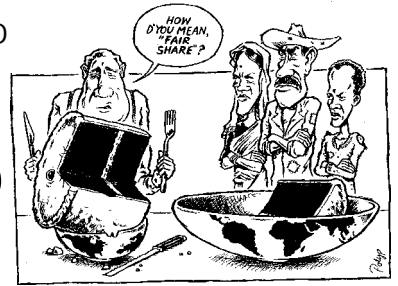




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LUNCH OUTS

“Genetically diverse food resources underpin world food security. It is farmers who have developed these resources and their rights are being destroyed.” – Patrick Mulvany, Intermediate Technology Development Group.

Next week was meant to be the beginning of the UN World Food Summit in Rome, where world leaders were due to meet to make major decisions to help reduce world hunger. But after the hijack attacks in the US the full conference was postponed probably until June next year, instead a small scale annual meeting is still taking place although no decisions will be finalised. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Qatar, however, is still going ahead, which goes to show that free trade liberalisation (giving free reign to multinational companies to steamroller over human rights and the environment) is more important to our world leaders than fighting starvation and securing global food security.

Five years ago at the first world food conference agreements were made to try and reduce world hunger. One of the most important moves was the agreement to introduce a new legally binding convention to ensure that living things couldn't be patented - called the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (PGRFA), that would directly oppose the WTO's TRIPs (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights, where companies can 'own' plant varieties they have 'developed').

The PGRFA aims to ensure the conservation, sustainable use and 'free flow' of the genetic resources of food crops, and also tries to ensure that if corporations use a food crop, farmers who've helped to develop it receive a fair share of the benefits. It could also ensure that genetic information from crops were public property stored in public gene banks, and could limit the increasing use of intellectual property rights where organisations can claim ownership over seeds and genes. The agreement is well overdue, over the past century over 90 percent of world crop varieties have been lost from farmers' fields.

Thai'd Up

“...its [Jasmine rice] acquisition by the US is an example of Biopiracy and this is why the Treaty is needed” – Pinit Korsieporn, Thai Director of Foreign Agricultural Relations.

Thailand is one of the biggest rice pro-

ducers in the world, producing Jasmine rice, which is made up of several of the most desired varieties in the world. This unique group of rice varieties has been grown and developed by Thai farmers for thousands of years with seeds being handed down over generations and shared. To the Thai people the concept of anyone 'owning' this rice is simply absurd. However this is about to happen as a University of Florida professor, with full backing of the US Government, is working on genetically manipulating the rice to enable it to grow in the US climate. Then he plans taking out a patent on it and selling it to the US public as "Jasmine" rice, thus undermining the export of Thai Jasmine rice and the livelihood of thousands of Thai farmers. About one third of Thai Jasmine rice produced every year is exported to the US.

Such biopiracy shows the urgent need for protection for the world's small farmers. But over the 5 years since they were first discussed the PGRFA regulations have been watered down to the point that if they're ever agreed they'll be pretty much irrelevant. And there's no prizes for guessing whose been putting up the most opposition, er, yes, the US and the European Union with a hefty bit of shoving from the biotech companies. As the treaty now stands, although there will be no right to patent seeds, genes from seeds will be allowed to be patented. Because of this most countries are refusing to sign up seeds into the treaty, which increases its ineffectiveness further. But even if the treaty does live up to its original aims the one big question is whether the WTO bully boys will allow it to override their unfair-trade rules or even have an equal footing. Either way the chances are looking slim for the world's farmers who may soon be forced to wave goodbye to the free exchange of seeds and their rights to profit from seeds they've

- * 815 million people in the world regularly go hungry.
- * 62 million people face food emergencies caused by natural and man-made disasters.
- * One fifth of the world's children do not eat enough calories or protein.
- * 18 million people in East Africa still rely on food assistance.
- * Britain chucks out £500 million of safe and edible food each year.
- * 1.4 billion people around the world are believed to depend on saving their own seeds for their food security.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For circulating a bit of paper!

Neil Sorensen, a delegate at this week's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) meeting in Italy, was booted out and locked in jail for the night. His crime? While the Americans are using the Conference to try and get on as many FAO sub-committees as possible, Neil circulated a memo pointing out the destructive corporate led nature of the US and asked people to stop them getting on *any* committees. FAO have now apologised for being a bit over the top!

CRAP SACKING OF THE WEEK.

Following from last week's *And Finally...* A girl lost her Saturday job at Thornton's, for the heinous crimes of eating one of their chocolates!

developed over thousands of years of innovation.

So after years of negotiations, those in power look like they will be offering the world an empty bowl. As Pat Mooney from RAFI/ETC Group remarked recently, "By participating, both NGO's and grassroots groups, lend legitimacy to these international meetings, but if they continue to refuse to listen to them, and translate that into action for good, then it's time to stop taking part."

For the latest information check out www.ukabc.org and www.itdg.org

* March for Trade Justice. Saturday 3rd November, starting from Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, outside the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 at 12.30pm, the Parade will go to Trafalgar Square (speakers at 3.30pm). www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk

BOMBED OUT

At the same time as randomly dropping food parcels from their planes, America have also been dropping cluster bombs. Cluster bombs are extremely nasty weapons that are used instead of landmines to hit moving targets, when released the bombs separate into smaller bomblets, up to 5 percent of these remain unexploded. Just like landmines they pose a great threat to innocent civilians. By some bizarre coincidence both the food parcels and the cluster bombs are yellow. When this was discovered the US was forced to broadcast a radio message warning the people of Afghanistan not to touch any yellow coloured objects they find particularly in areas where bombs have been dropped. Well they can say goodbye to their monthly meal then!

HOME AND AWAY

On Monday, in a blaze of publicity, Neolabour announced that they're getting rid of the much hated voucher system for refugees (see SchNEWS 254 & 267). The 'humiliating and demeaning' voucher system is going to be replaced with I.D. cards and 'holding centres'. From next Autumn all asylum seekers will be made to live in ex-army camps, old holiday camps or purpose built centres which are gonna be built 'away from the general populace' i.e. in the middle of nowhere. Seeing as they'll be cut off from society the government has decided that there will be no need to even give them vouchers to buy food and clothes as all this will be provided at the detention centres. Sounds like prison to us. Mohammed Asif, a spokesman for refugees living on the Sighthill estate in Glasgow, agrees "These reception centres will create a lot of problems. It is like prisons. It is against our basic human rights. They have done this to satisfy the opposition and some sections of the media".

I.D. cards are gonna be a double whammy to hit refugees. From January it'll be compulsory for them to carry the cards at all times - which will be a green light for the cops to stop and search anybody who looks foreign. Sheyda, who fled persecution in Iran, is worried about this: "People came here because they were afraid in their country, they had no freedom to speak, no freedom to think. They were in prison. And they do not want this."

* Public meeting about new detention centres Nov. 6th at the Bowen West Theatre, De Montford University, 37 Lansdowne Road, Bedford 7pm. More info 07786 517379. www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk

* Earlier this month police raided the offices and homes of people involved in 'Libertad!' confiscating computers, hard discs, and documents, because of the online demonstrations they organised against Lufthansa. The airline company, targeted because their planes are used to deport refugees, are claiming the 1.2 million hits caused economic damage. Er, that's the point.

OK KO'd

The Manchester OKasional cafe was illegally evicted this week by builders and police who kicked in the shop front window to gain access before nicking all the occupants.

The OKasional Cafe collective have been squatting empty buildings for the past four years and the current eviction is the most violent and heavy handed since the retaking of the Hacienda in 2000.

All those arrested were charged with nicking electricity - despite the collective contacting the electricity company. This Saturday is expected to see Manchester's biggest peace demo against the war in Afghanistan, and the squat, handily sited opposite the peace gardens and cenotaph, had been acting as an info shop for anti-war views.

* 'Shortcuts to Manchester' is an excellent little booklet telling you everything you need to know what's going on in the City. For copies send an SAE to Shortcuts, Dept 29, c/o MERCI@Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick St., Manchester, M4 7HR.

* The rules for (legal) **eviction of squatters** have changed, but it doesn't really make much difference to what will happen, it's just that the forms are different. Get your update for your **Squatter's Handbook** by sending an SAE to Advisory Service for Squatters, 2 St Paul's Road, London, N1 2QN, 020-7359-8814. Squatter's handbook's available from them for £1.57 (in stamps, cheque or postal order).

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Inside SchNEWS

There have been 17 more arrests in Sweden following June's demos against the European Union Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden (SchNEWS 310). Most charges are for rioting and property damage, the arrests came from police footage taken during the protests - with more arrests in Scandinavia and Germany expected during the winter. Fifty people have already faced charges, resulting in sentences of between 9 months and five years. "The quality of the prosecutor's case has sunk to low levels and gullibility has been a huge factor in the local court and court of appeal in Gothenburg, after the riots in June. Some of the sentences pushed by the prosecutors have been as long as those for murder. The sentences have, to the highest degree, been political." writes Sweden's Motkraft bulletin.

Prisoners may receive books and letters, but as time goes on they are receiving less. Paul Robinson, is the only UK citizen in prison in Gothenburg. Letters of support and for a full list of prisoners write to Solidarity Group GBG, c/o Syndikalistiskt forum, Box 7267, SE-402 35 Gothenburg, Sweden solidaritetsgruppen@hotmail.com

* Bonfire night benefit for Mark Cullinane banged up in a Moroccan prison for the past five years. The campaign needs to raise £1,500 otherwise he'll do another year inside. Bands include d.s.g., Digi Dub, Flatpig, Dead Plants, X-it (all of which feature on the SchNUSIC CD - available from us for £7) as well as DJ's and performers. 5th Nov 8pm - late, Concorde 2, Brighton, £6. www.dirtysquatters.com

* Spanish anarchist prisoner Eduardo Garcia has been freed on parole. Eduardo, a prominent political activist was fitted up with a 20 year jail sentence after being accused of sending letter bombs (SchNEWS 294). A demonstration organised outside the Spanish consulate (20 Draicott place London - Sloane Sq.tube.) at noon, 9th Nov is still taking place.

TREE CARE TREAT

"We can work with nature, harvesting in ways that cause minimum disturbance and sustain beautiful and productive woodlands for ourselves and other species." - Ben Law.

At this time of year, when the autumn leaves are falling, you might want to consider what's being done to preserve what's left of our forests. 'The Woodland Way: A Permaculture Approach to Sustainable Woodland Management' by Ben Law is a wonderful book that goes to the heart of such matters. Ben's been working the land in the UK and elsewhere for 20 years. In '92 he settled in Prickly Nut Wood, Sussex, where he uses the principles of permaculture (a way for us daft human beings to work with nature rather than destroying it) to look after himself and the abundance of life in the place where he lives.

Prickly Nut Wood is incredible. SchNEWS scribes walked round in a daze when they visited last year, grinning from ear to ear at what Ben is achieving largely on his own. The local ecosystem is used to provide food and shelter, and a variety of incomes help enable self-sufficiency. Power from wind generators and solar panels provides lighting and electricity for a shower and email/phone communication with the outside world. 'The Woodland Way' is full of practical tips on forest management and useful for anyone interested in permaculture. Well inspiring. Available from Permanent Publications, 01730 823311 www.permaculture.co.uk. They also produce Permaculture magazine and a catalogue of books and details of permaculture/sustainable living courses around the country.

SchNEWS in brief

The **Corporate Watch website** now contains new in-depth profiles of many companies including Unilever, Nestle, BP and ASDA. www.corporatewatch.org.uk ** Celebrate **Word Power's 7th birthday**. Readings and music, 7.30pm 9th Nov. Assembly Rooms, George St., Edinburgh. Tickets: £5/£3.50 from Word Power, 43 West Nicolson St, 0131-6629112 www.word-power.co.uk ** **Anti-privatisation Conference**, 11.30am-5pm, 3rd Nov., St Mary's Neighbourhood Centre, Upper Street, Islington, London. Speakers and workshops on opposing privatisation of public services, fighting anti-union laws and defending union rights. www.unionsfightback.org.uk ** '**We Are Everywhere**' are looking for contributions for a book/CD-ROM and website that promises to be information for inspiration. Contributions via their website www.weareeverywhere.org or post to Everywhere, c/o 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW UK. ** **Project Censored** publicise stories the mainstream media ignores and are now broadcasting censored stories on the web every Monday 7-8pm www.sonoma.edu/ksun. Also see www.projectcensored.org. ** The first **Voice of the People Celebration** aims "to bring people together from all walks of life and all areas of North Staffs to create a positive and fun space in which ideas and information can be shared." 12.30pm, 3rd Nov, Tontine Square, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. ** A **super summit in Ottawa** (16-18th Nov), has been arranged to replace the cancelled Washington IMF/World Bank. meeting. Would you believe it, a demo is planned on the 17th! Housing, legal, medical, food and other logistic aspects are being organised by Global Democracy Ottawa. www.flora.org/gdo/ ** There are anti **World Trade Organisation** (see SchNEWS 327) demonstrations planned across the globe. www.agp.org. 11.30am, 9th Nov: No to WTO picket outside the Qatar Embassy, 1 South Audley Street, London (New Bond St tube).

WAR Briefs

Anti-war actions are happening continually countrywide. See www.indymedia.org.uk for what's happening in your area or call CND 020-7700-2393 ** This Saturday (4th) public meeting - Stop the WAR - Help build an anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-war coalition. 4pm Millman Street Community Centre, Millman Street, (Russell Square tube) ** Tues 6th: 'Hidden agendas behind the war in Afghanistan', public meeting hosted by Worthing Eco-action at the Downsview pub (West Worthing Station), 7.45pm. ** Saturday 10th: Stop the War march and rally in **Brighton**. 12 noon at the Level. ** The following weekend, Sunday 18th there's a Stop the War march in London. Assemble 12 noon, Hyde Park. Coaches from Brighton - tickets from the Peace Centre in Gardner St.

...and finally...

Pumpkin Up The Volume.

Members of the Belgian Pumpkin Liberation Army have stolen 53 Halloween pumpkins to turn into soup for poor people. The pumpkins were taken from gardens in Leuven and given to Food not Bombs, who will make soup from them to feed the poor. It's the first time the Pumpkin Liberation Army has struck and hopefully the last but the ghoulish raiders have said they want to start a worldwide web of organisations "fighting against the improper use of pumpkins."

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers hungry for info for action not to bite off more than they can chew. Honest.