act Local' was the phrase that David Brower coined in 1969 when he founded Friends of the Earth (FoE) in San Francisco. The organisation has come a long way since then, becoming the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and more than 70 national organisations worldwide.

History of FoE

FoE's first major campaign in the UK came in 1971 when people from across the country dumped 1,500 non-returnable bottles outside Schweppes' headquarters to make a statement about recycling. Recycling has gone on to be one of the big campaigns for FoE over the years with a huge success in 2003 when the Household Waste and Recycling Bill became law. As a result, every council in England must collect at least two recyclable materials from every household by 2010, cutting down on landfill. Interestingly, the Welsh Assembly has still not committed to a similar target - there is more work to be done!

Other successes have been the introduction of the Endangered Species Act in 1976; winning a Europe-wide ban on all whale products in 1982; convincing McDonalds and KFC to stop using CFC-blown cartons in 1987, and ensuring that the Government abandoned plans to privatise nature reserves in 1989.

In 1988, we launched the first UK global warming campaign and 10 years later our campaign to raise awareness of genetically modified (GM) food led to supermarkets taking steps to ban GM ingredients in their own brands.

What about Wales?

FoE arrived in Wales in 1984, originally based in Porthcawl, now in Cardiff. We have worked with local FoE groups on many campaigns: to reveal the scandal of 'unknown' contaminated sites in Wales (back in the news lately); to stop the Usk barrage which would have directly threatened the ecology of the river Usk; to stop plans to import and burn *Orimulsion*, 'the world's filthiest fuel', by National Power, and to keep Wales GM crop free.

Our changing climate

This is the single biggest issue facing the planet today and will affect every one of us, our children and their children too. It is such a big issue that there is the chance that we bury our heads in the sand and think that it is hopeless to even try to do anything. Nothing could be further from the truth. We know what the problem is and we know how to solve it. The technical solutions are already here; we just need the individual and collective will to get on with it.

We all have our part to play and our politicians need to take a more proactive stance on the issue. We hear a lot of nice words from the Government but now is the time for them to walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

With this in mind, FoE has been running a climate change campaign called The Big Ask. Radiohead's Thom Yorke launched the campaign in May 2005 with a live gig in London. Since then, over 130,000 people from across the UK have taken action in support of the need for a climate change law that will commit the UK to making annual cuts in its carbon dioxide emissions of at least three per cent. This won the backing of 412 MPs - almost two-thirds of MPs overall, and a majority in every party sitting in Parliament.

In November 2006, the Queen announced in her annual Queen's Speech to Parliament that there would be such a climate change bill. This was an amazing announcement as Government Ministers had been telling us all along that there was no chance of getting a climate change bill into the Queen's Speech. The fact that they were swamped by letters, postcards, emails and personal visits by their constituents telling them they wanted more action on climate change led them to change their



The Big Ask live gig - Cardiff 2006

minds. If you ever wonder what an individual can do and whether politicians listen to ordinary people, then this is a great example of what we can do if we work together.

We are now in the position of trying to make this climate change bill as strong as possible. This is where you come in; you can take a very easy email action on the Big Ask website www.thebigask.com and let your local MP know that you support strong action on climate change.

Act Local

What do Friends of the Earth do at a local level? Well, we have a network of over 200 local community based groups around the UK. These groups are voluntary in nature and work on local and national campaigns. It is a great way to get involved even if you only have an hour or two to give. Groups work on all sorts of issues: the Monmouth group has recently set up a Farmers Market in their town; Cardiff and Newport groups hosted Big Ask gigs and the Flintshire group is working on fair trade and safe routes to school.

JOIN THE NEW WREXHAM FoE GROUP

Joining a local FoE group is an excellent way to find out more about environmental issues, meet like-minded people and take positive action at a local level. To find out more about the new group which is being set up in Wrexham, contact:

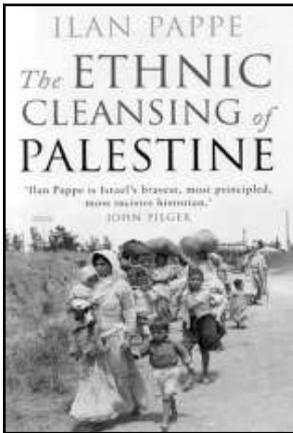
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Book Review

Ilan Pappé: The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine

Oneworld, 2006.

by Geoff Sands



Background

Ilan Pappé was born in Israel of German Jewish parents in 1954, six years after what the Israelis describe as their 'War of Independence' and what Palestinians call the *Nakhba* – the Catastrophe.

He is currently professor of history at Haifa University, and the events of 1947-8 form the subject of this, his most recent book – one which has won him widespread praise and recognition but which, by all accounts, has also made him one of the most hated men in Israel.

Pappé explodes Israeli myths

It's unlikely that the revelations contained in it will come as a surprise to many Palestinians, or indeed many Arabs. But Jewish Israelis will find that Pappé has exploded some of the founding myths of their state.

Israeli propaganda has won widespread acceptance, both in Israel and in the western democracies, for some simple propositions, none of which is true:

- that Palestine was empty of people before Jews began to arrive in the early twentieth century and 'made the desert bloom'
- that the War of Independence in 1948 pitched an Israeli David against an Arab Goliath
- that in 1948, half the Arab population of what is now Israel simply left voluntarily
- that Palestinian demands for an end to the illegal Occupation are just part of the general Arab/Muslim desire to destroy the Jewish state

Ethnic cleansing

Drawing from a wide range of sources, including Palestinian eye-witness accounts and Israeli military reports, Pappé shows how the diaspora of Palestinians from what became Israel stemmed from a deliberate Israeli policy of ethnic cleansing. This started even before British troops left Palestine (having done almost nothing to protect the Palestinians). It continued uninterrupted right through the conflict with the poorly prepared Arab forces; Pappé shows how, far from threatening another Holocaust, these forces posed no serious threat to the newly declared state. It gathered momentum with massacres on the

ground and, later on, attacks from the air. To summarise, it involved the destruction of more than 400 villages, eleven towns, and the expulsion of more than three-quarters of a million Palestinian people. Were such an event to happen in our day, it would be considered a crime against humanity.

In a recent interview Pappé points out that no Israeli government has ever acknowledged what really happened: *"I think that the ethnic cleansing in 1948 will never allow the Israelis to reconcile with the Palestinians and the rest of the Middle East, nor live in peace with their own Palestinian minority, unless Israel boldly faces the past."* The signs are not good. Pappé's book has yet to be published in Hebrew. And it's quite possible that some Israeli leaders plan to exploit the current crisis in the Middle East to engineer a further catastrophe for the Palestinians.

This book is available from Wrexham public library, ref. no. 956.9405.

Baha Mousa

**So, no one murdered Baha Mousa;
And no crime was committed
when we wasted Iraq.
And we can still afford to fill
our tanks with fuel.
So, that's all right then.**

by Gerry Doe



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