



Press Release: May 6 2006

FAKE FIRST PRANKSTERS ATTACK FARE HIKES

Bus passengers were deeply puzzled, and occasionally outraged on Friday, when political performance pranksters "The weather girls" carried out an elaborate hoax targeted at Bristol's most disliked corporation, the FIRST bus group.

Dressed in the recognisable pink and blue livery of the FIRST Company, complete with bogus branded name badges, several dozen fake FIRST representatives travelled on bus routes throughout Bristol. They claimed to promote a new PR campaign promising to relieve the burden of the 40% fare rise by providing "100% entertainment".

Singing songs, cheer leading, and teaching on-board self defence classes the "representatives" claimed to be part of "First F.R.E.E bus": F.R.E.E standing for First Representatives Entertainment Extravaganza. The idea of the phoney campaign was to reveal the injustice of fare hikes and the absurdity of the privatisation of public services that puts profits before people.

The elaborate deception included a slick corporate web site (www.firstfreebus.co.uk), glossy leaflets and press releases sent from an email address appearing as if they had been posted from FIRST group head quarters.

Local radio stations, duped by the group, carried early morning reports of the campaign, as if it had been promoted by FIRST itself.

A genuine FIRST employee, who asked to remain anonymous, thought that pranksters had somehow hacked into FIRST'S media communications system "the graphic design, logos and costumes were so realistic"

16 year old Abbie and Rosa who came to the spoof "launch" of the campaign's slick promotional film, held in the Canon's Marsh amphitheatre on Friday night said, "I was given a leaflet by one of the FREE reps, who at the time I thought were real, and told to come down to the launch party. I brought 40 eggs to the event to throw at the company directors who have destroyed our local bus services and who I thought were there. You can imagine my surprise when I realised that the whole thing was actually an incredibly creative form of protest against FIRST."

Spokeswoman for "The Weather Girls", stated,
"this is the first of a series of radical hoaxes that we are planning to carry out against corporate greed and arrogance."

To see the images and the film of the day's actions go to:
www.firstfreebus.co.uk