

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER TAKIN' POLE POSITION...

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TENTS STAND OFF



SMASH EDO ACTION CAMP ROUND-UP

It's been a hectic week in Brighton as Smash EDO and Sussex Police once again faced off over the presence of US arms manufacturer EDO MBM in the town. Local campaigners, having appealed for a national presence of peace activists for a protest camp, pitched up in Wild Park in Moulsecoomb - cheekily situated right behind EDOs main factory site on Home Farm Rd. SchNEWS had eyes on the ground...

The site was taken on Sunday night by around 15 campers and 'fenced off' with red and white tape, liberally adorned with Section 6 notices declaring the area squatted. A net was set up in the tree tops to prevent any overnight eviction. By Monday morning around thirty people had gathered at the site and cops didn't seem particularly interested. But early on Tuesday morning the site was invaded by Chief Inspector Mills, - seemingly commander in chief of the plod task force. One camper told SchNEWS, "they seemed slightly put out that everyone was already up and about, but made a great show of pushing people around and trying to count the tents." The cops were soon subjected to Smash EDOs very own patented sonic weapon and, being on the wrong side of the sirens for once, retreated back down the hill.

Later that morning activists converged on EDO MBM's second site on the Mill Road industrial estate in Fishersgate. Campaigners arrived as the last of the workforce were clocking in for a regular day's armament manufacture. Two people rapidly scaled the roof and unrolled a banner saying "SMART BOMBS / STUPID WARS". A barrage of noise was then directed at the factory. Cops arrived shortly afterwards, calling in the fire brigade for specialist equipment to evict the occupiers. When the

firefighters arrived however, they treated Police to a lecture on the arms trade and expressed their support for direct action! Although the rooftop occupiers weren't arrested until 1.30pm - the crowd outside left once news of the police attack on the camp started filtering through.

Meanwhile back at the ranch - forty cops headed up by Inspector 'Below' Parr invaded the protest site at around 12.30pm. One eyewitness told SchNEWS, "Inspector Parr was shouting himself hoarse through a megaphone at six of us while uniforms swarmed around photographing everything in sight, handing us notices that camping in Wild Park was illegal, something they hadn't even mentioned in their earlier visits. They were using a weird bye-law from 1875...and it's hardly as if the police regularly patrol Wild Park - there's burnt out cars everywhere!"

The police, commendably zealous in their rigorous enforcement of the 1875 Public Health Act (drafted to combat the spread of cholera), then moved onto the campsite at 2.30pm and began seizing and ripping down tents. Those occupying the nets in the trees prevented a total sweep of the site, but the police notice was intent on the tents. Cops seized rucksacks, cooking equipment and sleeping bags. They also rifled through and photographed any documents they could find - all very thorough for the offence of rough camping, which carries a maximum penalty of £2 pounds sterling and is listed alongside such heinous offences as watering your livestock in the public fountains.

Continued overleaf...



A.N.C. NO EVIL STATUE UNVEILED: PROTEST HIDDEN

This one didn't make the news: When the statue of Nelson Mandela was unveiled in Parliament Square, it was a touchy-feely moment for the heads of a 'democratic' country to parade their tolerance by putting Nelson's bronze floral shirt alongside Winston's overcoat (and occasional mohawk).

What they were careful to hide from Nelson as he came down to Parliament Square - that old hallowed turf of free-speech - was the permanent presence of peace campaigner Brian Haw, who has been camped at the square for 6 years, defying the SOCPA rules designed to target him and ban other protesters near parliament (See SchNEWS 574). His peace camp during the heart-warming event was surrounded by seven foot fencing, a media stage, banners and barriers.

Brian and his supporters were hassled by police as Nelson delivered his knowing speech about 'freedom' to experts on the subject like Gordon Brown and David Cameron. A protester had her banner taken in fear it might cause 'alarm and distress', and police threatened protesters with arrest for 'breach of the peace', when they shouted 'war criminal' during Brown's speech. But the police didn't want the publicity of arrests, and failed to nick an elderly man carrying an anti-Zionist placard - in a demonstration unauthorised by SOCPA laws - after he was told by the inspector that he could remain as long as he didn't shout.

You can guess what'll happen in years to come - there'll be a statue of Brian Haw at Parliament Square, with opportunist politicians queuing up to associate themselves with someone of such solid integrity. Meanwhile their boot boys and minions will be kicking the shit out of the current agitator defying the law to stand up for the truth...

* www.parliament-square.org.uk

CRAP APPEAL OF THE WEEK

For a marquee....

Got an unwanted marquee taking up space in yer garage? We could give it a new home. While we might one day be reunited with our treasured M*A*S*H era tent, we suspect it's going down for a long stretch. We'd consider anything (preferably post Suez Crisis). Well maybe not a bouncy castle but possibly a polytunnel. Or just send a donation to the usual address.

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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The plod became slightly more baffled when it came to dismantling the SchNEWS marquee. Veteran of many a free-festival and, it is rumoured, the Korean War, this was a knottier problem than yer lightweight modern Eurohike tatted from Glastonbury. Matters were complicated by one sneaky subversive loitering within the tent who D-locked himself to the caber-like main pole. A two-hour stand off ensued, with the Chief Inspector offering to give the marquee away to anyone who would have it! Eventually police scrambling on their hands and knees found the key for the D-Lock and our heroic marquee's last stand collapsed. It was last seen incarcerated in the back of a police Land Rover. Undaunted by this admittedly major setback, campers improvised shelters and went on a Critical Mass demo to highlight the factory's presence in the City.

Tuesday morning started with a dawn greeting for employees at the factory as activists strolled on to EDO's usually gated carpark. This was met by security guards with a German shepherd dog which was let loose on one protester - leaving him with an nasty open wound on the arm. As security withdrew, the dog also bit one of the factory's managers. Both men were taken to hospital and the protester has since been operated on. After that it was time to dust off the lawbooks once again as another section of the 1875 byelaw was wheeled out to justify one woman's arrest for making too much noise. But the racket carried on unabated and campaigners returned at 4pm for another bout. Shortly after 3pm a TNT delivery truck arrived, fresh from EDO's depot. Whilst someone attempted to lock-on to the lorry they were arrested. Police then searched the four other people present and came back to seize a video camera and arrest a woman for "obstructing police".

The camp rounded off with another noise demo, and the farcical police pettiness continued as cops confiscated a pound-shop airhorn under byelaws. That afternoon a group travelled to nearby Shoreham to visit the offices of Interlink Express, a courier company that does regular work for EDO MBM. A banner was displayed, and activists chatted with workers there, explaining why the campaign exists, and why EDO MBM is not a good firm to do business with.

"This year's camp, despite the expected police repression, has shown EDO MBM that the campaign is growing stronger and that we will continue to exert pressure until the factory closes or converts to civilian production. Thanks to everyone who came - see you next time..." - campaign spokesperson Sarah Johnson.

For more see www.smashedo.org.uk

* See the new SchMOVIE with footage of the events at www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies

TAKE THE MONKEY AND RUN

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have offered Oxford University twice what they paid for a macaque monkey named Felix. Felix is due for invasive brain surgery and certain death if the University have their way. PETA are joining SPEAK and others in demanding an end to plans to build a monkey torture facility on the campus. PETA's campaign coordinator Alistair Currie said "With 80 per cent of the British public in favour of some form of a ban on experiments, Oxford owes it to the public to tell the whole truth about his suffering and should have the humanity to release him to a sanctuary. Under these exceptional circumstances, we're willing to pay Oxford to make that happen." www.speakcampaigns.org

SITE FOR SORE EYES

After a brief respite for their holidays (bless 'em), builders have returned to wreak more havoc at Shell's refinery site at Bellanaboy in Mayo, west Ireland. Reminding them it was certainly not business as usual, around twenty protesters blockaded the site. Gaining access via the main gate, they stopped all work on site for almost four hours. By this stage three plod had arrived and began attacking people standing in front of site vehicles. Protesters then moved outside the main gate and joined another group in another blockade.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, concrete trucks entering the site were also blockaded. In another area, surveyors subcontracted to Shell were prevented from carrying out surveys on the likely pipeline route.

This is just the latest in the ongoing series of actions against Shell and their minions in government over the past five years. Site invasions, blockades, marches and pickets against the company are happening across Europe and give inspiration and courage to those in Mayo at the front line of this fight to prevent the oil giant from building a plant and high pressure pipeline through the area (see SchNEWS 595).

On September 14th there will be a national mobilisation for a mass sitdown protest at the refinery at Bellanaboy, as well as other international solidarity actions. Last year there was an excellent (arrest-free) demo a Shell garage in Brighton that stopped them selling their filth for the best part of a day. Let's see if we can raise the standard this year. See www.corribos.com/ and check www.indymedia.ie for updates and news.

PARTY & PROTEST

2 - Wychwood Forest Fair - A fair which ran from late 18th-mid 19th century at Newhill Plain, Cornbury, and was revived after The Land Is Ours squatted the original site in 1997. It is now on another site at Capps Lodge near Burford, Gloucestershire/Oxfordshire border, and there will be 150 stalls, funfair, Morris dancing, storytelling and more. Noon til 5pm. Web www.ebrington.com/blog/189/wychwood-forest-fair-2007

9 - Urban Green Fair - Brockwell Park, Brixton. Music, cafés, kids' zone, speakers, poets, workshops, DJs, craft and campaign stalls, all powered by working examples of renewable energy. www.urbangreenfair.org.uk

11 - Disarm DSEi - a day of actions against the Defence Systems & Equipment International (DSEi), the arms sales expo held every other year at East London's ExCel Centre. www.dsei.org

19-24 - Gatwick area No Borders Camp. This will be a space to share information, skills, knowledge and experiences, and to plan actions together against the system of border controls. Place: Gatwick area. Info: g-anc2007@riseup.net <http://noborders.org.uk>

23 - Benefit gig "A Seriously Funny Attempt to Get The Serious Fraud Office in The Dock!" - At the end of 2006, the investigation into arms dealing company BAE Systems - for bribing Saudis to get big arms contracts in the 1980s - was dropped following government-level interference. Then, in a surely completely unrelated matter, BAE could happily announce huge new contracts with the Saudis at the start of this year (see SchNEWS 526). The Campaign Against Arms Trade (www.caat.org.uk) and others have now launched a legal challenge to force a judicial review. Mark Thomas, Omid Djalili, Simon Amstell, Mark Steel and many more big gagsters are gigging at Hammersmith Apollo in London to help fund it. Tickets from £15 call Ticketmaster (0870 606 3400) or Ticketzone (0870 011 26 26) www.markthomasinfo.com

INSIDE SCHNEWS

A group of Italian anarchists felt the full weight of the state when put on trial for eco-sabotage last month. The four were up on charges relating to the damage of Esso garages and a bank, as well as for threatening two doctors who falsified medical reports to cover-up the beating of refugees in a detention centre. The four got ten years between them (although still currently free pending an appeal) and the crooked doctors got thousands in compensation.

See www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk

...and finally...

If the experiences of the two protest camps held recently are anything to go by (see this & last week's SchNEWS), you're better off being located near a major airport. This might bode well for the forthcoming **Gatwick No borders camp** (19-24th Sept - see Party & Protest). But what of the local Police who'll no doubt be tasked with the overblown state response? Well it's not been a good PR month for the Gatwick branch of Sussex Plod.

Last week a PC was accidentally shot and injured by a colleague at the Gatwick firing range. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) were called in, their spokesperson saying, "our investigators have attended the scene of the discharge to gather evidence."

This was something presumably no one said earlier in the month when there was embarrassment as Southwark Crown Court heard details of how one senior police officer, in charge of a team of 20, was caught with his pants down (almost literally) when he appropriated an official police room at the airport for an usual interrogation - a full body search of an internet date looking for 'sex on duty', he'd arranged on a website called uniformdating.com (we kid you not!). Thankfully he was acquitted of wilful misconduct with the ingenious argument that he was wearing his radio earpiece the whole time. Apparently this was enough to satisfy the law that his mind was sufficiently on the job whilst he was on the job.

But perhaps such sexual shenanigans are normal behaviour at the UK's second airport.

This week an employment tribunal at Brighton - for a female PC claiming sexual harassment and discrimination - has been learning about a police culture where armed police slept on the job, faked patrol reports and left weapons lying around (apparently, leaving your gun unattended was merely a 'doughnut' offence - meaning it was your turn to buy for the team, with more serious lapses upgraded to 'cake' status.)

Some officers were known for clocking up more time in the canteen than on patrol. Add the WPC's allegations that officers watched porn TV channels on duty, left lads mags open on topless pictures as well as making constant derogatory sexual comments towards and you have a lovely picture of modern policing in action.

Still, surely No Borders campers will receive professional treatment from Sussex's finest...

SENIOR GATWICK OFFICER SPEAKS OUT:



Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - we're not pegging out yet even if the jokes are getting ropier. Honest!

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