

WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER LOW FRISK...

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COUNTER PUNCH

SchNEWS ROUNDS UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS IN ANOTHER CRACKDOWN

Just when they thought that you weren't looking, Neo Labour is have another bash at any piddling law getting in the way of their crackdown on er 'terrorists'. This time the Counter Terrorism Bill proposes to introduce a range of new powers to share (or lose) data, imprison people without charge for longer periods of time and generally broaden the meaning of the word 'terrorism' and the police's power to do whatever they want about it.

Whilst most attention has been given to the proposal to hold people for up to 42 days without charge (three times longer than in 2005 - and longest in the western world), little attention has been given to some of the other clauses in the Bill such as the new rules that will apply to Coroners courts. At the moment a coroner is legally obliged to call an inquest into any violent, unnatural or unexplained death on their patch. The hearings are always held in public, with a jury, and must always be convened in certain circumstances such as deaths in police or prison custody.

Apparently the 'fresh look' at the regulations that we were promised following the

PAYOUT TIME

The 'War of Terror' which the UK govt is waging on its citizens is doing such a great job of arresting dangerous perpetrators that in the past five years they've had to pay out £44 million in compensation - mostly for wrongful arrests, assaults, malicious prosecutions and abuses of human rights. A Freedom of Information (FoI) Act disclosure obtained by Heather Brooke, an FoI expert and author of 'Your Right to Know', found that this amount was paid in more than 31,000 claims across the country, the vast majority of which were settled out of court. The average pay-out per claim is around £1400, while each case normally gobbles up another five grand in legal and court costs.

The top five most over-zealous police forces - or those with the most amount of claims against them - are, in order, Merseyside, Northern Ireland, Cleveland, Devon & Cornwall and the Met.

* For more on the FoI Act see www.yrtk.org

police murder of Jean Charles Menezes (see SchNEWS 552) has resulted - not in more openness - but a proposal to prevent coroners calling an inquest into such cases in the future. The Home Secretary will be given the powers to make any investigation secret if it is in the interests of national security, international relations or *any other public interest* to do so.

S/he will also be able make their own appointments to coroner's courts to make sure any results are 'on message' should it be difficult to hold a hearing away from the public glare.

The coroner system was set up more than 1,000 years ago - hardly a time when you could have called Britain a democracy - yet Neo Labour in one breath talks about our 'progressive democratic principles transcending the world' and in another trashes centuries old protections against the dictatorial power of the state. As if to demonstrate just how sneaky the government is, ministers failed to mention this proposal in a bill that's going through parliament that specifically deals with reform of the coroners system!

So next time MI5 have a shoot out with a terrorist suspect and accidentally kill a civilian - no one is going to investigate, and there'll be no inconvenient need to prove guilt. Ditto for the police; although the public may need some more PR-led convincing before they accept that black people just have more fatal 'accidents' whilst in the local nick than their white counterparts. The new powers are not restricted to terrorism cases and could be applied to cases of deaths where no link with extremism is suspected.

And if that's not enough, the Bill grants the Home Secretary powers to change certain provisions of the legislation without reference to parliament - just in case that definition of terrorism ever needs widening some more... Not to worry though because Home Secretary Jaqui Smith has declared that the proposals are compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and, besides, will only be used sparingly. Honest!

WHOOPS, SARGE, WE JUST SHOT SOMEBODY DEAD...



SUS IT OUT

As an added size ten in the teeth a return to 'sus' laws is on the cards. Back in the early 1980s, most stop-and-searches carried out by the police were so clearly aimed at harassing black youth that Brixton, Toxteth, Bristol and elsewhere erupted in riots. Used widely in Northern Ireland to similar effect, 'sus' laws allowed police to stop and search for whatever reason they wanted, even if that was no reason at all. Following the Scarman report, regulations were reluctantly introduced requiring police to have a 'reasonable suspicion' before stopping someone. Then any search had to be recorded and the suspect given a receipt. As a result of the McPherson report into the murder of Steven Lawrence police began filling out encounter forms whenever they stopped someone. Of course anyone who is part of what the police regard as the enemy will realise that police abuse of power is not an exception - it is routine. It's just that occasionally they get caught out.

Of course from the *Daily Mail's* point of view the police should be given a free hand to do as they see fit. (of course until Middle England gets its tweed collar felt for speeding or some other understandable and victimless crime). According to them the police are hampered by unnecessary red tape. The *Mail* is up in arms and ranting that police should be out nicking hoodies and paedophiles instead of filling out paperwork - and Brown now wants to out-trump the Tories over weapons crimes, after David Cameron said 'outdated search laws designed to protect ethnic minorities and the young from harassment must go'.

So now police won't have to record their reasons for stop-and-searching - they will simply give out a 'business card' to whoever they've hassled. Of course, the lack of decent 'encounter' records will have the handy effect of concealing the fact that black people are seven times more likely to get stopped than whites nationally.



Metropolitan Police Stop-n-search Card

Congratulations! You have been picked out from the crowd for being black / Asian / just a bit dodgy, and you may be a potential gun crime perpetrator / terrorist / jihadist / animal rights extremist / wrong'un. Sorry, this time we regret that you haven't been selected for extended detainment without charge under the Counter Terrorism Act.

Collect five of these cards for a free kicking

Henge And Racket

The battle to stop the motorway set to trash the area around the **Hill Of Tara**, Ireland (see SchNEWS 585, 597), is getting more urgent by the day as a third of the roadworks is already done – ahead of schedule even. In some of the worst archaeological trashing since US tanks trampled over 5000-year-old Sumerian relics during the Iraq invasion, the Hill Of Tara is one of the most important sites in Europe, yet suffering carnage. A motorway junction is being built which plows through a complex of monuments going back from 2000BC to 1200AD, including burial mounds, a henge, and other religious enclosures.

This week a high court action was launched aimed at protecting the Lismullin national monument near Tara. Gordon Lucas is seeking an injunction and declaration that the National Monuments Act 2004 – which gives the loopholes for such developments – is in breach of EU law. Meanwhile, as we speak there is digging equipment on the Lismullin henge – discovered only last year – which contains building work more than 4000 years old.

See www.themodernantiquarian.com
www.tarapixie.net and www.tarawatch.org

URGENT CALL OUT: People with bottle are urge to go and take direct action to stop the destruction now! There are protesters on the ground but numbers are low. Benefit gigs are planned to contribute towards transport costs getting people over to Tara. If you're interested in going please email us schnews@brighton.co.uk

Hit For Six

The UK Coal Conference 2008, held this week at Lords cricket ground, was on a shaky wicket after an action by Greenpeace campaigners. At 8am, this Wednesday, four of the five entrances were blockaded by two-metre high fences, to which they locked-on to, preventing the energy minister Malcolm Wicks and 200 other delegates from entry. The blockaders were even graced by the presence of a thumbs-aloft Paul McCartney who apparently said something along the lines of 'yeah, like guys, I'm really with you on this one....'

Meanwhile, as delayed entry inside went ahead, other protesters smuggled themselves in to pose as delegates. The aim of the chin-wag was – have a wild guess! – strengthening and protecting the coal power industry. When the energy minister did get to start his speech, he was interrupted by one protester who began reading out-loud the speech they would have liked Mr Wicks to give, before being grabbed by security. After which another person in the room stood up and continued it. There were half a dozen planted in the room, all eventually bundled out, but not before they'd got through their blurb on how "...coal has to be a fuel of the past. Burning coal is the single most carbon intensive method of generating energy known to man."

The Brown govt is about to give the green light to a new coal power station at Kingsnorth, Kent, to be built by German company Eon. This station – the first new one for 30 years – will pump out the same amount of carbon dioxide as the 30 least-polluting countries combined. To meet new emissions laws, it was supposed to have 'carbon capture and storage' technology, but in an email made public from Eon and the UK Govt in recent weeks, Eon were demanding to build a 'normal' station, saying the green gestures wouldn't work (i.e. be profitable enough). The government apparently caved in after six minutes and gave the go ahead for the full-pollution option. And, big surprise, there's a whole schedule of other new coal stations also planned...

* See www.greenpeace.org.uk

* For more about **Kingsnorth** see www.wdm.org.uk/kingsnorth

* **April 1st - Fossil Fools Day** - Rising Tide calling for a carnival day of action against the fossil fuel industry. For details about regional events see www.fossilfoolsday.org

Glaciers Minted

The ice caps are not only under threat of melting – the poles are the latest frontier for the great planetary carve-up brigade.

The Arctic is becoming more of a proposition for resource-ripping-off, now that the ice is melting faster than ever and oil is over \$100 a barrel. And it possibly contains a quarter of the world's undiscovered oil. Canada, Russia, the US, Denmark and Norway are all making claims on the area, and Canada have announced plans to set up a military base at the northern tip of Baffin Island. Due to climate change, the Arctic could be ice-free in the summer by the end of the century.

Meanwhile darn sarf in the Antarctica, attention is turning towards extracting goodies from there as well – and the 1959 treaty which kept it for peaceful and scientific purposes is now under attack. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the nearest countries can produce maps trying to show their particular continental shelf encroaches into the territory. Other claimants are scrambling to claim rights based on historical usage or expeditions – lining up for the scrap are Argentina, Australia, Britain, Chile, France, New Zealand and Norway. Russia and the US haven't said much yet publicly but you can bet they're watching proceedings with carnivorous instincts.

It's pretty tough to work there – strong icy winds, dark for 24 hours part of the year, and the fact that everything is under thick ice. But as resource scarcity kicks in, it may one day be 'economically viable' to plunder the continent. For starters it has 90% of the world's supply of fresh water locked in ice – which is readily accessible. Very little of Antarctica has seen mineral or oil exploration, though what they've been able to gauge from coastal areas, there is coal, and a host of elements including iron, chromium, nickel, copper and more. And it's guessed from studies that there's a fair bit of oil too.

But at least Antarctica does have some protection against mineral exploration; the thick ice plates covering it slide, making it very difficult to drill. For now, perhaps it's control of the lucrative ecotourist trade of 40,000 visitors a year that must be so attractive. If renewable energy solutions and lower resource consumption haven't kicked in by the time that it does become economically viable to mine there, things really will be looking bleak...

Party & Protest

FEB - 9 – End The Siege Of Gaza – at 10 Downing St, Whitehall, London. 4-6pm. Tel 02077006192 web www.palestinecampaign.org ** **9 – Seed Swap & Potato Day**. 10am-3pm, Doulting Village Hall, Near Shepton Mallet, Somerset. www.potato-days.net ** **9-10 - UK Indymedia Network Meeting**. at Sumac Centre, Nottingham. www.veggies.org.uk/sumac ** **9-10 - National Squatters Meeting**, Leeds discussing the squatting situation across the country, as well as preparation for days of action in April. Email squatmeetup@googlemail.com ** **9 - Animals, People and Environment Fayre**, 11am-3pm, "The Vic", Hill Street, Wrexham, free. www.wrexhamveg.org ** **10 - Seed Swap, Bristol**, plus talks, cafe, bar and stalls, free, email bristolseedswap@yahoo.co.uk ** **16 – Seedy Saturday, Plymouth**. 2-5 pm, Diggin' It, Penless Valley Allotments, Raynham Road, Stoke, PL3 4EU. www.digginit.org.uk ** **16-17 – Espacio Bristol-Colombia** are holding a 2 day training in "accompaniment" work in Colombia providing an international presence deterring army and paramilitaries from killing activists and building solidarity with autonomous, grassroots-level groups. At Kebele, 14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol, 11am-5pm on Sat, 10am – 4pm on Sun. Accom. available, £15. Email espacio@redcolombia.org www.espacio.org.uk ** **17 - Southampton's 3rd Seed Swap** - with vegan food and family events – 10am-4pm, Woolston Community Centre, 50p entry. www.octoberbooks.org/seedswap

Super Qualify Me

Do you want fries with that degree? Although McDonald's has been running a 'university' for years, it's been announced that they will now be offering qualifications here in the UK. Equivalent to A-levels, the 'McQual' will help students er ... work in a fast food restaurant for low pay and few prospects. An action-packed curriculum of burger flipping and fry shaking is sure to get eager students to take up the course by the thousand. And no doubt there'll be a whole semester dedicated to studying the loopholes that help the budding manager-to-be avoid giving his or her minions any employment rights.

But just why has a company renowned for its low skill work been given the right to hand out qualifications? In reality it's all to do with Gordon Brown's obsession with getting anyone and everyone into work. And to show what sort of business models he favours, he was on GMTV suggesting that a management style which has served the 30,000+ worldwide McD branches so well would add up to expertise which could be used 'anywhere'.

It's shrewd business practice all right – McDonalds and the other companies involved are getting in on the growth industry that is part-privatised scam training schemes which force unemployed into crap course or lose benefits. Other pigs at the trough include Working Links, A4e, and CDG - netting millions in profits from forcing the unskilled and disabled into work (see SchNEWS 614).

So now it's problem solved - once they're 'qualified', shove them off to any job in any fast food joint or, if they refuse, cut their benefits. Meanwhile Working Links nets a few quid, McDonalds gets a state-sponsored trainee and some unlucky punter ends up in minimum wage slavery. That's McBritain for you.

* Other companies include Network Rail, and FlyBe – with the aviation company able to offer qualifications which could form part of a degree.

* Two years ago workers in the fast food industry launched the 'Supersize My Pay' campaign in New Zealand. One of the trade unionists involved in the campaign, Mike Treen, will be speaking at the University of Sheffield at 7pm on Thurs 14th Feb.

SchNEWS Sunday Dinner

@ Cowley Club, 12 London Rd, Brighton
Feb 17th, from 2pm ** Vegan home-made lasagne, chips & salad + vegan ice cream £4.50
Get fed and help keep SchNEWS free! ** PLUS
6pm catch screenings of Take Three – the new SchMOVIES dvd, and Reel News TV.

...and finally...

While we at SchNEWS are generally in to the DIY approach, you can take it too far. Like one young nerd in Rockwall, Texas, for example, who in January – having found out all he needed to know from the Internet (is there nothing Wikipedia can't tell you?) – was attempting to create a nuclear reaction. In his house.

Sadly his plans were dashed by the FBI who descended on his family home before the experiments got too serious. That's not to say the FBI are ready to swoop on any would-be mad professor – they'd only found out about the atomic ambition by reading about it on his online blog - where he had boasted about possessing uranium and that his house had double in radioactivity. Way to go, Einstein!

It turned out that his plans for a mini-reactor can't have been too advanced as the cops were happy with a stern telling off and the confiscation of the experimental equipment – at his parents request! Let's hope this nuke kids on the block trend doesn't mushroom...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS advises all readers - the only A levels worth doing are in Anarchism... Honest!

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