

**Environmental activism**

• This article is more than 14 years old

Letters

Lessons from a secret policeman

Mon 17 Jan 2011 00.05 GMT

Plenty of attention is now focused on the undercover policing of the plot to shut down Ratcliffe power station ([Report](#), 13 January). But there is an important lesson from the trial that did go ahead, where 20 activists used a "lawful excuse" defence of preventing greater harm. Eminent climate scientists showed how climate change necessitates the reduction of our fossil fuel usage. It took two days for the jury to reach a "guilty" verdict. The judge praised the defendants' "veracity and motivation" before giving lenient sentences. A similar defence led to a "not guilty" verdict for Greenpeace activists two years ago.

We are approaching the point where the law will recognise that closing down a major piece of our energy infrastructure is justified by the climate emergency. Our politicians must take this on board and understand that much more rapid and concerted action is needed.

Christopher Broome

Chair, Sheffield Campaign Against Climate Change

- Over 20 years ago I was involved in an industrial dispute when Murdoch moved his printing operations to Wapping. In the early days of the dispute a man arrived to support our cause. He sounded passionately sympathetic and was very active, always in the forefront of the demonstrations. He did not seem to have any obvious means of support or permanent residence and as far as we knew slept rough in Wapping.

Several weeks into the dispute concern was expressed that this man had been spotted in deep conversation with police officers. It was suggested he may have been planted among us. He immediately disappeared and was not seen or heard of again. Those involved in disputes or demonstrations would be well advised to assume that there is at least one police plant among them.

Brian Williams

Newport, Gwent

- The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, which allows police to infiltrate legal organisations, must be repealed. [Police](#) must not be allowed to interfere with the public who are engaged in the pursuit of legal activities. Not only is it leading to a police state, it is also costing a vast amount of police funding and manpower, which would be better deployed in detecting and solving real crimes.

Lesley Kay

London

- If the control of the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) is passed from the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) to the Met, perhaps it could be renamed Scotland Yard Activist Surveillance and Infiltration, or SYASI.

More on this story



Protest at Met HQ over police officers' undercover sex with activists

24 Jan 2011



Undercover police cleared 'to have sex with activists'

22 Jan 2011



Police spy who married activist suspended from duty

21 Jan 2011



Most viewed