



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER TAKING THE CREDIT...

SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 24th November 2006 Free/Donation Issue 570



KISS OF DEBT

It's Buy Nothing Day this Saturday (25th November), but with £1,300,000,000 of consumer debt in the UK, it would appear that the zombies in the malls aren't listening. And in the mad plunge to the tills that is Christmas, there's plenty more stuff for us to buy with so called 'interest free credit' to help us get what we want straight away. All the talk of action to tackle climate change conveniently ignores the obvious solution: stop buying stuff! The churning out of all those consumer goodies is what's killing the eco system. Air freighted broccoli; plastic-wrapped apples; solar powered wind chimes; patio heaters – is any of this stuff worth the price we're paying?

Overdrafts, bank loans and credit cards are keeping the world economy bouncing along. The plasma telly might cost a grand, but if you chuck it on the plastic it's yours right away (at no extra cost, of course). And how much unsolicited post have you thrown away (well, recycled) offering you instant access to consumerist heaven with an unsecured personal loan? Everyone from Tesco to the RAC is getting on in the act. And millions of families are using credit just to keep above the breadline.

Surrounded by multi-million pound advertising campaigns using the latest psychological gimmickry to persuade you to keep them cash registers ringing, no wonder so many people find themselves out of their depth. Personal lending is one of the few aspects of banks' financial behaviour that isn't rigorously controlled by law - instead it's governed by a voluntary code of conduct. Banks and other loan sharks actively chase those with a history of not being able to handle their finances. Lower down the food chain some lending organisations trawl through court listings looking for those on the receiving end of county court judgements to make generous offers of the 'turn all your little problems into one big problem' variety.

The 'Home Credit' industry is booming and no wonder - it typically charges its unemployed borrowers interest rates of more than 400%! The main loan shark is Provident Personal Credit which is greedily pushing its way into recently de-regulated Eastern Europe.

Debt is a big, booming business, and those making the cash are the usual suspects based in London's boardrooms. The 'debt sale and purchase' market in the UK has been mushrooming, as financial institutions buy up banks' debts for a fraction of their value to then hassle the hell out of the debtors to pay up. Around £4.5 billion

worth of debt has been sold for a cut price £300 million, and so far collectors have squeezed almost £500 million out of people in debt. Nice little earner!

Apartheid profiteers Barclays are the real financial muscle behind companies like Cabot, which is hosting next week's "debt collections conference." Jointly organized with industry rag, 'Credit Today', the conference is a snip at 500 quid plus VAT (but don't try sticking on yer card). Once you've been to the gripping workshop on 'What every Debt Collections Manager wants for Christmas'! you'll no doubt be starving hungry for the evening meal (a networking bargain at £1,275). Meanwhile new powers for bailiffs to enter houses (see SchNEWS 565) will make 'debt recovery' that much easier and profits that much bigger.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The amount of consumer debt in the UK would be enough to buy you 236 years of food for the world's starving children or keep the Iraq war going for 23 years. It could also buy you 4 billion of Ecotopia's (www.ecotopia.co.uk) "panda friendly" bamboo flat screen computer monitors. Surely a better bet? Yep, they might look nice, but do you really need to replace your (albeit old fashioned) but perfectly working computer monitor and shove it's remains into landfill?

Ethical consumption and Fairer Trade are increasingly being used to justify continued guilt-free consumption, so hey! why not stick those hemp trousers on your Greenpeace credit card?! But Fair Trade is becoming more about big business than small producers: "When Fair Trade roses came in," says Paul Monaghan of the Co-operative Group, "Sainsbury's got them first. We were all fighting over the roses!" Now, even Nestle is moving in on the Fair Trade game (see SchNEWS 515), animal testers L'Oreal have bought the Body Shop (see SchNEWS 542) and Bono Ltd launched 'product RED' this year (see SchNEWS 544). "It's sugar coating on a bitter pill that can prevent us from focusing on the real issues" argues Indian activist Anuradha Mittal.

Sundays (thanks to the iron fist of organised religion) used to be a weekly buy nothing day, but now it's much more a case of 'what would Jesus buy?' Reverend Billy from the Church of Stop Shopping has other ideas though, predicting a disastrous dash to the Shopocalypse if we don't stop buying right now. Billy's 'Retail Interven-

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For assault and vinegar...?

As one late night carb-lover in Southgate, north London found out recently, when the chips are down cops can take littering very seriously. Waiting at a bus stop the unfortunate criminal had the misfortune to drop a couple of fries in sight of cops.

One officer took the deep-fried-illegality more seriously than most and told our would-be litterer, "If you don't pick those up I'll arrest you."

When told it seemed a little daft to arrest him for dropping chips, the cop grabbed his arm - spilling the entire contents on the ground - and (wrapping him in newspaper) bundled the him into the back of a police van, for the heinous crime of littering. He was released after 4 hours in the cells, no doubt with a chip on his shoulder...

tions' bring direct action to the shop front with sermons from the 'Slow Down Your Consumption School of Divinity', hitting big corporate brands like Starbucks and creating 'Commercial Free Zones' in city centres. You can read the Reverend's sermons more fully at www.revbilly.com Billy's also written a letter to Bono, asking him to ditch his RED card and start giving to, rather than profiting from, African poverty. Read more at www.dearbono.org There's more info on UK based actions and related info at www.buynothingday.co.uk and you can find out more about Buy Nothing Christmas at www.adbusters.org

WEL-UNFARE

With the government's own research showing that debt hits the poorest hardest, what's the proposed solution? Yep, that's right - its time to cut benefits again!

The Welfare Reform Bill is winding its way through parliament, promising a 'Pathway to Employment' for the sick and disabled. Incapacity Benefit claimants will soon be summonsed to attend 'work focussed interviews' as the government aims to get 400,000 people off the benefit and into low-end, dull, monotonous, minimum wage jobs. 300,000 lone parents are to be targeted too, as the new Employment and Support Allowance starts to replace Income Support. Clamp Down Britain continues unabashed with the usual Anti Social Behaviour stuff thrown in for good measure; this time proposals include cuts to benefits for parents of unruly kids.

The **Coalition Against the Welfare Reform Bill** are planning a 'Day of Action' on the 4th December 2006. Meet 11am at the St Stephens Entrance to Parliament.

www.swansheffield.org.uk for info.

DOWN-UNDER THE THUMB

Protests kicked off in Melbourne this week in response to the G20 Finance Ministers meeting. Inside the marbled halls of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, oil and mining interests joined ministers and special guest war mongering World Bank boss Paul Wolfowitz (see SchNEWS 490) for the launch of the Energy and Minerals Business Council, organised by Australia's two big mining corporations BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto. The G20 became the focus for two days of direct action and police repression.

As delegates flew in on Friday they were greeted with a day of decentralised actions around the city centre with office occupations at Tenix (involved in defence projects and production), an army recruitment office and five branches of ANZ bank – closing all city centre branches for the day. One hundred people occupied the offices of Oricas, a company who produces cyanide for the gold mining industry. Mirroring last year's G8, Make Poverty History organised a grandstanding rock-fest with U2 and Pearl Jam. No summit is complete without Bono, who told the crowd "Politicians have to do what you tell them to do", before a heroic attempt to get the Australian govt to up its foreign aid by a few points of a percent.

After a large carnival-style march on Saturday, with Oxfam and Make Poverty History all hitched on a liberal bandwagon called StopG20, things kicked off when a group of 100 toiled-up coppers waded into the crowd at dusk following the trashing of a police wagon. A pink Cadillac filled with larger than life mock-ups of endangered species, a sound system and several locked-on people, was attacked by truncheon wielding cops. In the argy-bargy several were injured, with one hospitalised and the Indymedia van was used as a makeshift ambulance for a concussed protester. Snatch squads entered the crowd, nicking around ten people, although some de-arrested themselves in the scuffle. The media and organised left have united in scapegoating the autonomous masked-up 'Arterial Bloc'.

On Sunday the police repression continued with people being snatched off the street, as well as a police baton charge injuring a group of 50 protesters at the Melbourne Museum, where the G20 delegates were being treated to a bit of well earned r&r. One of the 'Lentil As Anything' catering crew for the G20 Alternatives Conference was snatched, as well as Drasko Boljevic, who was bundled into the back of a van, tied up, trou-

sers pulled down, and physically and verbally terrorised by police for 25 minutes before being taken into custody. During interrogation Drasko found out he'd been arrested for assaulting a policewoman at the G20 protests, and had been mistaken for someone they were chasing. He wasn't actually at the protests that day, or even in town, and once the police established this he was out – but regardless of whether he was or wasn't there this was top notch over the top policing.

For more see <http://melbourne.indymedia.org>

**** Other news from Oz this week:** in Tasmania, anti-logging protesters halted operations for the day in the Weld Valley, with three arrests for trespass in a newly established exclusion zone. This comes after protests and actions escalated following police raids which evicted two protest camps last week. At stake is the old growth forest in the Weld Valley – some of the tallest trees in the southern hemisphere which live for over 2000 years, as well as giant caves which show evidence of human occupation going back the last Ice Age. Protests are expected to continue in what has been a five year campaign. For more see www.huon.org

Party & Protest

NOVEMBER: 25th-Defy-ID National Gathering, Nottingham. 11am onwards at the Sumac Centre, to organise resistance to ID Cards and the National ID Register. Food and accommodation available. www.nottingham-defy-id.org.uk/gathering **** 25 - Benefit for Anarchist Black Cross (ABC)** at the Afro Carribean Centre, Park St, Hull, nr Silhouettes. 6.30pm - 10.40pm. £5/£3.50 – with DJ's **** 25 - Bikeride from Oxford to Campsfield** Refugee Detention Centre. Meet at Martyrs Memorial, Oxford (near The Randolph and Debenhams), 11:15am. This event repeats on the last Saturday of every month. www.close-campsfield.org.uk **** 25 - Conference about Omar Deghayes**, Brighton resident in Guantanamo Bay. Speakers include Craig Murray, Milan Rai, as well as testimonies from Omar's family. 11:30am-4pm, 10/11 Pavilion Parade, Brighton Free entry. Call 07985 408124 see also www.save-omar.org.uk **** 25 - Demo against the BNP's annual conference** in Blackpool. Meet at 12 noon, the square at the top of Victoria Street, Blackpool at the side entrance to the Winter Gardens. <http://82.69.12.18/lancasteruafblog/index.php?itemid=541> **** 25 - Demo to stop the demolition of The Queen's Pub, Queens Market**, Upton Park, East London (Upton Pk tube) 12-3pm at the pub. Fight 'gentrification' and the destruction of communities for the Olympics. Call 0208 472 5933 www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk **** 26**

- South West Permaculture Convergence, by the Bristol Permaculture Group at St Werburghs Community Centre, Horley Rd, Bristol, BS2 9TJ. With talks & workshops from 9.30am til late, plus vegan food and live music. £6. **** 26 - Anniversary demo at Campsfield Refugees Detention centre**. Close All 174 Detention Centres In Europe! No Fortress Europe! At Campsfield IRC main gates, Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxford. 12pm – 2pm. Call 07791 744260 www.ncadc.org.uk **** 26 - Bilston Glen Protest Camp** free cafe., cinema, live music from 12 noon. 7 miles south of Edinburgh. For more see www.bilston-glen-abs.org.uk Site mob - 0775 328 0009. **** 29 - War In Lebanon** Indymedia photographer back from Lebanon presents slideshow with discussion. 8pm, LARC 62 Fieldgate St Whitechapel E1, free. 0207 3779088, www.londonarc.org **** Nov 29 - Dec 13 - Look out for Mooreen** in central Sheffield – a **squatted social centre** – 2 weeks of gigs, workshops & films. For location call 07989 874965 web www.mooreen.aktivix.org **** DECEMBER: 2 - National anti-war demo at RAF Brize Norton** - where British troops are flown to Iraq and Afghanistan, and asylum seekers are deported. A demo against militarisation in the UK. Assemble at 12 noon in Carterton, Oxfordshire. For more call 07764 563855 www.stopwar.org.uk For more on the plight of the deportees see www.ncadc.org.uk

HELLFIRE TO PAY

Last week eleven people were nicked for trespass at a protest at the Wescam subsidiary of Canada's main weapons manufacturer, L-3 Communications in Burlington, Ontario. Wescam (We Scam, geddit?), a bit like Brighton's very own EDO-MBM (www.smashedo.org.uk), is a component factory which builds targeting equipment for the 'Predator' – the unmanned aeroplane which shoots Hellfire guided-missiles. Hellfire missiles (£55,000 per bang) are used in Iraq and Afghanistan, and just three weeks ago one fired from a Predator hit a Pakistani school, killing 80 kids.

The Homes Not Bombs group were told on the day of the action by police that a blue line painted on the grass near Wescam's entrance was the limit - and if protesters stepped over they would face 'serious criminal charges'.

Despite being met by 20 security guards, the protesters managed to place grave markers around the grounds with the names of Afghans and Iraqis who have been killed by L-3's handiwork. For two hours names of the dead were read out, but when a group tried to walk to Wescam's entrance, with a view to presenting company bosses with a 'citizen's inspection certificate' outlining L-3's war crimes, they were nicked.

Shoved into police cars complete with computers made by... L-3 Communications, the arrestees appear in court on December 19th, when a trial date will be set. See www.homesnotbombs.ca

...and finally...

Are you feeling loaded? No? Well how about some help to put it into perspective. Not normally people to be swayed by conspicuous wealth bragging here at SchNEWS, we did appreciate one little internet find this week: at www.globarichlist.com you can enter your yearly income and it will calculate exactly how rich you are. In the whole world. £14 grand a year gets you comfortably in the top ten percent, with £20k putting you in the top 5%. Higher wages than that and you're really living the super-elite high life. Just £26k a year puts you in the world's richest 1%. If SchNEWS was a person, it would be 809,194,122th. Apparently. Why not visit www.schnews.org.uk/extras/help.htm to donate and help push us towards that magic 800,000,000 barrier?!

Disclaimer

SchNEWS tells all readers - why not stick it all on the never never spending money you haven't got - what the hell it's all about to collapse anyway... Honest!

DIAMOND GEEZER?

Housewives' choice Leo De Caprio being called on by the Kalahari Bushmen to help save their land from evil diamond miners? Sounds like the plot of a Hollywood blockbuster - except it happens to be true (See SchNEWS 514).

Cute-boy De Caprio is star of Blood Reserve, a new movie about the aforementioned sinister diamond trade. Meanwhile real miners, TH Diamonds, have just started digging in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The Kalahari bushmen have lived in the area for thousands of years but are now succumbing to First World diseases, with AIDS spreading rapidly as their land is opened up to the insatiable demands of corporate investors. Their very way of life is under the threat of extinction as they are evicted and forced in to reserves, to go the same way as the American Indians. They have called on the 'millionaire heart-throb' to highlight their plight to the world but, through all the glitz and glamour, will he hear? See www.survival-international.org

ON GUARDIA

They've been heavier than usual on the Mayo this week. The ongoing campaign to block the building of a feckin great big gas refinery plant in Rossport, Ireland, is irritating the hell out of Shell (See SchNEWS 549). When imprisonment didn't intimidate the aggrieved locals, Shell backed down a little, hoping the protests would just fade away. Time being money, now the kid gloves are off and the Guardia are showing themselves increasingly ready to kick a few heads in if you get in the way of Progress.

A regular morning rally by the Shell-to-Sea protest group was assaulted by the baton-wielding fluorescent-jacketed cops, literally battering a path through to the site for the construction vehicles. Those who climbed onto the trucks were beaten down and four people were hospitalised.

A boycott of all Shell/Statoil products is already under way and the blockaders vow to fight on. Watch the footage of the day at www.corribos.com and see www.shelltosea.org

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