

Extrait du Southern Times

<http://www.southerntimes.net>

Tilting at windmills? Not exactly...

A WINDMILL PROTEST

- NEWS FROM THE FRONT -

Date de mise en ligne : Monday 28 June 2004

Description :

Portel des Corbieres and Abbey du Fontfroide at loggerheads over Wind Farm...

Southern Times

On Sunday 9 May 200 people, led by PATRICIA CHABAUD, the mayor of Portel les Corbieres, held a protest picnic to block the entrance to the Abbey of Fontfroide in the Corbieres.

What, you may well ask, had the Abbey's owner, Nicolas d'Andoque, done to deserve the angry attention of the people of Portel des Corbieres and of Maryse Arditi, the Green Languedoc Regional Council Vice-President, Senator Roland Couteau, and the socialist Deputy, Jacques Bascou?

Had he sold the Abbey of Fontfroide to mad monks? Was he planning a nuclear power station in the Cloisters? Was he suspected of being a vampire?

No, none of the above: he is suspected of secretly pulling strings to get the Prefect of the Aude Department to veto the plan to put 10 wind generators on the hills of Couloubret, which separate Fontfroide from Portel des Corbieres.

Certainly Nicolas d'Andoque, alongside the Mayor of Narbonne, had voiced his strong opposition to the project, which has the backing not just of Portel des Corbieres but the majority of the communes of the "Corbieres en Mediterranee" region.

Whether this opposition was the determining factor that led the Prefect of the Aude to say no to the plan is unknown. In the eyes of Patricia Chabaud and of the protesters from Portel and the other "Corbieres en Mediterranee" communes, the Prefect has abused his powers and has placed private interests above the wider community.

Under the slogan "Le vent est notre richesse. Laissez-nous vivre avec, the picnic protest is seen as the opening salvo in a series of protests aimed at overturning the Aude Prefect's decision.

Claiming that the decision threatens the opening of a Danish owned wind generator factory in Port la Nouvelle and the development work of Portel des Corbieres, it promises to be a hot summer at Fontfroide.

Jean-Marc Boudet is the regional director of SIIF Energies du Midi, the company behind the wind farm development. Joining the picnic with his family, he said "This is the first time that I know of when there has been a demonstration in favour of a wind farm!" > The of conservation versus sustainable development, decentralised decision-making versus the central State, and private lobbying versus public protest all came together on the Couloubret hills. What is clear is that the process behind the Aude Prefect's decision is not as transparent as it should be.

A survey done by the Huissier du Justice, who went up in a helicopter and took photos from the maximum height of the blades, clearly showed that the wind farm would be invisible from the Abbey of Fontfroide. This result was disregarded. The targeting of Nicolas d'Andoque as "enemy number one" by the Mayor of Portel des Corbieres is unjustifiably aggressive, and the threatened boycott of the European Elections, which will marginally affect the Prefect of the Aude as the returning officer, is so obviously self-defeating as to be absurd. The protesters need as much political support as they can get.

We need to know why the Aude Prefect made the decision he did; what were the determining factors that led to his veto; does it represent a policy change or was it a one-off veto, and what does this mean for the future of sustainable

A WINDMILL PROTEST

energy in the Corbieres?

Once we know the answers to these questions, the people of Portel and the Corbieres can decide what policy they want to see and set about making it happen.

Post-scriptum :

by Peter Shield of Midi-Life.com.