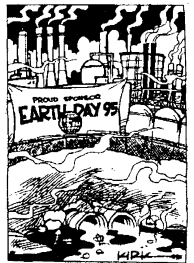


WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER SICK AS A CARROT



SchNEWS

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HERBAL HIGHS

Revolting Students

Unless a much bigger international coalition can be formed ... to save health freedom – we will see it stripped from us as the drug companies play a game called ‘boiling the frog slowly’”- John Hammell (The Life Extension Foundation).

Imagine walking into your local health food shop to get some herbal remedies or vitamin supplements. Well, if certain people get their way you won't be able to.

The Government has been secretly working on a proposal that would give the Medicines Control Agency (MCA) sweeping new powers to classify health products as medicines. Don't be surprised if you don't know anything about this. The government's consultation period wasn't exactly extensive with only a few weeks for objectors to put their side. When SchNEWS decided to have a ring around to find out what people involved with health and medicine reckoned to the proposal, most didn't know what the hell we were talking about (nothing new there then).

Thanks to Britain's membership of the European Union (EU), the only criteria the MCA needs to apply are:

- *Can the product alter physiological function?
- *Is it being used for medicinal purposes?

Seeing as anything you eat or drink has an effect on your body, this covers everything.

Previously a product had to be either unsafe for human consumption, or else its manufacturer had to make false medicinal claims before it could be banned. In theory, under the new EU regulations, even glucose, coffee and brandy could be classified as medicinal. This back-door plan will mean that if small businesses want to license a product they will have to fork out between £80 000, for a single-ingredient product, and £2 million, for a multi-ingredient product in order for them to go through testing procedures. Everything from cancer chemotherapy drugs to simple vitamin preparations would be treated the same.

“Clearly this is but yet the latest stage of a concerted effort by the powerful pharmaceutical industry to halt the growing interest in ‘alternative’ medicine”

Ann Wills (British Anti-Vivisection Association)

By restricting what nutritional supplements people can take, the government is telling us that we don't know our own bodies and aren't sussed enough to make decisions about our own health. As Penny Viner of the Health Food Manufacturers Association points out

“This proposal will achieve the situation whereby the MCA will be acting as policeman, judge and jury without any checks and balances”

So who the hell are the MCA? They are a QUANGO, funded by taxpayers and run by people appointed by ministers. By 1996 a third of public expenditure (£50billion) and three quarters of civil servants had been quangoed. It's hard to find the status of quangos: they can be Non-Departmental Public Bodies, Next Steps Executive Agencies, private companies, government departments, trusts, public companies, or a mixture of any of these. They can refuse to answer any questions over the phone by hiding behind their protected status and are only in the phone book under their supervising department's name. So here you are: the MCA's phone number is 0171 273 0392.

- Internationally, the drug companies are trying to stitch us all up by saying a level playing field is needed for global commerce. To achieve this, countries must agree on common rules. A German proposal calls for (1) no dietary supplements to be sold for preventive or therapeutic use, (2) dosage limits set by the commission, and (3) preventing nations from setting their own standards.
- This proposal is being pushed by three German companies - Hoechst, Bayer, and BASF - who were formed when IG Farben was disbanded after the Nuremberg War Trials due to their role in manufacturing the poison gas used in the Nazi concentration camps.

So is SchNEWS getting its herbal knickers in a twist? To see what will soon happen here we only have to look across the pond to Canada and America where supplements have been withdrawn following similar pressures from the multinational drug companies.

According to Christopher Whitehouse of Consumers for Health Choice *“The implications are much more serious... It is not the law that has changed, but that the MCA is saying that it is going to be the most ruthless regulator in Europe”*

Oh dear - someone pass us a cup of Camomile tea.

Society for Promotion of Nutritional Therapy, P.O.Box 47, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8ZX Web: <http://visitweb.com/spnt>

Consumers for Health Choice, 9 Old Queen St, London SW1H 9JA

What Doctors Don't Tell You, 4 Wallace Rd, London N1 2BR Web: www.wddy.co.uk

Three Colleges and Universities in London have been occupied over the past couple of weeks, as students grew militant in the face of chronic underfunding. Funnily enough Tony Blair's promise to make education a top priority hasn't materialised for students. Not content with continuing phasing out grants, New Labour introduced tuition fees. However, when students started getting expelled for not doling out over £1000 a year in fees, they reacted. At Goldsmith's College in South London, 8 were expelled for non-payment, so they staged a week long occupation, ending only when the College gave in and re-instated the students from Easter.

At University College London (UCL), things were a bit more full on. Over 300 students occupied buildings in protest at the planned expulsion of non-payers. The occupation started at 1 pm on Thursday, UCL issued a Court summons by 9pm and the case was in Court the next morning. By 6pm that evening the bailiffs (who were paid triple time) turned up with sledge hammers. This eviction may be related to the fact that Mikhail Gorbachev was due to speak in one of the buildings occupied!

The students' union at UCL covered the college with posters disowning the occupation and wanted to liaise with the management. A student from UCL said “the Union's procedures are official, but not democratic. What have they done to secure the future of those who cannot pay?” The student welfare officer at UCL was *even* seen having a pint in the bar while students were being dragged out!

Meanwhile, over 100 students at Camberwell School of Art have been in occupation for over a week to protest against the lack of resources and increasing risk to students' welfare from dodgy Health and Safety practices. Management are refusing to reply to their demands until they concede. They are due in Court at 10am, Friday.

Contact the occupation: 07930 662 416.
* Campaign for Free Education, PO Box 22615, London N4 1WT. Tel: 0958 556 756

http://members.xoom.com/nus_cfe/

STOP-PRESS

As SchNEWS went to press, students at UCL had sacked their executive officers after a vote of no confidence.

It was just past midnight on March 24th, 1989, when the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* ran aground on Bligh Reef in the icy waters of Prince William Sound. Nearly 11 million gallons of crude leaked into the water, blackening 1,500 miles of the magnificent Gulf of Alaska coastline. 250,000 seabirds, 2,800 sea otters, 300 harbour seals, 250 bald eagles and as many as 22 killer whales were killed.

Ten years on from the most damaging oil spill in history, and the effects of the *Valdez* continue. According to a recent report by the state-run Oil Spill Trustee Council, which monitors the effects of the tanker accident, of the 28 species listed in the report, only two - the bald eagle and the river otter - are considered "fully recovered" a decade later.

However, another disaster soon followed that had nothing to do with the choking black mass that coated the pristine arctic wilderness. The *Valdez* disaster has become in the textbooks of the public relations companies, a prime example of how *not* to handle the press and public. Forget the oil-spill, what Exxon needed was some green-wash.

"It is easier and less costly to change the way people think about reality than it is to change reality"

Morris Wolfe, PR consultant

Green-wash is the term used for corporations who make a big song and dance about chatting to mainstream environmental groups, spend millions on adverts telling the world how green they are, while behind the scenes doing everything they can to oppose any laws which might harm their profits. This is commonly known as having your cake and eating it, or what John Stauber, of PR Watch magazine calls the "good cop/bad cop" approach.

The father of greenwash, E. Bruce Harrison, is a strong advocate for corporate-environmental 'partnerships'. *"It's smart on two levels: it avoids legal problems, and it widens your options,"* he wrote in the 1993 book 'Going Green: How to Communicate Your Company's Environmental Commitment.' In chapters with titles like 'Mental Greening: The Habit of Thinking Like a Good Guy' and 'What to Do When You're Attacked by an Activist Group,' he suggests that companies meet with citizens who criticise them, listen but reveal little information, and research their opponents, even if it means hiring private detectives to spy on them.

So while the *Valdez* oil spill continues to pollute the gulf of Alaska, Exxon continue to drag their feet in paying \$5 billion damages to the 30,000 Alaskans affected by their recklessness. Meanwhile, the company's vice president for environment and safety reckons that while the oil spill was unfortunate, exhaustive studies by the company and so-called independent scientists had found no long-term harm. Strange then that the Oil Spill Trustee Council have discovered that oil spills cause a hundred times more damage than previously thought and oil pollution of less than one part per billion is sufficient to kill marine life. Salmon and herring with half-formed tails, twisted spines and grossly

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distended stomachs are still being caught in Alaska's Prince William Sound. "There are still patches of heavy oil pollution out there, and traces of these are still killing fish," said Dr Bruce Wright of the US National Maritime Fisheries Service in Alaska. "It is not the local impact that is the real problem," says Wright. "Our work indicates that even microscopic amounts of oil that get into any stream or bay are going to kill fish. This is a problem for the whole world."

Swilling out a tank of diesel fuel or an outboard engine will have deadly consequences, he added. "Even rain falling on car parks will flush oil that has leaked from engines and carry it into drains and then into streams and bays. Marine life will be killed off even if only tiny traces of oil are present." "The *Valdez* disaster provided us with a perfect laboratory. We are able to compare fish that were born in polluted parts of the Sound with those born in areas unaffected by oil," said Wright.

The scientists' study suggests that no coastal region can ever be protected from oil pollution. In plain English this means that 'green' and 'oil company' are two words that can never be compatible.

Companies like Exxon (called Esso in Europe) now pay public relation firm front groups (nicknamed 'Astroturf' groups) that support their interests. Astroturf groups often hide their real agendas behind warm and fuzzy names to try to, as one PR man admitted in a New York Times interview, come over all "good-guyness."

One of Exxon's favourites is the Global Climate Coalition, who lobby governments to oppose any international climate change treaties, that could wreck oil companies profits. A couple of years back the Exxon chairman addressed a large international gathering in China and urged developing countries to sort out their environmental problems by "increasing...the use of fossil fuels". The logic being that economic growth will pay for the mess caused by...economic growth.

*Joseph J. Hazelwood, skipper of the *Valdez* when it crashed is finally returning to Alaska to begin a community service program, picking up litter on the streets of Anchorage.

***International Day of Action** against Exxon-Mobil Wednesday 24th March. Contact Friends of the Earth 0171 490 1555

*Read '**Global Spin**' - the corporate assault on environmentalism by Sharon Beder (Green Books)

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www.oneworld.org/cw

Court in a maize

The two women charged with 'conspiracy to cause criminal damage' are appearing in Plymouth Crown Court on 29th March 9.30am. They are defending themselves over the trashing of a genetically modified site which they admit to, but say it was in the public interest. The mutant maize was growing next to an organic farm and near bee hives so cross-pollination could easily occur. A large demo is expected. Get down there! Contact 07970 873643

The Crossroads Women's Centre, are hosting **Sans-Papiers**, immigrants without papers third anniversary celebration, on Friday 26 March at 7pm, with big screen footage of recent protests around Europe. The centre is at 230a Kentish Town Road NW5 Tel: 0171 482 2496 ** Get on down to the Guilford **Technival** on 4th April at Maltings Bridge Sq Farnham. Six room festival featuring acts from Megadog and Pendragon. Tickets £6.80 adv. Box office 01252 726234. **If you're interested in permaculture design then get in touch with **Naturewise** who do working weekend courses. Call 0171-281 3765 ***Free **permaculture courses** if you're on benefits in mid Wales. Contact 01970 832044 ** Brighton and Hove **Wood Recycling Project** is open at Regent Street, Brighton, selling timber saved from landfill - 01273 570500 ****Culture Culture** is a wicked little 'zine that rips out the still beating heart of consumerism and feeds it to the dogs. Get it from CattleProd, Box 39, 82 Colston St BS1 5BB or www.gn.apc.org/cattleprod ** Last week the **Wild Greens**, the direct action youth wing of the Green Party jumped the fence at the Crop and Food Research Centre near Christchurch, New Zealand destroying an experimental G.M. potato crop & ruining the \$200,000 research project. The experiment involved mixing the genes of potatoes with genetic material from toads and silkworms to make the potatoes rot resistant. www.econation.org.nz/ ** Protest at a genetic crop site near Edinburgh on Sunday 28th March Contact **Fife Earth First!** 01334 477411 ** Next meeting of the **Inter-Continental Caravan** is on 24th March at Strike, Top floor, 11-29 Fashion St, London E3 at 7 pm **

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...and finally...

The Queen Mum could be in for a bit of an eye-opener this summer, if plans for a mass dis-robing outside Buckingham Palace take place. Organiser Vincent Bethel reckons that "*Society is mentally ill*" and forcing people to hide their body's isn't helping.

"It is a fact that humans have genitals" (can't argue with that one)

"Would you like to live in a healthy world, a healthy environment, among healthy happy human beings?" (well, yeah that sounds good)

"Theoretical humanism is a misnomer, theoretical humanitarianism is a paradox, theoretical love is utterly preposterous." (eh, you've lost us)

Now SchNEWS isn't against people getting their kit off if they want, but maybe well stick with the beach. Still if you want to 'protest naked for the right to be naked in public' on June 8th contact 208 Foleshill Rd., Coventry, CV1 4JH

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers to remember to keep on swallowing the corporate truth pills while chanting "profits are good, profits are god", then you will feel content. Honest