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*G8 protests*

### **A coalition against the new global order**

A huge white human chain snaked through the streets of Edinburgh for Saturday's demonstration.

The circular route, starting and ending at the city's Meadows, was almost three miles long — and it was clogged with protesters.

By the time the first marchers arrived back in The Meadows at noon, countless more were queuing to set off. For three more hours the demonstrators kept coming.

Thousands more sat on the grass, listening to music and speeches, watching link-ups to the Live8 concerts across the globe and short documentaries on aid, trade and Third World debt.

The figures announced for the size of the demonstration kept rising—100,000, 125,000, 200,000 and, by the time the last protesters arrived, 225,000. The actual figure was undoubtedly much higher.

The protesters ranged from school students to pensioners and were of every race and religion. The organisers had asked protesters to wear white, and most did.

Many protesters added their own slogans to their T-shirts, emphasising one or other key issue — “Drop the Debt”, “Fight Poverty Not War” or “Stop Climate Chaos”.

They carried banners and placards from hundreds of different organisations. Trade unions, local Make Poverty History groups, NGOs, Stop the War groups, political parties and faith groups were all represented.

While most of those marching were happy to support the official demands of Make Poverty History — debt cancellation, fair trade and increased aid — it was also true that anger over the role of the multinationals and over the occupation of Iraq were never far from the surface.

At the official MPH stage in The Meadows, the biggest cheers were for speakers such as human rights activist Bianca Jagger.

She angrily attacked the IMF and World Bank, tied global injustice to the question of Iraq and condemned G8 leaders for linking debt relief to further privatisation.

Singer and songwriter Billy Bragg won over his audience when he sang, “You know where you are with the New World Order —right up the arse of the USA.”

Earlier he told the crowd, “If in a year's time nothing has changed, you know who to blame.

“It won't be Bob Geldof's fault, or Christian Aid's fault. It won't be your fault. It will be the fault of those eight men—the leaders of the G8. We need to send a message to those eight men—‘We know where you live’.”

Many of those marching in Edinburgh had never demonstrated before. Some had been politicised through unions, churches or campaigns.

Some had followed the emerging anti-capitalist movement—attending European Social Forums and previous protests at summits of world leaders.

Countless others had had their first taste of protest through the huge mobilisations against the war in Iraq.

Together they represented a mighty force that is unlikely to be satisfied with half-hearted measures from the G8 leaders meeting behind barbed wire in Gleneagles.

In 1998, when the G8 last came to Britain, 70,000 people demonstrated in Birmingham.

This time in Edinburgh it was four or five times more — with millions more across the country identifying with the protesters' demands.

The movement against the war has tied in with a great feeling for global justice to produce a potentially explosive movement.

There will now be a struggle over what set of politics gives direction to that mood. That debate will determine whether the movement is co-opted by some variant of New Labour, or whether it turns to confront head-on the masters of war and poverty.

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