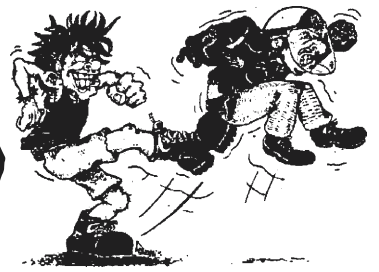




WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER OUT OF POCKET

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The Murdering Fund

The Washinton DC protests against the International Monetary Fund/World Bank spring meetings were billed as Seattle II, and so of course SchNEWS' rovin' riot reporter decided to take another Anarchitours package holiday.

Anarchitours - "5 days of non-stop chanting, marching and police brutality, all in the idyllic setting of the USA's most deprived city: stimulate yourself with in depth discussions of global monetary policy, explore the charming teargas clogged alleys of the 'capital of the world' before relaxing with a luke-warm bowl of lentil stew in the luxury of a crumbling squat; or perhaps simply get stuck round the back of the White House in a turtle costume, cop a face full of pepper spray and spend the next week being beaten up in police custody....."

In the week before the DC's finest practiced their legendary intimidation tactics - heavy police presence, circling helicopters, arresting 600 people at an anti-Gap demonstration, motorbike charging a critical mass bike ride, closing down the direct action convergence centre for 'fire violations' and confiscating bikes, puppets, pipe-bomb making equipment and homemade pepper spray ingredients. The last two turned out to be, er, a propane cooking stove, gasoline and spices, but you can't be too careful these days, especially in Bill Clinton's back yard.

Foggy Bottom

Despite the heavy policing, and the obvious media headlines ("blood-stained terrorists that trashed Seattle vow to burn DC to the ground and slaughter everyone in it" etc), this was not a re-run of November 30th (SchNEWS 240). Although shed loads of activists, gutted that they missed all the fun in Seattle, turned up for the festivities and sports shops sold out of goggles as everyone geared up for chemical warfare, there were no massive battles or Seattle-style rampages.

Washington DC is designed for riot control, having seen more protests than the South African embassy. Despite this, and the fact that the Seattle shut down has been closely analysed by every police force in the world, some bright spark decided to repeat the exact same plan - affinity groups forming clusters and committing to shut down 'pie-slice' sections of the city. Oddly enough this meant that when everyone dragged themselves out of their soggy sleeping bags at some ungodly hour of the morning and headed down to IMF headquarters in Foggy Bottom, they found shit loads of rozzers waiting for them behind barricades two blocks away from their target.

As the police had kindly shut down the city for them, the protesters concentrated on what they do best: dancing, chanting, singing god-awful hippy songs and arguing about whether kicking in McDonald's counts as violence. There were a few scuffles, and the odd gassing, but few succeeded in their goal of getting nicked. The next day was more serious. As the World Bank's Development Committee met inside a 100 block exclusion zone, a column of protesters managed to penetrate the perimeter. When riot cops blocked them in and ordered them to turn around, they insisted (!) that the police arrest them. Rather reluctantly the police agreed, and so several hundred protestors walked up in pairs and got on the jail busses!

IM Fired

The poor old bureaucrats and politicians of the IMF and World Bank just can't understand why nobody loves them, despite enforcing poverty, exploitation and environmental vandalism around the world for over fifty years. James Wolfensohn, head of the bank that helps maintain the debt stranglehold that kills 15-20 million people a year, confessed to being "nonplussed" that anyone should want to protest against his admirable efforts to ensure that rich creditors get their money back five times over, with a controlling stake in southern countries economies thrown in for good measure. And Britain's own goodwill ambassador Gordon Brown pointed out that the protestors had nothing to complain about as the IMF's International Monetary and Financial Committee had spent "almost the whole afternoon discussing poverty reduction." So we can relax, because good old Gordon is "determined to ensure that the benefits of globalization reach all countries." So don't think you can hide.

However, not everyone is so keen to be reached by the 'benefits' of globalization. A few days before the power elite met in Washington, the leaders of the Group of 77 - representing the 133 poorest countries in the world, or 80% of Earth's population - got together in Havana to give their verdict on the joys of IMF and World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programmes. Funnily enough they didn't share Gordon's enthusiasm, nor were they impressed by Wolfensohn's commitment to reducing poverty: in fact, they were down right pissed off. "One day, humankind will be called to account: How come you never made no connection between growing poverty for the many and booming wealth for a few?" said Musa, Prime Minister of Belize. And Arthur Mbanefo of Nigeria, said

"I, for one, support the demonstrators."

Structural Adjustment is as painful as it sounds: the heady cocktail of privatisation, deregulation, mass redundancies, and currency devaluation that the rich nations impose on poor countries has predictable consequences. As unemployment soars and prices double overnight as a result of devaluing the currency, guess what, people get one fuck of a lot poorer.

And seeing as 'fiscal prudence' also requires slashing social programmes, there's nothing to stop rural people being driven off their land and sliding into urban poverty. Because this means that wages are now more 'competitive' (ie lower), the country is now ready to be a home for export-gearred sweatshop industries and cash crop cultivation, which provides the necessary hard currency to keep paying the interest on those loans that the World Bank gives them to tide them over the 'adjustment process'.

This cosy stitch-up, which can turn a food sufficient country like Somalia into a famine wracked, war torn mess in a few years flat, is known as the 'Washington Consensus,' and forms the basis for the expansion of the neo-liberal economic order we all know and love.

But all over the world this 'consensus' is being challenged: Ken Livingstone, who once said the leaders of the IMF deserved to "die painfully in their beds" reckons that "The IMF and the World Bank are still appalling, and now the World Trade Organisation too. All over the world people die unnecessarily because of the international financial system."

For more info on how IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes destroy local economies, ravage the environment, wipe out jobs, cause famine, and enrich a corrupt corporate elite, see Michel Chossudovsky's excellent book 'The Globalisation of Poverty'

And if you want to know more about the world wide resistance to the corporate takeover of the world send a 40p SAE to SchNEWS for a copy of the excellent Peoples Global Action Bulletin 5. www.agp.org

For more on the Washington protests check out www.a16.org/ www.indymedia.org/

The next big global days of actions:

May 1st International Workers Day (see SchNEWS 255) including gureilla gardening in London. Transport from Brighton. Tickets from the Peace Centre, Gardner St. £6/5 0207 281 4621 www.freespeech.org/mayday2k

September: The IMF is meeting in Prague and big actions are planned. Watch this space.

Flooded With Debt

Mozambique is the 3rd most indebted country in the world, with debt repayments of £2 million a week. In 1991 the IMF demanded 'structural adjustment' saying Mozambique had to reduce its spending to suit debt repayments. The only cuts the struggling government could make were in social services.

What's this mean? Well, there's no chemicals left to develop the x-rays in hospital, there are no gloves left for the nurses in a country with an AIDS epidemic, the nurses scrape by on \$60 per month when the national poverty line is \$75, corruption is rife and doctors and teachers are quitting in droves.

The terrible floods have seen the IMF let Mozambique off most of its repayments this year. Kindness? Nah...they're going to stick it on to future repayments.

But don't trust yer cynical SchNEWS- here's the expert opinion: "The IMF likes to go about it's business without asking too many questions. In theory, the funds support democratic institutions in the nations it assists. In practice, it undermines the democratic process by imposing policies. Officially, of course, the IMF doesn't 'impose' anything, it negotiates the conditions for receiving aid. But all the power in the negotiations is on one side-the IMF-and the fund rarely allows time for consultations with parliaments or civil society. When the IMF decides to assist the country, it despatches economists. These economists frequently lack experience in the country; they are more likely to have first hand knowledge of its' five star hotels than of the villages that dot its' countryside. They work hard, but their task is impossible. In a period of days or, at most, weeks, they are charged with developing a program sensitive to the needs of the country. Needless to say, a little number crunching rarely provides adequate insights into the development strategy for an entire nation. Worse, the number crunching isn't always good. The models that IMF uses are frequently flawed or out of date. Critics accuse the institution of taking a cookie-cutter approach to economics and they are right. Country teams have been known to compose draught reports before visiting. I heard stories of one incident when team members copied large parts of the text for one country's report and transferred them wholesale to another. They might have got away with it, except the search and replace function on the word processor didn't work properly, leaving the original country's name in a few places."

And the expert? None other than one Joseph Stiglitz, former World Bank chief economist!! * For an in depth look at the IMF check out New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Rd, Oxford, OX4 1BW Tel 01865 728181 www.newint.org

Brazil Nuts

500 years ago this Saturday, the Portuguese 'discovered' Brazil. Imagine if someone walked into your house today and said, "Hey I've discovered it". That's exactly what the Portuguese did to the indigenous Indians of Brazil. The speech writers are calling it "the meeting of two civilisations", but as Portuguese poet, Jose Saramago points out, it's a bit like celebrating the meeting of German and Jewish cultures in the second world war. Indian reserves cover only 11% of Brazil, but the mining and logging boys still reckon it's "a lot of land for a very few Indians". So while the anniversary 'celebrations' are held the Indians are having their own meeting to demand a voice. www.survivalinternational.org

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SchNEWS in brief

SchNEWS is skint, nothing new there, but we would like to do a double issue in two weeks time with lots of party and protest dates for the summer. So - please send us some cash so we can pay our printing bill, and send us dates for our diary. And dear Brightonians we need your help with mailout on Friday's... ** The Legal Defence & Monitoring Group need **legal observers for MayDay**. This involves monitoring police (mis)behaviour, keeping notes, witnessing arrests & injuries and handing out bust cards. No legal knowledge is required and all legal observers work in pairs, so you won't be on your own. If you want to help call 020 8374 5027 or e-mail war1921@altavista.com ** The April edition of **Squall Download** is out now. 80p worth of stamps to PO Box 8959, London, N11 5HW www.squall.org ** If anyone wants a copy of Brighton's spoof freebie newspaper **No Leaders** with articles on MayDay and New Labours corporate takeover of Brighton send an SAE to the SchNEWS Office ** A resolution at **BP Amoco's** AGM calling for a halt of oil production in the Arctic gained 13.5% of the vote. Meanwhile the oil company has proposed to the government that multinational companies should be allowed to dispense with annual general meetings. www.greenpeace.org ** Sheffield has a new squat cafe **Wiser Monkeys** at 140-148 Devonshire Street. It will open for three weeks including MayDay festivities. People needed for workshops and entertainment e-mail jimthackery@yahoo.co.uk or call 0114 281 2814 ** Fancy **A Crap Night out?** Then get along to the Gloucester in Brighton this Sunday (23) 5-10:30pm to see Flannel, Fish Brothers and Tragic Roundabout. The night is to commemorate Simon Jones, who died two years ago on his first day at work. For a new video about the campaign send £5 c/o SchNEWS address (payable to Simon Jones Memorial Campaign) www.simonjones.org ** **The Crawley Hospital Campaign** are holding a public meeting on Friday 28 April, about the consequences to the NHS of the Governments Private Finance Initiative, and the fight against the downgrading of Crawley Hospital. 7.45pm, at the Civic Hall, Crawley. 01293 403461 ** Oh dear, what a shame the **National Front** planned march through Worcester on Saturday has been banned. ** Want to know about low impact, low cost building systems? Then get along to the **Earthships** lecture by Michael Reynolds @ the Brighthelm Centre, North Rd., Brighton 7pm next Thursday (27) (suggested donation £4) www.earthship.org ** **Radio 4A**, Brighton's premier spoken word pirate station (ok it's the only one) transmits again on 106.FM this Monday (23). Check yer No Leaders for a programme.

Chernobbled

14 years ago next Wednesday is the anniversary of **Chernobyl**, the world's worst nuclear accident. Winds carried the radiation as far afield as Wales, and 25% of Belarussian territory was contaminated with 485 villages being lost forever. Today the bitter legacy of the disaster is still being felt as Chernobyl victims continue to develop diseases and are treated as outcasts by other communities. Svetlana Alexievich, a Belarussian author has written a book 'Voices From Chernobyl', published by Aurum.

Christian CND and the Chernobyl Children's Project are holding a vigil to mark the anniversary on 26th April 11am-2pm at St Martin in the Fields Church with a vigil, followed by a walk to the Innocent Victims memorial at Westminster Abbey. Tel 020 7700 4200.

ROBERT HAMILL

Robert Hamill, a 25 year old Catholic, was kicked to death in Portadown town centre by about 30 Loyalists on April 27th 1999, despite the presence of an RUC Land Rover a few yards away. No one was arrested for two weeks. Charges against five men were dropped after a few months. One man was eventually convicted of affray but acquitted of murder. No forensic evidence had been gathered at the scene. No first aid was given by the police.

The case has similarities with the Stephen Lawrence case, but there is a major difference. The prolonged attack on Robert happened in full view of four fully armed police officers. They ignored pleas to intervene. Robert died after twelve days in a coma with extensive brain injuries. Had the police intervened at any stage during the assault, he might well have lived.

After the attack, the murderers loitered unperturbed for about an hour, yet the RUC made no arrests and refused an offer of help from an army patrol. One man was detained for a few minutes and then released, an officer ignoring an eye-witness who told her, "He's one of the ones that did it." The RUC took no statements and did not even declare a crime scene until six hours later. Robert's family are campaigning for an independent judicial inquiry, to contact them write to BM Hamill Campaign, London WC1N 3XX

POSITIVE SCHNEWS

Plants for a Future (PFAF) grows unusual edible plants and has a database of over 7000 potentially useful plant species that could grow in the UK. In 1997 they began the process of setting up Britain's first true 'Eco-Village', which would be almost self sufficient with nearly 1000 species of plants being grown organically. Unfortunately the project has recently received a major setback with the refusal of planning permission, thanks mainly to a concerted campaign by a local sceptic. They're now going to public enquiry on 2nd May, and letters in support for the application can be sent before this date to Planning Inspectorate, Room 1015, Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol BS2 9DJ. PFAF The Field, Penpol, Lostwithiel, Cornwall, PL22 0NG, Tel: 01208 872963 www.scs.leeds.ac.uk/pfaf/

...and finally...

One Sandwich Short of a Picnic...Not content with causing misery and starvation round the world, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have been accused of lurching out their own delegates last November. At a recent day-long high-level seminar cheerily entitled "After Seattle: Restoring Momentum to the WTO", speakers complained of delegates having to survive on sandwiches and not being able to get a decent meal while the protesters outside feasted on a soup of tear gas and pepper spray. Following on from the idea of holding the next ministerial meeting in Qatar (SchNEWS 247), another suggested location was a cruise ship, leaving protesters who "do not represent the general public" high and dry, though the delegates would no doubt feel comfortable surrounded by other sharks.

President Clinton's remarks that the protesters had legitimate concerns was branded "disgraceful". And if you thought protesters in Seattle where there to demand greater transparency or abolition of the WTO, think again. What they really wanted was to get on TV and raise money for their own organisations!

disclaimer SchNEWS warns all debtors, it's no use raiding yer piggy-bank, cos it ain't gonna save yer bacon. Oink oink