

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER RIGHTEOUSLY ANIMALISTIC...



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Taken an eye test lately?



A Novartis Company

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CIBA PUNKS

IN THE VIRTUAL REALITY OF THE CRACKDOWN ON ANIMAL RIGHTS PROTESTS

The British Govt's attempts to smash the animal rights movement have long been catalogued in SchNEWS over the years, but this week it turned from the pernicious to the ridiculous as Police stretched their already tenuous use of the word 'blackmail' with regards to animal rights protest...

Last Tuesday (14th) some activists did a banner drop protesting against Ciba Vision, a subsidiary of Novartis, from an overpass over the motorway near Ciba Vision's premises at Hedge End, near Southampton. Ciba Vision make contact lenses, and are a client of vivisection lab Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS). The protest was just outside the exclusion zone which limits protests near the premises of a list of companies associated with HLS as named on the injunction against SHAC (See SchNEWS 581). The two were not arrested, and only had their details taken by police for a possible court summons.

But things turned serious last Friday at 10am, when police kicked the door down at the house they were staying. With a search warrant regarding Tuesday's banner-drop, 25 coppers arrived - including Hampshire Police's two 'animal rights specialists', Martin Foster and Andrew Tester - and some plain-clothes CID to do the interviewing. The two banner-droppers were arrested for criminal damage and conspiracy to blackmail - because, the police said, they had used spraypaint to make the banner, and that spraypaint had been used in other actions against HLS targets previously! Their clothes were confiscated for forensic analysis, to see if they could be linked to a recent 'home visit' on the manager of a HLS client which involved paintstripper on his car and other nasty surprises. As one of them said, "It's as though police think we're the only people in Hampshire with spray cans".

This was the third time this same household had been raided in the past year, and police also took a computer, owned by another resident, who is currently one of the defendants in the upcoming SHAC trials (see below). A total of six computers, three printers and ten mobile phones have been taken from this household during these raids.

How can a banner drop in a public place - for all intents and purposes a legal, non-violent action - blow out into a possible charge of 'conspiracy to blackmail'? With the evidence at hand this case would get laughed out of court - that is unless the police try to pin something on them - but this is just the latest chapter in the British Govt's tenacious and heavy handed campaign to smash animal rights activism in this country.

Said one of the arrestees - "If they take what is legal protest, and use it to arrest peo-

ple, it forces protesters underground because if they put their faces to actions - even legal ones - they risk having their house raided and being dragged into court cases with possible prison sentences. The Police are the biggest recruiters for the ALF (the name used for covert, anonymous animal rights actions)."

"Any animal rights activist saying 'I will continue to protest until they stop' is now seen as tantamount to blackmail. But what is happening to SHAC and other animal rights groups is going to happen to other types of campaigns."

TRIAL & ERROR

Rumbling in the background to this weeks incident is the first of two SHAC trials, which is currently into it's third week and is due to last over four months, ending in January. The second trial begins then, but it may be affected by the results of the first. Eight have been charged - two with blackmail and the others with 'conspiracy to blackmail'. Since then, four are on remand and three have pleaded guilty.

But what is all this 'blackmail' thing about? Since 2001 SHAC have published the names of companies doing business with HLS, and initially sent them polite letters saying, 'Do you know what HLS do? Please stop dealing with them.' Since then there has been demos and ALF-style actions against some of them.

It turns out that some of the companies involved did stop working with HLS. Many did so after being visited by police, who told their management that now they were on the SHAC website they needed to beef up security - warning staff of dire threats to life and limb and advising them to check under their cars for bombs. These companies include those making cages, other torture equipment, and supplying transport and other services to HLS, as well as clients using HLS's 'research' on animals.

The police and prosecution are alleging that, by hosting the names of companies that work with Huntingdon Life Sciences, SHAC are giving a nod and a wink to ALF-style attacks. Yes covert attacks have taken place against HLS related targets - including painstripper on cars, phonecalls and letters to directors' homes and more - and people have been prosecuted for various offences in the past - but these attacks against HLS (and associated companies) are not being linked to the SHAC defendants in this trial. Instead re-publishing public information and writing to companies about animal abuse inside HLS' labs is made to look like a scene from a Mafia movie where the don says "...we wouldn't want any nasty accidents to happen to you on your way back from the animal murdering lab, would we now."

This trial is just the latest court case involving animal rights activists, coming after the recent Sequani trials which saw Sean Kirtley banged up for four years for running a website (See SchNEWS 634). In May 2007 police made 32 arrests across the UK in 'Operation Achilles'. 700 police were involved as homes and animal sanctuaries were raided, with police seizing computers, mobile phones and cash in what a popular weekly direct action newsletter described as a 'fishing expedition' (See SchNEWS 586).

But while HLS are being protected by the bootboys and laws of the British state, they are in fact in a tenuous state. They took a loan from the British Govt in 2001, and are battling to repay it. Novartis are being targeted because they are a major client of HLS, which HLS would sorely miss, and their status on the New York Stock Exchange is another weak point for them. If they get kicked off the NYSE before 2011 - as has happened in the past due to the international efforts of SHAC - they will go into liquidation.

That animal rights activists are portrayed in Britain as 'extremists' or 'terrorists' is deeply ironic seeing as they are about protecting animals from torture.

* See also www.shac.net

FULLY OCCUPIED

A delegation of eight people from Brighton, including five Sussex University students, has travelled to the Tubas region of Palestine. The group, members of the Brighton Tubas Friendship and Solidarity Group, are looking to foster links with local communities in the Jordan Valley, as well as to gather information on the realities of living under occupation. And to offer more practical help, they also intend to travel to the threatened community of al Masra to assist with their olive harvest.

A delegation from the group in October last year, joined al Masra residents on a protest against illegal land-grabbing by the Talmon B settlement when settlers started to fire live ammunition at the demonstrators, many of whom included young children (see SchNEWS 609). The village has continued to

suffer intimidation and violence from the settlement, including the murder of a 15-year-old boy by a settler in December last year. Despite the identity of the settler being known, he has continued to escape justice from the shockingly indifferent Israeli authorities, although Brighton Tubas has continued to press for his prosecution.

This is the fourth large delegation that the group has taken to Palestine over the last few years and among their successes, the group have helped to build a school in an area where any new constructions faced demolition (see SchNEWS 584). To find out more about the Brighton Tubas Friendship and Solidarity group, as well as to read updates and blogs from the delegation, visit www.brightonpalestine.org/cms

MEET SWEDISH BALLS

Stereotypes about Swedish indifference may have to be rewritten (not that we took any notice of them anyway) as peace activists made simultaneous attacks on weapons factories in Sweden this week.

In the dead of Wednesday night / Thursday morning, activists from peace and disarmament group OFOG/Avrusta (roughly translated as 'mischief' / 'disarm') used bolt cutters to break into a BAE Systems facility in Karlskoga, about 150m west of Stockholm. Leaving behind a banner saying, "The door is open — you are free to start disarming," — and they proceeded to do just that, damaging any components in sight, smashing parts destined for Howitzer 77s.

Meanwhile, around a 100km nearer the capital in Eskilstuna, other disarmament experts were breaking into a Saab owned weapons factory where they damaged twenty high explosive grenade launchers with hammers.

Five arrests in total were made, two now remaining in jail after being bailed and returning to the factory to have another go. The arrestees strategy is to make as much media impact as possible and welcome charges being brought against them, with one saying: "I look forward to a chance to ethically and legally argue for our actions in court. I hope one day the arms manufacturers will be charged for the criminal damage that Swedish armaments cause in wars and conflicts around the world."

Maja Backlund, spokesperson for OFOG, said, "Civil disobedience and action are most vital parts of democratic development." claiming that the weapons damaged were of types used in Kashmir and Iraq.

And as another of the arrestees, also a deacon in the Swedish church, said, "When your government supports an illegal war and sells arms to dictatorships, it's time for ordinary citizens like us to take action." Here endeth the lesson.

For more see www.ofog.org/about-campaign-avrusta (plus video of the exploits at www.ofog.org/avrusta_aktionsvideo)

* Back in the UK, the wave of students out to kick morally bankrupt corporations (and armed forces) off campus for peddling their wares at careers fairs continues (see SchNEWS 651, 650). On Monday (20th) fully dressed-up grim reapers showed up at Nottingham Uni to dissuade a rogue's gallery of criminals (BAE, MoD, BP, Rollys Royce, QuenetiQ and E.ON amongst others) from attempting to confuse innocent young minds with their filthy propaganda. The infiltrators' mix of reasoned flyers and more simple messages such as a banner saying 'BAE Kills' caused such disruption that the second day of the fair saw virtually none of the big bad boys show up. A glittering career in activism now awaits... For footage see <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=VfJ8geHkaRk>



DEFRA-NATELY MAYBE

Just in case you were in any doubt, starting to think, 'hang on, why do we spend our time risking arrest and assault in futile actions against war, oppression and animal abuse?' and considering hanging up the balaclava - well, think again... There's been a hearty thumbs up for the power of direct action from, of all places, the Department of Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), who said last week that the decision not to sanction a mass killing/cull of badgers in England (see SchNEWS 610) was all down to the threat of direct action from animal rights protesters.

In government-speak, Hilary Benn (DEFRA secretary) stated that their decision was based on 'the likelihood that public order problems' could jeopardise the slaughter, 'in the face of the total lack of public acceptability of a badger cull.'

So there you have it. Straight from the horse's mouth. If it was just 'unacceptable to the public' the Man would have gone ahead and committed badgercide anyway...

* See www.badgertrust.org.uk

WORCESTER SOURCE

A squatted social centre in Worcester has survived a threatened illegal eviction this Wednesday (22nd). Wet Paint, an art squat run along the lines of the TAA squats, was given a notice this week by a bailiff for the owners, Keather Properties, who said they would forcibly remove the squatters as was their right under Common Law, set out in Halsburys law of England. A phone call to the Advisory Service for Squatters confirmed that this was not lawful, and preparations were made for a violent confrontation with bailiffs, and doors were barricaded.

With numbers inside, and outside the building, they were met late Wednesday morning by a group of men who surveyed the entrances to the building. They were given a notice saying that their planned eviction was unlawful, and that they needed to go through proper legal channels.

So for the time being Wet Paint is back on, Worcester's oasis of autonomusness is still creating art, music, food, and more. The crew are adamant that even if this building gets evicted, they will occupy somewhere else.

Check it out at 13-17 Carden Street (off City Walls Road), Worcester WR1. Site mob 07965710354 email wetpaint@riseup.net

YER NUMBER'S UP

The Government plan to massively extend the powers of state surveillance by registering everyone who buys a mobile phone on a national database. Jacqui Smith, Home Secretary, votes 'in favour of a reserve power which could only be used when there is a grave and exceptional terrorist threat'. It is hard to see how branding every phone with an identity will defend us from terrorism.

But merely arguing against compulsory registration on the grounds that it won't stop crime, Phil Booth from NO2ID says, 'is a bit like arguing against torture on the grounds that it produces bad information'. In reality it's just a massive infringement of civil liberties and the act (in this case the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act) is simply morally wrong.

* To take action visit NO2ID www.no2id.net

PARTY & PROTEST

OCTOBER: 25th - 2nd Northern March Against Racism - 'Unemployment and inflation are not caused by immigration! The enemy is profit!' Meet 12 noon outside the old fire station, Westgate Road, Newcastle. 07504174530 www.tynesidecarn.co.uk ** **27th - Aldermaston Big Blockade** - non-violent blockade of Britain's nuclear bomb factory to stop the next generation of Trident nuclear weapons. Starting at 6.30am, it is advised to come to Reading the night before - for details 0845 45 88 361 www.tridentploughshares.org ** **29th - Halloween demo at EDO-MBM/ITT** - Spook out the Brighton bomb factory. 4pm-6pm, Home Farm Road, Brighton www.smashedo.org.uk ** **31st - Demo At Sequani** - the vivisection lab, 4pm at Ledbury, Herefordshire <http://sequani.wordpress.com> ** **31st - Dancing On The Grave Of Capitalism** - Calling all witches and wizards, come and spook out the Bank Sector for Halloween, 5pm-midnight outside Lehman Brothers, 25 Bank Street London. <http://graveyard.at> ** **31st - Critical Mass** - Reclaiming the streets for cyclists. For events in your city see www.critical-mass.info/europe.html#europe ** **NOVEMBER: 1st - Nevermind The Bankers - where's our share?** With huge amounts of money going from govt coffers to prop up the banks, what about cuts to public services, pensions, repossessions and job losses. Assemble 12 noon Churchill Square, Brighton, march to The Level ** **1st - UK Peasants Revolt 2008** - A peaceful protest for those who believe that the UK Govt is failing in its duties to act in the interests of communities, homeless, immigrants and elders. 1.30pm, Hyde Park London 07888663722 www.peasantsrevolt.org

* For full listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

...and finally...

Give enough chimpanzees typewriters, they say, and eventually they will come up with the works of Karl Marx (well, Shakespere at least). Well, give scientists enough money and they'll eventually come up with the blindingly obvious.

A government 'think tank' called Foresight, using over 400 well paid researchers, has just published it's 'Mental Capital and Wellbeing' report, which comes up with it's own '5-a-day' approach as to how people might go about becoming a bit more cheerful and productive. Suggestions include revolutionary ideas such as 'developing relationships with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours will enrich your life' and 'Helping friends and strangers links your happiness to a wider community and is very rewarding'. The obviously-not-rocket-scientists go on to say that activities like fixing a bike or gardening, and hobbies like sports and dancing can all increase your feeling of wellbeing. Who'd've thunk it!

Still one useful issue the report highlights is the strong link between mental illness and debt. Half of people in Britain in debt have a mental disorder - compared with just 16% of the population at large. This leads us to wonder just how deranged all the corporate elite and the government have become considering how even more deeply under the ocean of debt they've sunk lately...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - we all need to conspire and conspire to inspire...Honest!

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