



RED BIRD

FOR ECOSOCIALISM

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ABOLISH BILLIONAIRES?

On the 4th February 2025, at 8am, the Landmark London Hotel at Marylebone was sleepily going about its business. Inside, the wealthy paid hundreds of pounds a night for luxury accommodation in the heart of London. Low-paid waiting, cleaning and cooking staff doted on their every need. On this morning, the hotel had several wealthy individuals and industry figures setting up for the **London 'Corporate Jet Investor Conference'**. A lavish breakfast was being laid out for attendees and preparations were in place for speakers to discuss the future of the private jet industry.

Within a few minutes, the usual workings of the hotel were stopped. **Two groups of people, carrying banners and signs calling for an end to the private jet industry, stood in front of the front and back doors of the hotel.** For the next hour, they held their banners, chanted and sang, as the wealthy industry attendees of the private jet conference had to be smuggled into the hotel via side entrances.

This was the launch action of **Climate Resistance's new campaign, Abolish Billionaires.** In this campaign, through targeting key sites of 'luxury emissions' such as the private jet industry and other forms of ultra-wealthy pollution, they hope to stress the class dimension of emissions.

As Climate Resistance highlights, using Oxfam data, 'the wealth of the world's ten richest men grew on average by almost \$100 million (£80.52 million) a day and even if they lost 99 per cent of their wealth overnight, they would remain billionaires.' At the same time '47% of the world's population lives on less than \$6.85 (£5.52) a day.'

This creates a situation where billionaires emit a million times more emissions than the average person globally. Abolish Billionaires pushes to the centre this contradiction, demanding the taxing of the wealthy to prevent emissions, pay for the climate transition globally, and ultimately place wealth redistribution squarely at the centre of climate politics.

As attendees of the action, we wanted to reflect on some of the better parts of this action, as a lesson to the wider ecological movement in Britain. **We think actions which highlight the stark class inequalities at play in climate politics must become central to root environmentalism in the everyday life of exploited people globally.**

Over the first 30 minutes of the action, protestors at the main entrance **were met with violence and unnecessary aggression from hotel security and staff members** who expressed extreme determination to break up the line of protestors blocking the main entrance.

En masse, with often up to five security men, they attempted **to break the line by viciously grabbing and kicking protestors and tugging at individual's limbs in efforts to pull them to the ground or isolate them from the group.** Guests of the conference likewise attempted to pull apart the line, indignant that they had to use a side door rather than the grand main entrance. Most outrageously, the hotel CEO Fergus Stewart has been recorded on film punching a protestor in the face.

Frustrated by a lack of success in breaking the line, they resorted to snatching at individual's phones that were recording the protest as well as our banners and the megaphone.



Despite this, activists succeeded in holding the line and de-escalating the situation. If the hotel security had split the line of activists up, or succeeded in beating them back, then the conference would have been able to proceed with little disruption. **This required activists to not only link arms, being prepared for security response, but also actively trying to check-in and take care of each other** throughout the process, preventing anywhere becoming too tired to hold the position.

The hotel management were enraged by our ability to harm their guests' perfect hotel experience with our unsightly and disruptive presence. The suit-clad security and top-hatted doorman stood beside us and delivered an excess of apologies to the incoming guests, clearly wary of the slew of inevitable complaints and poor reviews that the entitled super-rich could subsequently leave for the Landmark Hotel. Ultimately guests were able to attend the conference by a side door, but the hotel will be left considering the harm to its reputation (and subsequent profit-making capacity) should they continue to host such events and face further protestors. **Future actions should bear this in mind: the more a business derives profit from its image and capacity to give entitled people a certain experience, the more damage we can do by just being present, loud and disruptive.**

We found throughout the demonstration that people walking by on the street stopped and seemed quite supportive of the political message of the action. This reflects the intuitive politics that emerge when focused on the emissions of the ultra-wealthy.

Data in 2023 suggested that 1 in 10 flights taking off from British airports were private jets, making us one of the leading places for private jet flights in Europe. Such emissions serve no social purpose, yet have a massive contribution to climate disasters seen across the world.

Despite less press interest than the more generally disruptive actions of recent climate groups, it is possible to still get significant attention on demonstrations like this, whilst highlighting obvious policy proposals, such as increased wealth taxation and the end of private jets. This was a traditional blocking action, so could be replicated in many other locations at places where the wealthy think they can go about unbothered. As one chant put it at the demo:

'World gets warm, we get poor, climate change is class war!'

In a more satirical but no less appreciated hint at class dynamics, protestors were subverting the liberal framing around consumption choices with the chant:

'Change your diet for the climate, EAT THE RICH!'

ACTION ROUNDUP

On the 6th January, activists from a collective called Shut the System **claimed to have succeeded in cutting the fibreoptic cable going into 55 Tufton Street** (the headquarters of several climate denialist and right-wing organisations in London). It was suggested this shut down the phone and internet connection for significant sections of the building.

On the 29th January, there began the appeal of 16 Just Stop Oil activists who have faced custodial sentences varying from 15 months to 5 years for their activities against climate breakdown. At the Royal Courts of Justice in London, **over 1000 people sat in the road and conducted several days of public protest against the growing repression of political dissent in Britain.**

On February 12th, activists with Axe Drax, **occupied the offices of corporate lobbyists 5654 & Company.** The lobbyist has worked for Drax, who operate Britain's single biggest carbon emitter and just received four more years of government subsidy, as well as Heathrow Airport.

WHAT IS RED BIRD?

Red Bird is a bulletin for the British radical environmental movement. We want to encourage discussion about movement strategies and tactics. Print your own copies, discuss, and share with your fellow troublemakers.

WRITE TO US

Contact us on redbirdbulletin@proton.me

We welcome letters of 100-150 words.

Bulletin pieces are usually 500-700 words. Feel free to contact the editorial team for a longer discussion.

STAY IN TOUCH

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