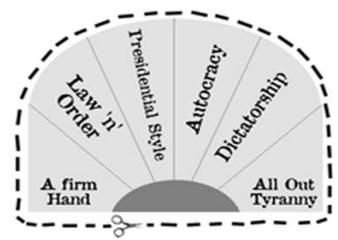




RISE UP!! IT'S YER JACKBOOT ON THE STAIR... WITH FREE CUT OUT 'N' THROW AWAY

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TOTALITARIAN-O-METER!

YOU'RE HAVING A L.A.R.R-F

Last rites for Parliament under new Bill?

Heard about the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill? Tedium personified by the sound of it. In fact concealed under this yawn inducing title is possibly the biggest goosestep towards a totally authoritarian society the Blair oligarchy has yet dared to take. It's been dubbed the "Abolition of Parliament Act" by radical firebrands *The Times*.

Since the advent of the (now looking more liberal by the minute) Criminal Justice Act in 1994, SchNEWS has warned about and reported on the constant bombardment of measures clamping down on civil liberties and eroding our previously hard won democratic freedoms. The repressive grip has continued to tighten over the years, with increased surveillance, Anti-Social Behavioural Orders, ID cards, Anti-Terror laws and the Serious and Organised Crime Bill, to name but a few examples. In fact, of the six thousand criminal offences on the books over a thousand were created by Neo-Labour. These laws continue being abused by the powerful to retain control and iron out any irritating resistance to the great corporate sell-out of the last decade. There is one thing, however, that they've all had in common. All such laws have had to be debated in and voted through... by Parliament.

While this bunch of self-interested ideology-swallowing career politicians have done little to oppose the big crackdown, it has at least meant that everything done has remained fairly visible. Pockets of political opposition have emerged, including some surprising outbursts of sanity from the old loons in the House of Lords and the judiciary. Even some parts of the mainstream media have taken to wondering whether we are getting close to a dictatorship, now that the crackdown has hit Middle England. All this has helped to water down some of the more soviet-like sub-sections of the more totalitarian proposals. Ultimately, we are left with a public record of the law changes which, in theory at least, means that those responsible could be held accountable later.

Overall, none of this was too disastrous for Government Inc. Enough Whips could be cracked, arms twisted and cosy media relationships fostered to ensure that most of the Magna Carta-pulping stuff could get through unscathed. But as Neo Labour's electoral stranglehold has weakened of late, Tony Blair and the spin-doctors have become increasingly frustrated by pesky opposition MPs throwing spanners in the works. Even worse, he's had to contend with a number of muscle-flexing interventions by the very last

people he has ever listened to - backbench Labour MPs who aren't quite as on message as they might be.

This has culminated with a number of irritating Parliamentary revolts such as over the 90 days lock-em-up-for-no-reason provision in the Terror Bill, which was kicked out by MPs a couple of months ago. There are also the ongoing, repeated attempts by the Lords to remove the 'glorification' of 'Terror' offence in the same bill. How aggravating must this be for our would-be Lord Protector Blair and his bunch of merry PR men? These laws don't affect any important demographics! Damn public scrutiny! Damn reasoned political debate and democratic decision-making! But how to get around all these problems? Never fear, political genius Tony is here with the answer: let's do away with democratically agreed laws and instead have some LARRs - Legislative and Regulatory Reforms...

CRACKDOWNER

Launched with little fanfare, amongst concerns about bureaucratic red-tape and the inefficiency of out-dated procedures, the aniseed pip at the heart of the gob stopping bill is this: why not just bring in a law that allows the government to introduce, amend or replace any legislation it likes. This can be done without all that tiresome business of needing Parliament approval. Ministers will be able to create new criminal offences at whim. All manner of focus group orientated idiocy cooked up Neo-Labour up in its laboratory of ideas will find its way to a street near you. That way, ministers can get on with carving up power to suit themselves and their corporate overlords. MPs can then get on with legitimising the regime, opening supermarkets and holding local surgeries back in their constituencies. Brilliant! The fact that Neo Labour may not be in power for eternity shouldn't matter - well, Neo-Labour - Conservatives, not much difference there... and there are a few restrictions to ease the consciences of the all important moneyed classes. Orders won't be used to introduce new taxes, for instance, but most of the limitations on their use are fuzzy and subjective. One of the "safeguards" in the Bill is that an order can impose a 'burden' only 'proportionate to the benefit expected to be gained'. And the judge of whether it is proportionate will be... well, the minister introducing the law of course. Whose benefit is of course carefully left unanswered.

Cambridge Law Professor, John Spensor, has referred to it as the 'abolition of

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For arson' about...

The trial of US environmental activist Rod Coronado continues this week. The San Diego FBI arrested Coronado in 2003 for allegedly "teaching others how to start an arson fire". In an unprecedented bout of bad timing Rod gave a lecture on animal rights and militant environmental activism, just 15 hours after a \$50 million fire that wiped out an apartment complex, in the most expensive act of eco-terrorism in US history. A press release from the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) claimed responsibility. The FBI allege that Coronado is a national leader of the ELF and because of these links they nicked him for incitement, along with three others who had attended the lecture for contempt because they refused to testify before a grand jury investigating the fire. Charges include "distribution of information relating to explosives, destructive devices and weapons of mass destruction", which carry a maximum penalty of 20 years. Coronado denies all charges. A quirky footnote that falls under the category for simplest 'tell it-how-it-is' slogan of the week comes from the scene of the eco-attack where the FBI found a 12-foot banner that read, "If you build it, we will burn it." - Flamin' cheek!

parliament' Bill. This bill can be used to detain people for a couple of years (troublesome activists or Johnny Foreigner perhaps), introduce house arrest, and give the police greater powers of arrest and interrogation. It could also be used to set up new courts, and in effect re-write the rules on immigration, nationality, divorce, inheritance and the appointment of judges - all without any parliamentary scrutiny.

SchNEWS aren't under illusions that parliament ever acted in our interests but we're not ready to see absolute power handed over lock, stock and barrel to the spiders at the centre of this web. The whole project bears an uncanny resemblance to the Reich's Enabling Act which allowed the Nazis to legally dismantle the constitution of the Weimar Republic. What do they want that is so controversial that they're not even sure if this parliament of placemen and sycophants is going to push it through? This proposition has already begun to cause ripples and it is imperative that it doesn't remain in the shadows but encounters resistance at every turn.

The Bill is online at www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cm-bills/111/06111.1-4.html

PIPE DREAM POPPYCOCK

It was recently announced that yet more British troops are heading for Afghanistan. St George and his malleable sidekick, St Tony, have decreed that in their crusade to save the world (especially the USA and UK) from the far-reaching tentacles of terrorism - and heroin[ism] - Afghanistan must be tamed.

British troops are being stationed in the southern territory of Helmand, with the expectation that some 3,300 of them will be deployed there by late summer. This UN-sanctioned intervention has a multi-pronged purpose: Helmand is considered to be a lawless region; under the control of drug lords, the Taliban, and an alleged al-Qaeda stronghold. Added to this, the area is fertile ground for poppies, estimated at yielding a trade in heroin valued at £650 million per year.

Military bigwigs spout the well worn soundbite that interrupting the flow of the region's narcotics trade will deprive al-Qaeda of lucrative funds, and therefore keep the threat of terrorism away from our shores. Helmand, roughly the size of Wales, is considered by the militarists to represent a fertile training ground for insurgency. (Coincidentally, there were those who found Wales itself good enough for this purpose - Mr Hamza?)

What everyone still seems to be avoiding mentioning, however, is the subject of oil. Specifically, the Caspian Sea Pipeline Project. Not so back in 1998, when Dick Cheney was enthusing, "I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian." However, in order to make this pipe-dream of pumping black

gold all the way back to the Mediterranean a reality, Afghanistan was vital to the equation and the Taliban had grown increasingly business-unfriendly, threatening to spoil the plans.

Then came the slightly convenient 9/11, and shortly afterward troops moved in, removed the Taliban and the pipeline was back on. (To check how we saw it at the time, see www.schnews.org.uk/sotw/reshaping-the-world.htm). So frantic were the US to have things run smoothly, Congress lobbied for the overturning of sanctions against Azerbaijan (known as Section 907 of the 'Freedom Support Act'), in order to allow the proposed pipe to run through that territory. Among those sponsoring the drive were four US oil giants forming the conglomerate to run the project: Unocal, Amoco, Exxon and Penzoil. Little wonder as estimates for transportable oil reserves in the region ranged from a conservative 60 billion barrels to a dizzying 200 billion. (For more on the pipeline, see SchNEWS 433)

The fact remains that US Inc. wants to make sure it can remain in control of the region and ensure nothing stands in the way of the latest dash to secure the world's resources - and it doesn't want to be seen as acting unilaterally when it has so much to gain from such military dominance. Not to mention it probably needs to keep enough troops back for other adventures, such as the continued plundering of Iraq and preparing for face-off with Iran. What to do, what to do? Stand up and be counted loyal servants of your Majesty...

*To learn more about the US's reign of terror in Afghanistan, visit Human Rights Watch at <http://hrw.org/doc/?t=asia&c=afghan>

PRO TEST DUMMIES

Concerned about the effect that the SPEAK campaign is having on preventing the go-ahead of Oxford University's primate research laboratory, (SchNEWS 524) a bizarre coalition calling itself PRO TEST (good pun - shame about the ethics) has entered the fray. They had their first demo on Saturday 25th going head to head with SPEAK's regular monthly demo outside the laboratory.

Of course it's great to see the mainstream media get behind a grassroots group or perhaps we're being a little naive... Luckily for PRO TEST their agenda coincides exactly with that of the University, the government and Thames Valley Police - so that's how you get headlines! Despite national press coverage and exhortation from the Uni to support the new pressure group, a crowd of only 350 turned out to march for the lab. This included die-hard vivisectionists as well as 'Vegetarians against the ALF' and a mish mash of Marxists and rigger-buggers. One idiot even turned up in full hunting gear!

So what next for PRO TEST? Funnily enough they don't seem to have anything planned. Cynics might argue that the whole thing was a propaganda stunt cooked up by the authorities to justify the clampdown on animal rights activists. Despite all the pious cant from the vivisection lobby about democracy, freedom of speech and assembly are rationed commodities on the streets of Oxford. Campaigners against the lab are subject to a draconian injunction under our old friend the Protection from Harassment Act and are subject to routine police aggravation.

SPEAK (www.speakcampaigns.org.uk) are calling for a mass demonstration on World Day for laboratory animals on Saturday 22nd April.

DOWN SHEPTON

It's been a topsy-turvy week for the anti-Tescos treesitters in Shepton Mallet (see SchNEWS 533). First, on Wednesday, the whole site was cleared by one hundred bailiffs at six in the morning. The trees used for the last camp were destroyed after the eviction, but there's around 180 still waiting to be saved. The campaign is down but not out as activists have reclaimed part of the site and are sending out an urgent call out for people to get down there with equipment and general tat ASAP. The camp can be contacted on 07749 110689. Shepton Mallet is located on the A361 between Glastonbury and Frome. Nearest train stations are Castle Cary (about 8 miles) and Frome (about 9 miles). The camp is in a patch of woodland behind the Cenotaph (at the top of the High Street) at the south end of Townsend Road.

And across the Channel a few dozen people have been occupying the building site of the youth prison, the EPM (Etablissement Pénitentiaire pour Mineurs) in Orvault, France since Monday morning. Activists have set up four tree-houses whilst others gather on the ground in solidarity and intend to thoroughly shut the whole thing down.

Last October, a first demonstration against the "EPM" took place during which some 200 people invaded the building site, putting up banners on the highway and putting out survey stakes, to slow down the construction process. For more contact: of-fence@no-log.org

BOMBASTIC

200 cops and 40 Police vehicles - that was Sussex Plod's 'proportionate response' to March 1st's Victory demo outside Brighton bomb-builders EDO MBM. Over 70 campaigners gathered to celebrate the end of the injunction which created an exclusion zone around the factory. (see SchNEWS 531). There are regular demos outside the factory so check out www.smashedo.org.uk. Activists will be returning for a Citizen's Weapons Inspection at 4pm on the 21st of March

SchNEWS in brief

Last week the Botswana government announced that a diamond mine on the land of the **Central Kalahari Bushmen** (See SchNEWS 517) would affect 5,027 square km of land - well over a hundred times more than previously admitted. They stated that 'a small area immediately around the mineral deposit (i.e. within a mere 40km radius), is cordoned off.' This means that an area 10% of the total size of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) will be impacted. This is despite Botswana's Minister of Minerals, Energy and Water Affairs saying in 2000 that only 46 square kilometres or 0.09% of the reserve would be allocated to mining. No doubt the repression of the Kalahari people will continue apace... For more see www.survival-international.org **March 5th sees the launch of the **Brighton Alliance Against**

SHELL TO PAY

Oil giant Shell have found themselves in the dock in Nigeria. The Ijaw have been fighting since 2000 for compensation for environmental degradation in the oil-rich region. (For more on the ecological devastation wrought by the company see SchNEWS 520). Having initially ignored calls by the Nigerian parliament to pay restitution to the Ijaw for polluting their lands. The corporation have now been ordered to cough up to the tune of \$1.5bn. Apparently they are feeling hard done by and will appeal, claiming the decision should not be upheld, as there is no evidence against them. They do however "remain committed to dialogue with the Ijaw people."

While some Ijaw have opted for court claims, others have taken the law into their own hands. Militants have launched attacks on oil-related sites and are currently holding seven foreign oil workers hostage. In the wake of these crises, Shell has halved its output from Nigeria.

If and when the Ijaw do see their award, then will come the internal wrangling over how the money is divided up. But for now, they've had their day in court.

Urban 4x4s. They will be setting up an information table in the Sydney Street/Gardner Street area from 12.30pm and will send out teams of 'parking wardens' to issue mock parking tickets to urban 4x4s. For more call Blake Ludwig, national Alliance Against Urban 4x4s on 07932 736257. ** On Sunday April 2 there will be an act of **mass civil disobedience against the occupation of Iraq** from 12 noon within the no-protest zone outside Parliament. ** **'Debt and Power - Towards an End of Debt Domination'** is the title of the Jubilee Debt Campaign Conference 2006. 11-5pm Saturday 8 April 2006 South Camden Community School, Euston, London, NW1 1RG. Attendance is free but booking is essential. Email events@jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk to reserve your place.

...and finally...

If ever proof were needed that all politicians are wankers...Not content with all the usual perks of political office (kickbacks, expense accounts, and corporate soirées), it turns out the worn out members of the U.S. Congress can also look forward to a free monthly dose of porn in the form of Hustler magazine.

Since 1983 pornbroker Larry Flynt has been mailing a copy of his nudie mag to all 535 up-standing members of Congress. The arrival of the latest (left of) centrefold has been causing quite a stir in more ways than one. Despite most Congress men and women claiming they bin the magazine as soon as it arrives (and the rest just read it "for the articles"), it seems that they have no choice whether they receive it or not. Members of Congress are legally obliged to accept mailings from members of the public, even jazz mags. Some have even gone as far as suing to try and prevent the monthly delivery, but to no avail.

Time to add 535 names and addresses to the SchNEWS mailing list perhaps.

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SchNEWS warns all readers... it might be later than you think. Honest!

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