



Meat the real climate criminal

Whether or not we eat meat is normally considered in relation to animal welfare issues or perhaps whether it can be justified to kill an animal. What is rarely considered however is the severe impact livestock production has on climate change, oil use, water use and deforestation. It is essential that we, as consumers, think about this when we consume meat and dairy products.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (UNFAO) estimates that livestock production is responsible for 18% of all global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. To put this into context, the production of a kilogram of beef generates approximately the same GHG emissions as driving 250 kilometres. Caroline Lucas, Green MEP commented, ‘A vegan driving a 4X4 does less damage to the planet than a meat-eater on a bicycle’.

There are a number of hidden GHG emissions in meat production that most people do not necessarily think about, these include:

- Fertilizer and grain production
- Forest clearing for cattle ranching
- Extensive use of machinery

Most of us do not consider the environmental consequences of our meat consumption.

Meat and dairy do not just affect climate change, their production also uses large amounts of natural resources.

The livestock industry is responsible for deforestation; it is estimated that during the last ten years alone, an area the size of Greece has been cleared in the Amazon. That is 19,368 kilometres² per year. This is primarily due to cattle ranching and feed crop production. Brazil has recently stated it hopes to double the size of its cattle industry. The Brazilian government does not see this as contradictory to their commitments to tackle climate change.

Meat and dairy consumption is also consuming vast quantities of oil. The meat and dairy products most of us consume are dependent on a supply of cheap oil because intensive agriculture is dependent on oil for our feed crop production, fertilizers and machinery, transport of goods and packaging. In an age of peak oil, how much longer can we justify using cheap oil to produce large quantities of meat?

Livestock production also consumes large quantities of water. For every litre of milk, it is estimated we use 990 litres of water in the production process. This rises to over 15,000 litres for a kilogram of beef.

Intensive farming methods are also responsible for pollution of water sources. Animal waste, antibiotics and hormones, chemicals from tanneries, fertilizer and pesticide use and sediment from eroded pastures all find their way into rivers and streams. Both nitrogen and phosphorus excreted by animals increase the chance of there being too many nutrients in water (eutrophication)

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A Brussels Summer...

A new Parliament with a new president. An old treaty with a new referendum. Anya Whiteside reflects on the state of play as Brussels relaxes for the summer.

Relaxing in the park outside the European Parliament

As Brussels slipped into an August slumber with diplomats away enjoying the summer, there was a brief interlude in which to reflect upon the last few months and what the next might hold. The gigantic glass buildings of the European Parliament sigh their relief at having disgorged their members after the pressure of months of campaigning before the European Parliament elections this June. The results of those elections are only just beginning to be felt.

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which can lead to algal blooms. This problem can be exacerbated by the use of nitrogen fertilizers.

It is clear that there has to be a reduction in the current quantities, and a change from the status quo in the methods by which meat and diary is produced. This is not to say that meat and dairy consumption is wrong per se, but that the way in which we currently consume it is unsustainable and is pushing us closer to dangerous climate change.

The Parliament appointed a new President in its first plenary session this July. Despite the inevitable debacle of MEPs begrudgingly traipsing to Strasbourg to vote on decisions which have often been pre-decided in Brussels, the new Parliament made history by voting in its first President from a former Soviet-bloc country. Jerzy Buzek symbolises what the EU is meant to be all about. Born in Poland he witnessed the bloodshed of the Second World War, experienced the effects of the Iron Curtain and worked for a free and democratic Poland. His inauguration speech demonstrates the far-reaching changes Europe has seen during his lifetime: ‘Many years ago, I used to dream of becoming a member of the Sejm when Poland became free once again. I now hold the office of President of the European Parliament, which is something I could never have dreamed of back in those days’. He promises to work for both human rights and for change within the Parliament so that it is more relevant for the European citizens it is meant to represent.

Despite the summer slumber the Lisbon Treaty, as always, lies just below the surface. The second Irish referendum will take place in October and the future structure of the EU depends upon the result. The EU has pledged not to interfere with Ireland’s state of neutrality and not to impose any rules on abortion, euthanasia, gay marriage or taxes. Brussels-based diplomats are desperate to see the fruit of their eight-year struggle to change the structure of the EU so that it works more efficiently. Let’s hope Irish citizens have a better understanding than many of us who feel totally confused as to what effect the Lisbon Treaty would have on Europe, let alone if it should be supported or not. (If that includes you, see our summary of what the Lisbon Treaty says on page 4). The process is slow, the details are confusing but the shape of the future EU is what is being decided and for that alone this will be a crucial year.

Anya Whiteside

Three things you can do:

- Eat less meat and dairy- This one is simple. Unless you’re meat and dairy-free already, it wouldn’t hurt to eat a little less.
- Eat more fruit and vegetables - Good for your health and the environment.
- Eat local and organic produce - Whether you’re a vegetarian, a dedicated carnivore, or somewhere in between, you can help by purchasing local produce in season. Think about the whole food chain (where did the animal feed come from for example).

Steve Hynd



A Sponsor of War



Robin Brookes (third from left) with Peace Tax 7

When we pay our taxes we become sponsors of war. Taxes become a form of conscription in an age where the military requires our money rather than our bodies. Warfare no longer requires vast number of soldiers to fight in the trenches but instead highly sophisticated weaponry and specialized training. This is why I organised an interview with Robin Brookes, a member of the Peace Tax 7, a member of ‘conscience’ and a Quaker. A man who has withheld a proportion of his taxes because he considers it “an affront to his conscience”.

The Peace Tax 7, a collection of 7 ordinary individuals in the UK who are opposed to sponsoring war through their taxes, hoped to have their case heard in Strasbourg but it was not permitted into court. After years of legal battling, for many this would be a point to give up. When I spoke to Robin however, I found him in high spirits talking of the need to change societal norms, attract younger people and to highlight politicians’ “war-fighting mentality”.

In terms of legal challenges it looks as though the concept of the peace tax in the UK will have to wait a decade or so before it is next heard. This is no time however to be easing off the campaign for it is public consciousness, Robin argues, that will bring about the change that is required.

At the moment the peace tax campaign is disproportionately supported by older people. Many young people who are active on the streets protesting against war have not considered that they are sponsoring the war they are protesting about through their taxes. Robin comments that there needs to be a greater peace tax presence not only at demonstrations but also at music festivals (may the Big Green Gathering RIP). For the campaign to be a success we need a new generation to

connect the idea of financial conscription to that of physical conscription. This is proving harder now that there are whole generations across much of Europe that cannot remember military conscription.

Robin went on to say that it was not only the young who need to think about this, every single one of us needs to search our conscience about how we feel about our money being paid to fund military campaigns. To help with this, the concept of ‘statements of conscience’ has been developed. People are invited to put down in writing how they feel about these issues. As thoughts spring from the individual’s conscience they become material pieces of evidence, a recording of an individual’s opposition to war. Robin goes on to speculate about bringing them all together to create an anthology of protest.

It is clear that the idea that I (or you) do not want to pay someone else to kill on our behalf is not overly controversial. Robin talks about how in many ways the military would be supportive of such a concept, ensuring that personnel are not lost without good reason. If you can prevent an armed conflict from occurring in the first place this is surely better. In Robin’s view however, our desire for war reflects the fact that “politicians have a war-fighting mentality” which is about beating the opposition, rather than building a common ground. The UK government of our day is putting British troops on the front line to face death and injuries because they have not developed sufficient peace forces and mechanisms to avoid conflict. For Robin, the military might play a role as an emergency response force, with occasional armed peace-keeping missions. This is far from the current situation where soldiers are sent into conflict zones to ‘create’ peace (it is apparent that politicians too often confuse breaks in the fighting with peace).



As the ‘conscience’ and peace tax campaign states however, it is not for anyone to tell you what to do but for you to act in accordance with your own conscience.

Steve Hynd



What does the Lisbon Treaty Say?

The words ‘Lisbon Treaty’ and ‘Irish referendum’ provoke an array of emotions for different people, from anger, to hope, to confusion. The Lisbon Treaty is the outcome of an extremely complicated process started in 2001, when the idea of streamlining and simplifying EU processes was first put forward. To come into effect the Lisbon Treaty has to be ratified (put into action) by all Member States. Ireland’s constitution mandates it to hold a referendum before it can do this and the Irish people voted ‘no’ in their referendum last June. Having secured what he believes are key guarantees, the Taoiseach of Ireland, Brian Cowen, is putting the Lisbon Treaty to a second referendum on 2 October. The future shape of the EU therefore looks to be determined by Irish voters. What then, does the Lisbon Treaty actually say? I have attempted below, to summarise the key changes that the Lisbon Treaty would make:

EU Values

- The Lisbon Treaty states that the EU’s aim is “to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its people”.
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights would be given treaty status.
- National Parliaments would be given the right to raise objections if they felt that draft EU legislation would be better addressed at a local or national level.

EU Structure

- The Lisbon Treaty would unify all EU policies, which are currently split into three different sections or ‘pillars’.
- Co-decision, which gives the Council (Member States)

and the European Parliament (directly elected by European citizens) equal decision-making power, would be extended to cover most legislative areas. One of the exceptions would be decisions relating to the Common Foreign and Security Policy which will continue to be made by the Council. Qualified majority voting would become the norm for most other Council decisions and the Council will meet in public to consider or vote on legislation.

- A new ‘High Representative for Foreign Affairs’ would represent both the Council and the Commission on Foreign Affairs issues. This would hopefully create a more coherent EU approach to foreign affairs.
- A new ‘President of the European Council’ would be elected by the Council for two and a half years instead of the current six-month rotating presidencies held by Member States

New Initiatives

- Member States would be mandated to increase their own military capabilities and the EU would move towards a common defence policy. In the meantime Member States who choose to, could have ‘closer co-operation’. If Member States within this ‘closer co-operation’ were faced with armed aggression, the other Member States would have to go to their aid.
- A ‘citizen’s initiative’ would allow citizens to invite the European Commission to submit proposed legislation to the Council and European Parliament on any matter where one million or more citizens from a number of Member States called for it.

Anya Whiteside

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