

WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER HAZARD COUNTY...

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F.A.C.K. YOU

WORKPLACE DEATHS CONTINUE, TEN YEARS AFTER THE MURDER OF SIMON JONES

“FACK grew out of the campaigning around Simon Jones’ death which had a magnificent effect, especially the direct action. It woke people up to the fact that we could take on the companies that kill people and do something about it. There’s over 20 families of people killed at work involved with FACK, campaigning against unfettered and unregulated greed of business. People build struggles on past struggles, it’s important to learn lessons from past campaigns - it’s how we get stronger” - Hilda Palmer of Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK)

Ten years ago, on 24th April 1998, Simon Jones was killed at a Shoreham dock on his first day at work unloading a ship. His death sparked a campaign of direct action against the corporate killers. Ten years on and despite lip service from Neo-Labour, businesses still get away with the murder of employees and families are forced to fight for justice. Families against Corporate Killing (FACK) were formed as an umbrella group to help people who lose loved ones to workplace accidents.

Eventually bowing to the pressure from both campaigns and large scale corporate safety failures like the (ironically named) Herald of Free Enterprise ferry disaster and the Hatfield train crash, an offence of corporate killing has finally made it on to the books - just last week in fact, following a government consultation paper published way back in 2000.

The long-standing promise to punish directors who allow their companies to kill people resulted in nothing of the sort. The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act has just become law to universal condemnation from safety activists and unions. The building industry union Ucat’s general secretary Alan Ritchie said, “This Act will not save the life of a single construction worker. Only by creating the possibility that directors will go to jail will there be a change of culture in the construction industry.” He should know – last year 77 workers died in the building industry.

But despite all the tragedies, how does the workplace safety record shape up now?

In fact, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is worse than ever. Between 2006 and 2007, UK deaths at work went up from 217 to 241, an increase of 11%. In the same period HSE inspections of workplaces decreased by 24%, to the point where a workplace could expect the man from the HSE to call once every 14.5 years. Since 2002, the HSE has lost over 1,000 posts as a result of cuts. Go get them cowboys!

In Britain, a worker between 16 and 24

years old suffers a reported workplace injury requiring more than 3 days off work every 12 minutes of every working day. A young worker is seriously injured at work every 40 minutes. Workplace fatalities in this age range occur at a rate of more than one a month. And year on year, the number of accidents rises.

So the ability to more easily extract a few fines from those companies able to be unequivocally proven guilty won’t come as any consolation to the family of Simon Jones - or Steven Burke, a 17-year-old scaffolder who fell to his death from inadequately constructed ‘birdcage’ scaffold inside a giant sewage rec-



HIS STORY REPEATED

A decade since the death of Simon, we look back on the campaign to bring Euromin to justice. Simon was well known in the Brighton community – as well as a writer for SchNEWS – and it was this community who combined with his family to mobilise and form the Simon Jones Memorial Campaign...

In 1998 Simon Jones was sent to one of the most dangerous jobs in the country, one he had no training for. Simon had been killed by a profiteering gangster, James Martell, whose company, Euromin, ran the dock where he died. Complicit to the crime were the employment agency Personnel Selection which sent him to his death without any checks or references.

On 1st September 1998, which would have been Simon’s 25th birthday, the Simon Jones Memorial Campaign went into action. Thirty protesters shut down the dock where Simon was killed, climbing two 80-foot towers with banners reading “Simon Jones RIP” and “Casualisation Kills”.

That evening, a packed meeting in a Brighton pub decided it couldn’t stop there. “A lot of the people at the meeting had casual jobs,” said Emma, Simon’s girlfriend at the time of his death. “People were furious that employment agencies could get away with taking half your wages without even making sure the job they sent you to was safe.” Two days later Personnel Selection was occupied and a “Murderers” banner hung from its window.

In March 1999 the MP George Galloway gave a speech in parliament calling for the prosecution of Euromin over Simon’s death. Afterwards campaign supporters occupied the Department of Trade and Industry’s offices - those supposed to regulate employment agencies.

The campaign kept up the pressure by targeting the Health and Safety Executive a



The fight for justice for Simon Jones - ten years on, the lessons learnt.

Film showing and discussion with Anne Jones, Simon’s mother. 8pm, 24th April, Cowley Club, 12 London Rd, Brighton.

lamation tank in 2005. His case was finally dealt with in February this year. Despite a damning verdict that showed the scaffold he was assigned to was a staggering 2,500 tubes short, his employers 3D Scaffolding Ltd were fined a mere £80,000 (and given 18 months to pay). His family stated, “No amount of money would bring Steven back or hurt the defendants whose actions and inactions led to his death, but the family feel fines should be much greater to bring home the full seriousness of what they have done.”

* For more see **Families Against Corporate Killers** www.fack.org.uk

few weeks later. But this time security guards were waiting for an attempted occupation – and looked on while thirty members of the campaign turned round, walked onto Southwark Bridge and blockaded it for three hours.

The result of the campaign was a complete climb down by the state. The Crown Prosecution Service had refused to prosecute anyone over Simon’s death all along. In March 2000 two High Court Judges ordered the CPS to reconsider this decision - the first successful judicial review of a decision not to prosecute for manslaughter over a workplace death in British legal history. The judges described the CPS as behaving “irrationally”, “failing to address the relevant law” and adopting an approach that “beggared belief”. They told the CPS to review its decision “with dispatch”.

Nine months later, after a spirited picket of the CPS where a campaign supporter was arrested and locked up for demanding someone who had killed his mate got arrested and locked up, the CPS finally agreed to prosecute.

The trial of Simon’s killers took place in November 2001 and resulted in conviction on health and safety charges but acquittal on the charge of manslaughter. Following the verdict the campaign issued a statement saying:

“We are painfully aware that in 21st century Britain the fight for the most basic of workers’ rights – the right not to be killed or injured at work – is still being fought. Without direct action James Martell and Euromin would never have faced prosecution in the High Court for Simon’s death. As long as this government and its agencies refuse to take action against companies that profit from casualisation at the expense of their workers’ lives we will continue, where necessary, to break the law so that justice will prevail.”

* **Simon Jones Memorial Campaign** www.simonjones.org.uk

* **See also SchNEWS 182, 333 and others...**

FREE SPACE NOT MY SPACE

This weekend (11th-12th) sees two days of **Decentralized Action for Squats and Autonomous Spaces** across the world. In the UK groups in cities across the country will be occupying buildings and opening them to the public, as well as partaking in direct action and other hijinks. The themes of the weekend include resisting gentrification, privatisation of public land and homelessness, but most of all about creating free, anti-capitalist autonomous social spaces.

BIRMINGHAM: Events kick off with a demo on Friday 11th, 2pm outside the Council House in Victoria Square, about the gentrification of inner-city Digbeth, and the corporate takeover of the city centre. An empty building close to the city centre will be occupied for the weekend, and open to the public. For more info email freespacebrum@riseup.net, web www.seedwiki.com/wiki/birmingham_social_centre

LEEDS: A central-Leeds building will be occupied with a free cafe, free shop of clothes, books, toys and tat, information, and an acoustic open mike on Saturday night. All are welcome to get involved - the space is open to film screenings, workshops and more. For location and info email leedssquat@googlemail.com or call 07526 261061.

READING: Reading Grassroots Action will be taking a privatised area along the river in central Reading on Friday 11th spreading information, with free food and free Zapatistas coffee. On Saturday (12th), the Common Ground community gardens in Katesgrove will be re-squatted and re-opened to the public - it was evicted in October 2007 (See SchNEWS 607). Opening at 1pm, there's a BBQ at 3pm and live music from 5pm. To get there: go through alleyway, next to ex-Womens Information Centre, Silver Street, Reading, RG2. For more email katesgrovegarden@yahoo.co.uk web www.rgacollective.org.uk

BRISTOL: In response to the spillover of shopping centre shite from Broadmead into St Pauls and Old Market, a nearby empty space in will be taken for the weekend. Friday is setting up day, with screenings and cafe from 7pm. On Saturday there will be a Carnival Parade starting Albany Green, St Pauls from 11am - bring costumes, banners etc - as well as an art exhibition at the centre all day and a cabaret/open mike following at night. For location call 07528 953230 / 07591 631230 see also www.bristol.indymedia.org/article/688145

MANCHESTER: Manchester Space Invaders will be squatting a place in the central city, beginning the weekend on Friday with live music from 5pm. On Saturday there will be workshops, family events and more at the squatted centre, and a fair/fun day at Cathedral Gardens from 1pm-6pm. At 5pm there's a demo and street party bringing together local autonomous spaces and No Borders. Meet by Urbis, next to Manchester Victoria train station. Saturday night is a squat party. For locations and info email manchesterspaceinvaders@yahoo.co.uk web www.mcraz.wordpress.com

LONDON: Space Is The Place. There are events at a new squatted social centre in Shoreditch and other autonomous spaces in London. Starting on Friday night, 7pm, at the RampART social centre (15-17 Rampart Street, E1 2LA) are a cafe, info-stalls, screenings and discussions. Also on Friday at the NO:ID Gallery (26 Calvert Ave, E2 7JP), live bands from 8pm.

On Saturday demonstrate for clean, safe homes in support of the residents at Alexandra Court Hostel, a 'temporary' hostel at 1a Belgrade Road, Hackney, N16 8DH, which rips off tenants living in abject conditions. Meet 12.30pm at the hostel and march to the Hackney Town Hall on Mare St. By the London Coalition Against Poverty - tel 07932 241737 email londoncoalitionagainstopoverty@gmail.com

All over the weekend from 10am-7pm the Shoreditch squat will be open to the public with cafe, free shop and squatters estate agency - it's on Bowl Court, up Plough Court near corner of Great Eastern Street and Shoreditch High St.

At 8pm on Saturday there's a benefit gig for Advisory Service For Squatters at the Hackney Social Centre, 231 Lower Clapton Road, featuring live bands - tel 07758 119655. Also on Saturday there'll be Wominspace workshops and drag party from 9pm till late at 4a Corbridge Crescent, London, E2 and from 7-11.30pm the Earth Circus Climate 4 Change Cabaret at The Old Mercedes Showroom, 341 Finchley Rd, NW3 6ET.

NOTTINGHAM: A squatted space will be opened, with two days of discussions, screenings, jumble stalls, cafe and partying. To find out location call 07534 496679 or see www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/nottinghamshire

BRIGHTON: After the success of last weekend's Temporary Autonomous Art squat in Portslade (see SchNEWS 626), the Brighton crew will be holding an event on The Level on Sat (12th) in the afternoon with cafe and more. Later people will move to a squatted building for an evening of music and film screenings. To get the location be at The Level.

* For a round-up of international events see <http://april2008.squat.net:8080/wiki/Agenda>

ART ATTACK

May 1st-15th sees the return to the capital of the Street Blitz - the interactive way to conduct guerrilla art. The idea is to use the whole city as an open gallery. Install your art, or creative urban landscape subversion, and then post up details on the Blitz website map with text and pics to encourage others to visit / enjoy / join in.

As the organisers say, "The corporate image factory... doesn't ask your permission to push images in your face so neither should we seek consent in order to leave our own mark on the city..." Get yer paint out and see www.streetblitz.org

FLIGHT RIOT

Police have taken violent action to break a mass hunger strike at Harmondsworth detention centre. On the 1st of April over 300 detainees went on hunger strike in protest. They were angered by the brutal treatment and repeated injustice heaped on them by the asylum system. They are being deported without having their cases properly heard, without having committed any crime and after abuse by detention centre staff. Most have been placed on the fast-track deportation process, meaning they have no time for protracted legal appeals. Many are also victims of torture and have been denied the right to see specialists to assess their evidence. In response almost all the detainees occupied the prison courtyard.

SchNEWS spoke to an activist from the SOAS Detainee Support Group, who told us, "Between 5 and 6 in the morning on the 5th of April around 50 police in riot gear stormed into the immigration removal centre and took 30 detainees away. Most of them have been put in isolation or into the common prison population. This effectively cuts them off from the outside world. One detainee we managed to talk to told us he is bruised all over his body, has injuries from handcuffs and has a damaged ankle. He also told us that he saw another detainee being grossly mishandled by police. We do not know this second detainee's whereabouts or what happened to him. Those left in Harmondsworth are feeling very intimidated but say they are coping. Some detainees are still refusing food but we do not know how many." Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre is run by Kalyx, a subsidiary of multinational company Sodexo (formerly Sodexo).

For more on asylum action www.noborders.org.uk and www.soasdetainee.blogspot.com

...and finally...

How would you know if your action group or campaign had been infiltrated by a mole? Another new recruit, but they're a bit different... they're too keen... too clean - leaving you questioning your prejudices about people with normal haircuts. Usually in time that person chills out, and if they hang around and start mucking in, you find out that they're alright.

But sometimes peoples' paranoia isn't misplaced... London Greenpeace - the group at the centre of the McLibel trial - were so pissed that at some meetings more than half the attendees were undercover. In 2005 the Campaign Against The Arms Trade revealed that one well liked and highly active campaigner - Martin Hogbin - was in fact working for a spy company employed by BAe Systems (see Mark Thomas's account at www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/12/387054.html).

This week was the turn of anti-aviation activists Plane Stupid, although their spy outing was "more Austin Powers than 007". The posh boy James Bond wannabe blew his own cover under questioning by blurting out which Oxford college he studied at. From there campaigners got his real name, and more juicy details from his Bebo website, such as the details of his favourite film: Top Gun, and his employer: C2i International - a security and investigations company with clients in governments and the aerospace industry. To read their hilarious account see www.planestupid.com

(Note to editors: check out that new proof-reader Tarquin's credentials...)

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - Trust no-one - not even yourself. Honest!

SQUATTERS IN TABLOID SHOCKER

MESHO, The 16-page tabloid spoof paper about squatting, homelessness and autonomous spaces is out! Apeing the **METRO** masthead, it will be distributed around the country over the weekend, but nearly didn't happen: three separate printers pulled out at the last minute fearing a legal comeback - one excusing themselves because they print **METRO**, before another finally obliged at the last minute. Download **MESHO** on pdf (16 page, tabloid size, 4.7mb) at www.schnews.org.uk/satire/pdf/mesho.pdf



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