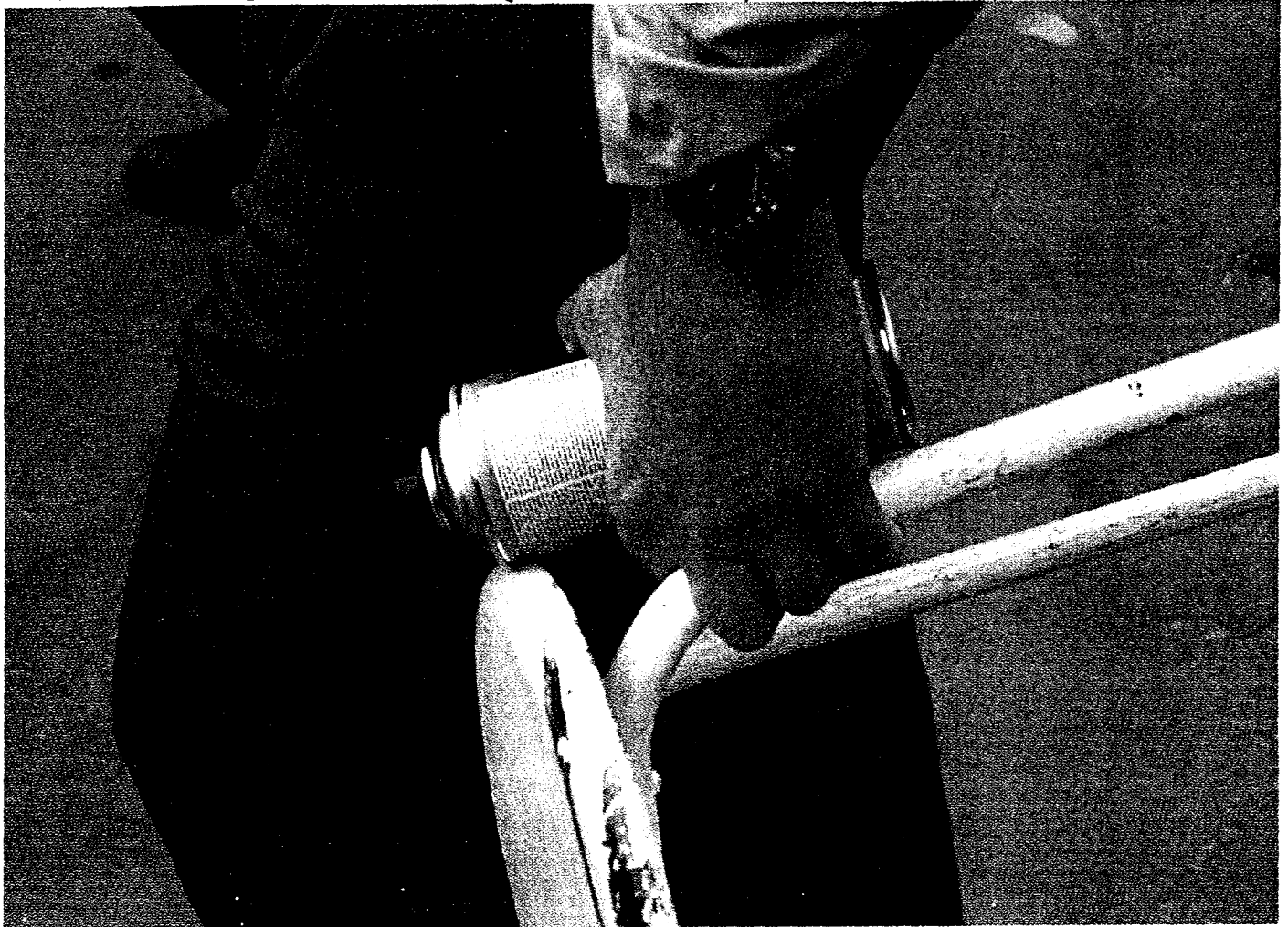


ADBUSTERS no 71 (mai 2007) (CANADA)



Formed a year ago in Paris, (the Dismantlers) are one of several French groups on a crusade against consumerism and aggressive advertising. Staging high-profile protests across the country, the group demands that advertisements in public spaces be restricted to dimensions of 50 x 70 cm (the maximum size for political posters). This March, the Déboulonneurs won a huge symbolic victory at a trial when they were found guilty of vandalizing billboards, but only fined €1 – vastly less than the €75,000 and five years in prison which they could have incurred. Alex Barret, one of the founding members who was involved with the trial, shared his thoughts with *Adbusters*.

(the Dismantlers)

Q: How do you find the public reaction of the public and of the medias vis-à-vis the trial and your activities?

We benefit from a large sympathy from the public. Why? Our criticism of the invasion by advertisements is largely shared by the public (according to a poll by *Le Monde*, 77 percent of respondents feel that there is too much advertisement). Our approach is perfectly non-violent, respectful of the public, of the police and institutions, and of non-ad

material. We have a measured and open discourse, and our criticism of the ad system is solid and coherent enough so that people can rally around it. The massive anti-ad action (Stopub) of 2003 in the Parisian subways and in 20 other French cities allowed us to start to open the debate . . . Since then, in the public eye, advertisement was no longer so innocent and inoffensive.

Q: According to your group, what are the negatives effects of excessive advertising in the public space?

The environment is being placed in danger . . . the health consequences (alcohol, industrially-produced food, obesity, anorexia) are being increasingly recognized. We normalize industrial production by omitting the pillaging of our planet and the social exploitation of populations of rich as well as poor countries . . . We sell off public space which is, in fact, privatized by businesses. The public space is confiscated by these businesses: it's an assault on our democracy.

Q: The Déboulonneurs have received fines that were vastly reduced from their original amount. Do these results encourage you?

This proves that certain judges are also touched by the problems that we solve . . . We choose civil disobedience because there are no other means of action to make ourselves heard, and that, faced with the inertia of public powers, the impossibility to make progress by legal and judicial means.

Q: What activities do you foresee in the future?

We pursue our anti-advertising activities every month, and multiply the collectives in all the regions of France in order to provoke a profound debate on the function of the ad system (notably the

collusion between the media and the advertisers, who prevent us from treating – correctly, and in-depth – all the subjects of society that affect our lifestyle, liber-

ties, environment, the responsibility of corporations, and liberalism).

*Interview by Jenny Uechi*

