



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! THE WORLD IS STILL UNDER ATTACK!

SchNEWS 100

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SchNEWS REACHES THE BIG ONE HUNDRED AND ASKS... **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

"If you go to one demonstration and then go home, that's something, but the people in power can live with that. What they can't live with is sustained pressure that keeps building, organisations that keep doing things, people that keep learning lessons from the last time."

Noam Chomsky

Over the last few years, thousands of people have got involved in direct action of one kind or another for the first time. People have protested and partied realising that life isn't something that just happens - each of us can make a difference, and together we can change the world we live in.

Nice one! It has been conservatively estimated that, in the last year alone, there have been at least five hundred separate actions carried out by direct action activists - that's ten a week. At places like the Newbury Bypass, it's been one big long direct action since January, costing the authorities newly £10 million, seriously hampering work and bringing into question the whole idea of the car culture we live in - at a cost of over 1,000 arrests. In South Wales 'eco-warriors' descended on the Welsh valleys and joined with locals to breathe life back into the fight against open cast mining. Across the country roads and motorways have been turned into street parties and streets have been gridlocked by cyclists. Politicians' gardens have been dug up and genocidal jets destroyed. People have fought their way onto TV programmes while producing their own newspapers, newsletters, videos and pamphlets to let everyone know what's going on.

The campaigns and actions that SchNEWS has covered over the last hundred issues have been enormously varied. But what they have in common is that they have all been about people who have got off their bums and refused to be passive in the face of injustice, oppression, and the destruction of our planet. And by being active - by doing instead of talking or waiting for someone else to do things for us - enormous lessons have been learnt.

DIRECT ACTION STATIONS!

Creativity, imagination, humour and energy are the name of the game as activists have realised that what passed for 'left-wing' and even 'revolutionary' politics in the 70s and 80s was stale, boring, and ineffective - marching from point A to point B once a year shouting slogans and then going home was never going to change the world. Not even a wee bit.

The ingenuity, imagination, and organisational skills of anti-road campaigners just keep on making things more difficult for the police and bailiffs. Where do you go after tanks start pumping out techno at the security at Fairmile? Most people now see the importance of physical self-defence and good legal support on actions as ways of defending themselves. People are learning to use the media instead of having the media use them to produce sanitised 'lifestyle' reports that ignore the important questions we are raising.

SINGLE ISSUE NONSENSE

"Ultimately, the idea of SchNEWS is to encourage people to get off their bums, go see things for themselves and make up their own minds.... And sure we're putting in our slant - but at least we're saying it without bosses and advertisers breathing down our necks."

SchNEWSround introduction

The British media have constantly tried to emphasise the 'lifestyle' aspect of what we do in order to trivialise the issues we raise. When Justice? set up a squatters' estate agency to highlight the reality of mass homelessness in Britain (and the fact that it was possible for people to do something about it), we were deluged with reporters wanting to know about the 'alternative lifestyle' scene in Brighton. We even ended up on the fashion page of the Daily Mail. Road protesters trying to explain the insanity of the government's road building programme are smiled at politely by journalists who then asked how they go to the toilet up a tree!

In the face of this attempt to trivialise and isolate us we have learnt probably our

most important lesson - that the battles we started off fighting - against profit-producing car culture, against attacks on our right to party and protest - are linked with many other struggles in Britain and abroad. Over the last year SchNEWS has covered struggles well beyond the 'alternative' style issues we are, according to lifestyle journalists, meant to limit ourselves to. The miners' strike, revolutionary struggles from Bougainville to Kurdistan, Britain's occupation of the north of Ireland, football, attacks on the unemployed, uprisings in Brixton and Paris, prisons, attacks on asylum seekers, sacked Liverpool dockers - the list goes on.

Making these links, destroying the myth of 'single-issue' politics, is probably the most important step we have taken over the last year. And it's about time - because if things are gonna change then such movements have got to grow.

"We were moving on, growing, making links. Liverpool dockers and their families may not wear the same clothes as your average road protester, but in Liverpool we found out that we had a lot more in common than many a middle class commentator might think. We came together because we saw our struggles were interlinked and the solidarity displayed on both sides, in the face of vicious police intimidation, was inspiring. But then what could be more natural than groups of people fighting this sick system coming together?"

SchNEWS 85

Monday 30th September, 1996. Same country - two very different worlds. Seaforth Dock, Liverpool, on the first anniversary of the sacking of the 500 dockers fighting against casual labour. Largely deserted by the labour movement, the dockers - inspired by the party on the M41 motorway in July - turned to Reclaim the Streets and other direct action groups for support. Activists from across the country descended on Liverpool, squatted a building to lip in and raided the docks. Flags flew from the roof of the dock offices, climbers took over the giant gantries which lay idle all day, and activists swelled

Official Direct Action Conference Souvenir Programme

“The concept of a single issue group is now meaningless. We’re making more and more links all the time.”

the picket line when they weren't running in and out of the gates. Meanwhile up the road in sunny Blackpool, it was lots of blah as the Labour Party - the official opposition - held their most right-wing Conference to date.

POVERTY, WHAT POVERTY?

The living standards of the poorest people in Britain, the real working class that makes up the poorest third of our society and has no political voice, have been slashed in the last few years. The disparity between rich and poor in Britain is now greater than in Nigeria. A third of all children in Britain grow up in poverty - that's 4.1 million kids. One in three households in the East End of London have an annual income of under £4,500. If the poorest 60% of people in Britain had the same share of earnings they had in 1979 each such family would be £3,000 a year better off than they are now.

Half of Britain's workforce works for less than the European Union's decency threshold of £6.03 an hour. Several million work for under £3.50 and one million for less than £2.50 an hour. Benefits have fallen from 40% of average male earnings in 1979 to 17% today. At the same time, some people are doing very nicely, thank you. Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine, for instance, has a personal fortune now growing at two million pounds a week. He is already worth £170m, putting his family amongst the hundred wealthiest in Britain.

The Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) will make things even worse. If you refuse an offer of a job or training scheme you will lose all your benefit instead of the 40% you used to lose. Unemployment Benefit claimants under 25 will have their benefit cut from £48.25 to £37.90 to pay for tax cuts for the middle class. Loads of us will be forced to choose between shitty 'jobs' that give multinationals slave labour or losing all entitlement to benefits. Already nearly half a million people under 25 are earning £2.50 or less an hour. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the suicide rate amongst young men has increased by 75% since 1979.

Those who work will also find themselves worse off under the JSA as employers will be more likely to sack their workforce and look for those given the choice of either working for pittance or having their benefits cut.

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

“We can't let people just march in and do what these people are doing. We have to look after the interests of our shareholders” Guinness told *SchNEWS*, describing what it thought about the Land is Ours campaigners who took over derelict land in Wandsworth to turn into a low impact eco-village.

“The world's largest 500 companies produce 50% of the world's greenhouse gases. Shell connive with the murder of

human rights and environmental activists in Nigeria and BP help fund Colombian death squads to secure access to the £23 bn Colombian oilfields. Between 1972 and 1985 only one per cent of World Bank funding for urban transport in the third world went to pedestrian facilities. Almost 80% directed to road vehicle schemes - nothing to do with the needs of the people in these countries, but much more profitable.

Multinational capitalism is the most destructive, inhumane system ever known to humanity - but funnily enough no political party of any importance in Britain opposes it. It is a system where a few massive, transnational companies control the production and distribution of most of the world's goods. These massive companies need to expand or go under. They need profits like people need air, and will do anything to get it. Politicians, states and governments are not really the main problem - they only do what they're told to by big business, driven by its own macabre logic. It is not through mismanagement or badness that the world is as it is - it is simply the working of a logic, the logic of capital, that cannot produce anything other than huge inequalities, wars and ecocide.

“One per cent of the world's population now controls 60% of its resources while 80% of the world's people scabble for 15 % of its resources.”

It is not really surprising that it has been people concerned with defending the environment that have been amongst the keenest to take action against this system. Whether in Britain where children from estates are far more likely to get asthma than children in the leafy suburbs, or in the third world where the fight for social justice is integrally linked with resistance to the multinational rape of their countries' resources, the link between social injustice and environmental destruction is obvious. You cannot seriously campaign to defend the existence of our planet's ecology without challenging multinational capitalism and its never-ending hunger for profit - a hunger that has brought us to the brink of ecological collapse. As one US delegate to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit commented, *“Environmental protection has replaced communism as the greatest threat to capitalism”*.

Millions of people throughout the world are involved in life and death struggles against capitalism and its unending attacks on their ways of life and environment. They usually face repression that makes what we face at present seem like a tea party. As Under-Sheriff Nick Blandy, in charge of evictions at Newbury, has touchingly put it, *“These protesters don't know how lucky they are. We could be using CS gas. In less tolerant countries they would machine gun them from trees”*. The people waging these struggles win or lose by building sustainable organisations of re-

sistance that fit the conditions they live in.

USE YOUR CROSS WISELY - CRUCIFY A POLITICIAN

So what about the 'official opposition', the Labour Party? Will they at least be slightly better than the Tories? You decide. Jack Straw's 'opposition' to Michael Howard's law and order crusade, for instance, is more like a who-can-be-more-like-Judge-Dread competition rather than a defence of civil liberties against a state determined to crush the last remnants of our freedom.

There are some who think that electing a Labour government will make things slightly better. For instance the organisers of a recent 'green left' conference stated that *“The immediate priority is to help defeat the present Conservative Government”* (i.e. elect Blair). Surely the immediate priority is to involve lots more people in actions, *in doing things*, rather than getting people to vote for a scumbag party like Labour. An exaggeration? Hardly. Blair has been completely straight about the fact that he's offering bugger-all to the worse off and has talked of his admiration for Thatcher. In the 80s under Thatcher things were bad enough - but she had North Sea oil and the profits from numerous privatisations to pay the social security bill for mass unemployment. New Labour will not have that money and have made it clear they will do anything - dole cuts, workfare, health cuts, whatever - to keep their middle class voters happy. Frank Field, Labour's hot-shot benefits expert, even wants every adult to be given a smart card encoded with a DNA fingerprint to make the benefit system more secure.

Don't expect any better from the Liberal Democrats. They like to parade themselves as the most environmentally friendly party but David Rendel MP is staunchly in favour of the Newbury bypass in a pathetic attempt to save his seat at the next election by going on an anti-protester offensive.

The coming election will be an opportunity to show the contempt we feel for the politicians - Labour, Tory and Liberal Democrat - who run this country on behalf of profit-guzzling big business. As one activist put it at the summer Earth First! Gathering *“We can harass them around the country, break up their set-piece TV appearances and generally make life very difficult for them. These politicians treat us like shit and it only seems right to return the compliment.”*

NEVER MIND THE BALLOT - LET'S GO OUT THERE AND DO THINGS FOR OURSELVES

“Direct action is not a last resort. It is the preferred way of doing things.”

Reclaim The Streets flyer handed out at the M41 street party.

People are voting - with their feet and actions 365 days of the year. Take the Exodus Collective. They were formed out of the need of people on the council estates of Luton to gather and find housing. In the last four years they have gone from putting on small parties in woods to huge gatherings, attracting up to 6,000 people. All donations collected at parties are pumped back into the collective. They have housed over 40 people at the HAZ Manor and run the Community Free Farm where school kids regularly come to sample the rural atmosphere. Despite such community-minded activities (or more likely because their activities are community-based rather than done for profit) they have been seriously harassed by the police.

Credit Unions in Liverpool are now so numerous they are available to half the population. In these not-for-profit banks, people pool their own resources and draw on them for small loans to lots of people not considered 'credit worthy'.

Plants For A Future are growing 1,500 edible and useful plants on a 26 acre farm in Cornwall, and are now planning Britain's first sustainable eco-village somewhere in the south west.

UNDER ATTACK - 'DIVIDE AND DESTROY'

"The anti roads campaign Reclaim The Streets is in danger of being hijacked by anarchist lawbreakers, transport campaigners warned yesterday."

Evening Standard August 96

The politicians, large businesses, multi-nationals, and the media are terrified of people getting together in opposition to their rule and are busy attempting to demonise and isolate anyone who tries to do so. Road protesters have been described as a "threat to national security" by the security services who now openly admit to targeting such groups. There are few people involved in any actions who will not have their face on a photo or video taken by the Met. Police Forward Intelligence Team. *Justice?*, by squatting an empty shop and being associated with one or two bike rides and street parties in Brighton, has been described by one of the town's MPs as creating a "mini-revolutionary situation". The attempt to label those most involved in direct action, particularly environmental activists, as 'terrorists' illustrates the way in which the state intends to divide and destroy us.

Hundreds of thousands have been involved in some sort of protest at some time or other - environmental groups in Britain, for instance, have a combined membership of over five million. The state does not want to alienate these people - it just wants to make their protests ineffective. It tries to do this in two main

ways: by isolating the most consistent and active campaigners from the majority of those involved through harassment, imprisonment and whatever else it takes; and by encouraging activists to follow 'moderate' (i.e. ineffective) leaders within the movement by giving these figures money, media-time and so on.

We have already had a taste of this strategy. When 7,000 people took part in Reclaim the Street's street party on the M41 in July the police didn't try to arrest everyone for 'conspiracy to obstruct the highway'. Instead, they raided the offices of RTS soon after, stole a computer and threatened two RTS members with conspiracy charges. The aim of such operations, is to intimidate and isolate those most involved in actions from the majority - and thereby stop the growth of a movement that has the potential of being really effective.

General Frank Kitson, a British Army expert on 'subversion', laid out this strategy in *Low Intensity Operations* way back in 1971. He wrote the book while he was busy waging war in Britain's oldest colony, Ireland. British rule has ruthlessly suppressed struggles of oppressed peoples throughout the world, but more than anywhere else Ireland has been used as a testing ground for the 'counter-insurgency' strategies now beginning to be used against us - repressive legislation, frame-ups, intensive information gathering, and other 'dirty tricks'.

In his book, Kitson emphasises the importance of intelligence gathering, "psychological operations" such as propaganda against opposition groups, use of the media to target individuals, and the use of infiltrators. The aim of all this is "to discover and neutralise the genuine subversive element" and "to associate as many prominent members of the population, especially those who may have engaged in non-violent action, with the government". Divide and destroy is the name of the game.

"Some of those taking part were anarchists dedicated to destroying society. They should not complain if next time society takes a dimmer view of their actions."

Evening Argus editorial after Brighton Reclaim The Streets, 17 February 96

PRISONER SUPPORT

The state will inevitably use its more extreme sanctions against us, and we need to support those who are subjected to its so-called Justice and retribution. Since its early days, *SchNEWS* has highlighted the importance of defending prisoners, especially jailed activists. We have learnt a lot about the barbarity of the British prison system and the importance of supporting those unlucky enough to be trapped inside it. **By now most of us probably realise that it's a lot more useful writing to a**

prisoner than to an MP. Many prisoners have written back to say how much they appreciate getting the *SchNEWS* and letters sent to them - and how much hearing about what's going on outside has stopped them feeling demoralised and isolated inside.

A HISTORY OF STRUGGLE

For the last two years *SchNEWS* has covered in detail the tooling up of the police and their nasty activities against us. But we've also drawn the links between what we're up to now and struggles in the past - because we've got a lot to learn from them.

The 1930s saw massive working class struggles involving rent strikes, pitched battles with the police, mass anti-fascist demos, and the organisation on a mass scale of the unemployed against workfare schemes and other government attacks. Thousands of working class people went to fight fascism in Spain while the British government did nothing.

More recently, the uprisings of black and white youth throughout Britain in 1980 and 1981 sent shock waves through the British establishment. It was felt that the traditional British Bobby needed to be toughened up to counter this threat. The thin blue line suddenly started to get thicker. Our counter-insurgency expert General Kitson was hurriedly transferred from Ireland to become Head of the Army's UK Land Forces and Kenneth Newman, the Chief Constable in Northern Ireland, was transferred to become Chief Constable of the Met. Gerry Northam's enlightening book *Shooting in the Dark* shows how the British Police have become a near para-military force along the lines of colonial Police Forces from the good old days of the Empire.

The miners' strike of 1984-85 was a major, and almost successful, challenge to Thatcher's government. A national police operation was mounted against the miners involving 20,000 officers. Every dirty trick in the book was used to beat the miners' strike including illegal road-blocks, massed attacks by riot police, MI5 infiltration of the highest levels of the miners' union, and a personal smear campaign against the miners' leader Arthur Scargill. Over 12,000 miners were arrested. Thatcher described the miners as "the enemy within" and Manchester's Chief Constable James Anderton called miners' pickets "acts of terrorism without the bullet and the bomb" (familiar, eh?). Tens of thousands of people joined miners' support groups throughout the country. But in the end, largely due to the failure of the labour movement and Labour Party to support the miners, the strike was eventually defeated. The Police were given more opportunities to try out their new strategies and new toys - the Battle of the Beanfield,

"We need to start to build sustainable organisations to meet the sustained attacks that are coming our way soon."

Wapping and Tottenham riots are but a few. Within a few years, hundreds were to join anti-poll tax groups that successfully defeated the poll tax and brought down Thatcher. This was the biggest ever show of direct action in Britain for years with at one point over 17 million people not paying, or refusing to collect the tax.

However, despite all these struggles, no sustainable organisations have been built to learn the lessons of the past and make the links we need to make between different struggles. In that sense, probably more than any other, the divide and destroy strategy has worked well. Popular movements, some extremely active and involving hundreds of thousands of people, come and go - but the strong, sustainable organisations we need have not been built.

IS THIS A LAUGH OR IS THIS FOR REAL?

We now face important decisions about where we go next. On our own we can at most be an irritation to those in power and an interesting object of study for journalists and cultural studies students. Linked with others, we can build something of real importance. As George Jackson, black working class revolutionary and Black Panther member shot by guards in a U.S. prison, put it, *"It isn't just a matter of trusting the good will of other slaves and other colonies and other peoples. It is simply a matter of common need. We need allies. We have a powerful enemy who cannot be defeated without an allied effort"*.

We need to build real unity with others, to learn from others. We will find our natural allies, as we did in Liverpool, amongst the millions of people in Britain suffering poverty, racism, police harassment - and fighting back, like us, in pockets of resistance. When the JSA starts to hit, and thousands simply lose all of their benefits, we have to have organisations there to do support each other. Because no one else will do it for us.

We have always been at our strongest when we've been most active, doing actions and organising imaginative campaigns that involve new people. In doing this, we have learnt that you don't get very far if you are constantly trying to impress the media and convince politicians that what you're doing is 'reasonable'.

As the eviction by Guinness of the Land is Ours occupation in Wandsworth showed, those in power don't give a shit about what's reasonable - they're only interested in money, not people. Next time The Land is Ours or whoever squats some derelict land maybe a few lessons can be learnt from the women on *EastEnders* who got nicked fighting their council for a playground for their kids - that sort of local DiY self-help is going to become more and more important

HERE'RE A FEW FACTS ABOUT A WORLD SYSTEM THAT WE ARE CONSIDERED EXTREMISTS FOR WANTING TO DESTROY

☉ Since 1960 the countries where the richest 20% of the world's people live have increased their share of gross world product from 70% to 83%. These rich countries are now sixty times better off than those where the poorest 20% live.

☉ 800 million people in the world are severely malnourished or starving.

☉ 10% of children in the poor countries of the world die before their fifth birthday. 40,000 children in poor countries die every day through preventable diseases - the equivalent of dropping a bomb similar to the one dropped on Hiroshima on the poor children of the world every three days.

☉ The wealth of the richest 358 people in the world exceeds the combined annual income of countries which are home to nearly half the world's population.

☉ About 11 million people are homeless in the world. One person in three in poor countries is homeless or in severely sub-standard housing. A third of the population in most third world countries are squatters - not exactly a 'lifestyle' decision. 37 million people have been driven from their homes by violence or armed conflict, 80% of them women and children.

☉ 400 million people live under military dictatorships propped up by multinationals that earn huge profits from the cheap labour these regimes provide.

☉ 10% of the Earth's species could be lost by the year 2000.

☉ If present rates of destruction continue, tropical forests have at most a decade of life.

☉ World military spending is \$778 bn a year - don't even try to get your head round that figure.

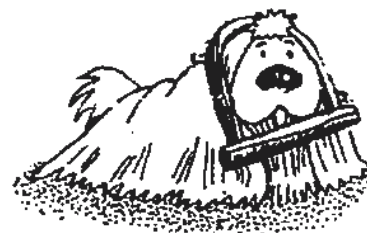
So - consider these next time you are worried about being too extreme in getting off your butt and doing something.

as facilities for people on estates become even more non-existent. We can't allow those who try to narrow the effectiveness of actions by constantly trying to keep things legal and 'acceptable' to those in power to stop us from being effective.

By their nature, most actions we've been involved in have come together very quickly and then moved on, to different places with different people. That's fine in its place - at road protests, for street parties, for one-off squats - but now we need to adapt the way we organise in order to meet new challenges. We need to build locally, getting to know and linking up with unemployed groups, black and refugee groups, strikers, and people living on estates forgotten about by corrupt councils.

We need to start to build sustainable organisations to meet the sustained attacks that are coming our way soon. Open, democratic organisations that are welcoming to new people, that discuss what we're doing and learn from past struggles and the loads of other struggles across the world that are fighting the same enemy we are.

If, over the next few years, we don't start uniting the pockets of resistance that already exist - if we allow ourselves to retreat into secretive sects that slag each other off and are endlessly suspicious of anyone new - we will simply be picked off struggle by struggle. If we do get it together with others, if we do start to involve new people in in-your-face direct action in their hundreds, in their thousands, then the sky's the limit - and we can start having some serious fun as we party and protest and build a real mass fightback against a system that has long outlived its welcome.



that was the...
SchNEWS 100
...that was.

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers not to read the next 100 issues of SchNEWS. It is merely ink on dead trees. Rather, spend your time fruitfully: consume, grow old, and decay. Then you will finally have contributed to (the) earth. Honest. Oh, and *smash capitalism!*

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