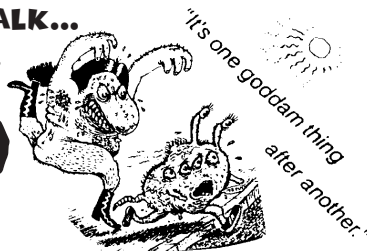


WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER MODIFIED BEANSTALK...

SchNEWS

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OOH, AMERICA - WHAT BIG LIES YOU HAVE!

"Over the past two years the US has flooded the world market with unregulated and unlabelled genetically-engineered grain. It is clear it wants to continue this practice and will sabotage any efforts to set international rules for GE crops."

Louise Gale, Greenpeace

More than once upon a time, an evil mutant wolf (neither beautiful nor noble, so no complaints, wilderness types) called the USA wooded, deceived then shat upon the Little Red Riding Hood of a free world. Well guess what, boys and girls - the furry bastard is back. Blink and you might have missed it, but on Wednesday a world wide agreement that would have put safeguards on the trade of genetically modified organisms (GMO's) was sabotaged and no, there's no prizes for guessing the villain of the piece.

Over 135 nations of the world were at Cartagena, Colombia to agree upon an International Biosafety Protocol, a binding set of international safety standards concerning the trade of GMO's. The Agreement would have forced exporting nations to tell countries whenever any GMO's were going to turn up at their docks. It would mean that biodiversity and environmental safety would be - shock, horror- put above the interests of industry, and provide protection for developing nations.

But surprise, surprise. America - alongside other members of the "Miami Group" (US, Canada, Australia, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, now dubbed the "Miami Vice" of grain exporters) - did the dirty and scuppered the plans, clearing the way for the biotech companies to take even greater control of the food chain. As Ricarda Steinbrecher, representative for Women's Environmental Network (W.E.N.) at the negotiations argues, *"Biodiversity and safety are the big losers at these negotiations. Trade has got the upper hand and is dictating a Bio-Trade Protocol."*

The US kindly decided to piss in the world's pint-pot on two counts. Firstly, worried that little niceties like clear labelling on international shipments might help citizens boycott products, they refused to allow things like soya beans and corn, which account for 90% of the world trade in GMO's to be included in the negotiations. The "health-conscious" Yanks insist that any safety tests felt necessary by ungrateful little

third-world nations would have to be carried out domestically - beyond the resources of many nations, who were hoping the Protocol might give them the time and knowledge to develop their own laws. Secondly, the US was insistent on the inclusion of Article 31, part of the Protocol relating to other international agreements, which all the countries wanted deleted. This would mean that, in the event of a conflict of interests between the World Trade Organisation and the Protocol, the interests of business would win out. Did the US play fair? We think not, as Dr. Steinbrecher points out: *"The Ethiopian delegate, representing some countries of the so-called 'Third World' was locked in a room with two delegates from the developed world for over seven*

front of locked doors, not knowing the state of play. We cannot accept this draft that was thrust down our throats without discussion."

The scuppering of the Protocol leaves countries that want to block the import of GMO's out on a limb - if they make an individual stance they could face the wrath of the World Trade Organisation.

And what, you may wonder, is Britain's stance on this? Well, after initial lip service to outrage, Bill C. got on the blower and now "we" are pressing for compromise along with the US.

As W.E.N. say, *"Consumers... don't want to be bullied by big industry and the USA. Without a strong protocol, we are all the losers."*

The same old Un-fairy tale, eh readers? For more bed-time reading, contact Womens Environmental Network, 87 Worship Street, London, EC2A 2BE. Tel: 0171 247 3327 or visit <http://www.greenpeace.org/>

DE-MYTH-TIFICATION

The Biodiversity Convention came out of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992; nearly 140 countries signed up to protect the plant and animal species of the earth. Unsurprisingly, the USA didn't join in the fun.

If the world was a Fairy Tale, then the World Trade Organisation would take the role of Big Bad Wolf who wants to huff n' puff our environmental laws down, to leave us as the vulnerable (guinea) pigs to be devoured by the wicked corporations.

hours without any break or contact with other 'third world' countries. He is under immense pressure"

Even more unbelievable is that the US didn't even have a formal delegation in Colombia. It is not even part of the Convention on Biological Diversity, so what was it doing there? Turns out the posse of bullyboy gatecrashers - sorry, *powerful lobby group* - was a bunch of Arthur Daley sales reps from biotech companies including Monsanto, Novartis, Agro-Evo, Pioneer, Rhone Poulenc and Global Biotech Forum who came, in the words of Greenpeace spokesperson Louise Gale, *"with one task - to torpedo the negotiations."*

The delegate from Mauritius joined 63 countries in condemning the negotiations, *"We came here to negotiate, but found ourselves most of the time in corridors or in*

KVAERNER KREW

Protester: "Do you consider the Economy to be more important than the environment?"

Kvaerner Construction: ".Yes!"

That's strange, as their delightful brochure boasts that *"...we see the protection of the environment... as our prime concern... we act as a single globally-functioning business with a single identity world-wide."*

The Kvaerner owned company, Midland Expressway Limited (MEL), are the consortium wanting to build Britains first toll motorway, the Birmingham Northern Relief Road (BNRR). While the Alliance Against The BNRR were in the High Courts appealing the decision for the go-ahead for the 27 mile motorway, 30 activists payed a visit to their offices, complete with banners, fire juggling and general chaos. Kvaerner may have difficulty getting an estimated £600-700 million from the city following the financial failures of their other toll roads in America and abroad. A camp is still on route, contact Mike on ..01922 416110, or Birmingham FoE..0121 6326909 for more info.

Learn to Desk Top Publish for SchNEWS!

We're running a training day on Monday 22 March. Absolute beginners 10.30 am - 12.30 pm, others 1.30 - 3.30 pm. (We can handle 4 people per session; book now!) SchNEWS is desperate for more people to DTP on Thurs evenings. Competent? Patient? Get in touch.

Fortress UK

While Tory Blair this week talked of a "more tolerant, more inclusive Britain" after the publishing of the Stephen Lawrence report, the second reading of New Labour's Immigration and Asylum Bill eased its way through parliament. Words such as 'tolerance' do not spring to mind in the new way asylum seekers, often fleeing torture and persecution, are going to be dealt with when they arrive here. The Bill includes:

- ❖ Withdrawing all benefits from asylum seekers and their families and introducing a system of cashless vouchers worth about £30 to exchange for food (forget clothes, toiletries, medicines, household goods etc.)
- ❖ Remove local authorities' obligations towards them under the National Assistance, Homelessness and Childrens Acts.
- ❖ Scatter asylum seekers in designated accommodation around the country; no matter that it might mean they are separated from family and/or friends or housed in areas without proper support facilities such as services for torture survivors.
- ❖ Giving immigration officers new powers to enter and search premises and arrest asylum seekers, in some cases without a warrant 'using reasonable force if necessary'
- ❖ Extend the use of detention and fingerprinting on arrival to the UK
- ❖ Some bail hearings to be tried via a live TV link!
- ❖ Reduced appeal times.
- ❖ Introduce a whole new range of criminal offences for people who help asylum seekers.

Still, as the Refugee Council points out, "*Most asylum seekers come here for purely selfish reasons: to escape death.*" Refugee Council 0171 582 6922.

DEMONSTRATE *t*his Saturday against the *Asylum Bill: 12 noon, 27 February, Embankment (a minibus is going from outside St.Peters Church, Brighton at 10am.)*

* 335 pages of the Stephen Lawrence case and no mention of police corruption. Funny that. But what of Duwayne Brooks, who was with Stephen at the time of his murder? After officers said he was anti-police they then reckoned he was in danger and needed their protection. So they assigned him the same copper who had been seen drinking on 3 occasions with the father of David Norris - one of the racist scumbags accused of killing Stephen. Norris is a big time gangster, currently serving 8 yrs for drugs and arms, suspected of at least one murder with a reputation of jury nobbling and intimidation of witnesses. Duwayne had a breakdown and couldn't give evidence at the private prosecution or even turn up at the public inquiry.

* If readers want to see our double-page interview with someone from the Lawrence Family campaign send an SAE for issue 177 or check out our web-pages.

Freedom For Tibet Week

March 10 1999 is the 40th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising, when the Tibetan people rose up against the Chinese occupation of their country. Thousands of Tibetans were killed by the brutal suppression of the uprising with the Dalai Lama also being forced into exile.

For a full programme list of the week, which runs from 4-13 March, contact the Free Tibet Campaign, 1 Rosoman Place, London EC1Y 0JY. Tel.0171 833 9958.

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SchNEWS in brief

Nobody likes paying for public services, do they, Gordon Brown? Apart from the people of **Milton Keynes** that is, who have voted in a referendum to increase their council tax bills by almost 10%. Faced with the prospect of deep cuts in schools, libraries and home help budgets a turn-out of almost 45% said yes to more public services. Bloody revolutionaries. ** The **U'wa people** live high in the cloud forests of Colombia and believe that their purpose in life is to protect the earth Bloody radicals. Of course, as you would expect their lands are now threatened by evil oil giants. One of them Berito KuwarU'wa is coming to the UK on 28th March @ Earth Centre, Denaby Main, Doncaster, DN12 4DY 01709 512000. ** **Permaculture** Introductory Weekend 13-14 March. Contact NatureWise 0171 281 3765. ** **International Women's Day-Rally** for Mothers Against Disappearances! Saturday 6th March, 4pm Trafalgar Square. ** Discuss **Ghetto Politics** with **London Anarchist Forum**, 8pm, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL (nearest tube Holborn).The Forum meet at same place, same time every week Tel 0181 847 0203. ** Benefit evening for Workers Aid for **Kosovo** Friday 5th March, 8pm-12pm, The Yard Theatre, Hulme with Attila the Stockbroker. Tickets £6/4. ** **The Centre for Alternative Technology** has recently won the British Environment and Media Awards. For best website. Check it out www.cat.org.uk ** **Genetic Engineering Network** Office needs help urgently. If you've any have time to spare call 0181 374 9516.

Bosses that bug us

Sick of your boss sticking their nose beak into your business? Well have a read of "Surveillance and Privacy at Work" by Michael Ford. Today a quarter of a million people are drug tested every year by companies. Businesses are investing in Big Brother interviews, demanding potential employees to release their most intimate secrets like psychological makeup, sexuality, religion, bra size etc. It's not just prisoners that are being fitted with electronic tags, but also your average Joe Public call centre worker. This infra red equipment designed by AT&T follows a worker the minute he gets into work, knows when he's off his PC, and can even track him into the bog. Ford's book goes into the whole world of pervy boss spying antics and calls for extra legislation to make this practice illegal. Contact: Institute of Employment Rights, 177 Abbeville Road, London, SW4 9RL (it's a steep £20 order it from the library.)

Resistance is useless

Those free party people activists RESISTANCE are holding another one day spectacular on Sat 13th March at the New Trinity Centre, Bristol. Entitled "An alternative thinkers gathering", day-time has stalls, Kebele Kulture veggie cafe and a wide-range of speakers (hey even SchNEWS will take to the stage). Social in the evening includes bands Baby Head and Dubmerge followed by an all-nighter techno party. Last years event was excellent. Details 07970 337638 Avon calling! Construction is underway on the Avon Ring Road (Bristol's answer to the M25). The campaign has squatted a field near the route and need more people. Anyone who can handle a spanner is urged to get on down there! The campaign has good local support and a secure camp. For details and directions contact 0836 653723.

Ashton Court Quarry Campaign, Bristol are celebrating one year anniversary of protest with a week of action on February 27-March 5 starting with a "BIG" free party on the 27th. Contact Campaign Mobile:07970 423834.

Inside SchNEWS

Eric Mann is a dangerous criminal. Thankfully for the public at large he will be behind bars for the next year. Yes, Eric, a 55 year old granddad is in prison for growing cannabis to stop the pain from arthritis. Send letters of support to Eric at HMP Swansea, 200 Oystermouth Rd., West Glamorgan, SA1 2SR.

Meanwhile the Green Party yesterday supported Paul Flynn MP in his bill to get marijuana de-criminalised for people who use the weed to relieve suffering. This has probably got about as much chance of becoming law as Howard Marks has of talking about some thing other than dope at this year's festies. But if you want to find out more contact the Green Party on 0171 272 4474.

Portsmouth Three

Hampshire police love hunt saboteurs, and welcome them to their Police Benevolent Fund all-night fund-raising parties. No, actually they don't; but they did set up a full-time CID incident room for them, for over 4 months. A week on Monday these efforts come to a head when begins the Portsmouth trial of 3 sabs charged with *conspiracy to commit violent disorder*. Funny, this one....

Violence had been mounting from supporters of the Hursley Hambleden foxhunt. When things kicked off again at a meet of the hunt, no-one was charged (on either side) for actual assault or damage, despite plenty of police having been in the area. But the cops were as keen to use the opportunity to gather intelligence on sabs as the hunting lobby were to make PR capital from it. The police took first pickings, arresting 42 sabs, raiding homes and workplaces and seizing clothes, phones, video cameras and vehicles. Then the media to moved in; the Evening Standard reportage furthering its propaganda effort against the anti-hunt Foster Bill.

Thus the web of conspiracy unfolds. We can infer the old bill had tipped off the hunt about the planned large-scale sab, as (unusually) present were pro-hunt surveillance teams and the regional press officer of the Countryside Movement (doubtless keen to canvas support for that organisation's concern for rural Post Offices). Another tip-off:

Demo outside Portsmouth Crown Court, 1:00pm, Monday March 1 (1st day of trial, and National Day Of Action Against All BloodSports). Prosecutions in Britain are never politically motivated. Be there to admire the Hampshire officers' dedication to the quest for justice.

* **Defence Campaign**, Box H, 67 Fawcett Rd., Southsea, Hants, PO4 0DH

...and finally...

A company trying to continue its 5 year perfect safety record showed its workers a film aimed at encouraging the use of safety goggles on the job. According to *Industrial Machinery News*, the film's depiction of gory industrial accidents was so graphic that 25 workers suffered minor injuries in their rush to leave the screening room. 13 others fainted, and one man required 7 stitches after he cut his head falling off a chair while watching.

disclaimer

