

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER PUTTING IT ON THE PLASTIC...

# SchNEWS

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## GARBAGE GAIA

AS A HUMAN MADE MONSTER ENGULFS THE PACIFIC OCEAN...

So where is the world's biggest landfill? And we are talking really big here. In the US? China, maybe? Well it covers an area at least a quarter of a million square miles... nearly three times the size of the UK. Any ideas? OK, well it was a trick question really - it's actually a slick of human debris in the sea, floating around in the Pacific starting from around 500 miles off the west coast of the US. It's caused by rubbish that gets caught up by spiraling underwater ocean currents, called a gyre, which draw it in from all around and trap it into a floating layer of filth near the surface of the ocean. Named by a Star Trek fan no doubt, the phenomenon has not been named 'Garbage Gyre', but given the more frightening tag of 'Trash Vortex'.

Just how big it is a matter of hot debate. While many organisations cite it as being around the size of Texas, Charles Moore, the American oceanographer credited with first discovering it, has recently been quoted as claiming that it's now twice the size as continental United States, extending nearly all the way to Japan. Either way, its staggeringly big. (Sadly as it's largely translucent, it's not visible by satellite so no good rushing to download Google earth).

Whilst some of the junk is stuff dumped by boats of one sort or another or off oil platforms, 80% of it originates from the land. It's caused by wind and rain taking trash from the land (and indeed landfills) into rivers, people dumping along the coasts, poor sewage treatment and waste from industry.

Just how many millions of tons a year the Konsumer Kings of Krap discard into their vortex may be unknown, but with Californians alone using 19 billion plastic bags a year, there's no shortage of waste to go round. In fact around 90% of human pollution in the sea is plastic and this is far from fantastic news for sea-dwelling organisms and the ocean ecosystems. Made from a process using that oil war-causing fossil fuel, oil, plastic is toxic to marine life and indestructible. While most plastics only officially take up to hundreds of years to 'degrade', the truth is they never actually chemically break down and return to the ecosystem at all - they just disintegrate into ever smaller pieces, making a deadly plastic dust.

And it doesn't always have to wait so long to be dust; billions of tiny plastic pellets, called nurdles - the raw materials for the plastic industry - are lost or spilled every year, many ending up in the sea. These act like chemical sponges, soaking up other toxic man-made chemicals, all artificial pollutants (for toxicity think DDT pesticide etc), concentrating them up to a million times more than in normal sea water.

Trawls of the Pacific vortex have revealed that for every pound of proto-plankton, the foundation of the marine ecosystem, in a given volume of water, there are six pounds of plastic waste.

Plastic is therefore a catastrophic threat to the world's seas as stuff chucked away anytime in the last fifty years is still out there degrading somewhere. Waste caught up in the trash vortex, the gyre currents keeping it suspended in a plastic 'soup' near to the surface, is only the thin end of the widgeet. Around 70% of marine plastic waste sinks straight to the sea floor where it can slowly choke plant life and the animals that feed on it, unseen.

According to the UN Environment Programme, plastic debris causes the deaths of more than a million seabirds every year, with countless fish and more than 100,000 whales, seals and turtles. Greenpeace have identified at least 267 separate species known to have suffered from entanglement or ingestion of marine debris. And before we get too cocky about how green and caring Europe is compared to their uncouth American cousins... they may not have vortices, but the North Sea is one of the most polluted seas in the world

## SAY IT WITH MOSES

On Monday demonstrators blockaded Israeli fruit importer **Carmel Agrexco's** UK headquarters in Hayes, Middlesex. Lorries from companies including Sainsbury's and Tesco's were prevented from entering the premises to load up on flowers and vegetables grown in occupied Palestine.

The protest was part of a week of action against Carmel called for by the Boycott Israeli Goods campaign ([www.bigcampaign.org](http://www.bigcampaign.org)) against the import of flowers from Israel and Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. The run up to Valentines is one of the busiest periods of the year for the 50% Israeli State owned company. Within the last week there has been a blockade of a Carmel depot in Belgium and local actions occurring around Britain to coincide with the week of action.

The two entrances were blockaded with arm-tubes, D-locks and people supergluing themselves to the road. At one of the entrances protesters were attacked by security guards and workers from the company, which nearly prevented the blockade from happening but the road was mostly blocked. When the Met Police turned up they were acted in their usual aggressive ignorant and blatantly biased manner and refused to listen to anything the protesters had to say - or look at footage from a video camera, smashed by security showing clear assaults on protesters.

COMING TO A COASTLINE NEAR YOU...

SchAMMER HORROR presents



### Crap Prosecution Of The Week

Cops at the May 2007 Bristol Critical Mass nicked a cyclist who stopped a driver from driving away after knocking a cyclist off his bike - rather than arrest the road rage driver. This week the case was thrown out of court by the judge who accepted that the police evidence was at best 'severely flawed' and at worst, fabricated.

and the Mediterranean is the most plastic-polluted sea by density on the planet.

Whether serious attempts to do anything about our constant adding to an already critical problem will really materialise before climate change or economic collapse give us a helping hand is anyone's guess (you can guess what we'd guess) - and so much damage has already been done. With respected journal 'Science' projecting that Earth's stocks of fish and seafood will collapse by 2048 if trends in overfishing and pollution continue, it looks like we're all gonna be sea sick soon.

For more see [www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/oceans/pollution/trash-vortex](http://www.greenpeace.org/international/campaigns/oceans/pollution/trash-vortex)

SchNEWS sends heartfelt if belated Valentine's wishes to our old friends Carmel-Agrexco (see SchNEWS 529, 558, 571) who have a pretty poor record in trying to convict people who have taken action against them. In September 2005, a Judge ruled that Agrexco (UK) must prove that their business is lawful. The acquittal of the seven activists before they were able to present their defence meant that the court did not have to rule on the legality of Agrexco-Carmel's involvement in the supply of produce from illegal settlements in the occupied territories.

In January 2006 seven people were acquitted of Aggravated Trespass for a blockade cos Carmel - in an imitation of the Israeli State - annexed land it didn't own to build a security fence. At a demo in December 2006 police made no arrests - being unable to find any law they had broken. So far no-one's got done for actions at the HQ, although court cases are still going on.

Police resorted to desperate measures, by arresting one person who had D-locked themselves to a lorry for 'suspicion of criminal damage to a lorry'. They also threatened to nick someone for supergluing themselves to the road for causing to criminal damage to the tarmac! We kid you not. This joke was met with howls of derision and the cops realised that it just wouldn't stick.

\* See [www.brightonpalestine.org](http://www.brightonpalestine.org)

\* Email [thewallmustfall@riseup.net](mailto:thewallmustfall@riseup.net)

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## OUT OF WARDER

As we have recently reported, the Neo-Labour mission has been to introduce hundreds of new laws and criminalise an ever greater proportion of the population. And they've been locking up record numbers of people too, even faster than they can do private sector deals to build new 'super' prisons to house them (see SchNEWS 614).

Now, the prison service officially declared the entire national prison infrastructure 'full' (for some reason images come to mind of them putting up the sign in the front window like a B&B). No room at the inn for new inmates as last week the population hit 81,681 - a far cry from those now-rose tinted days of the mid-nineties, under reasonable, friendly Tory types like that nice Mr Michael Howard, when we were raging against a then record population of only 56,000!

A huge number of those now inside are there for short sentences; non-serious, non-public-threatening stuff, like non-payment of fines, protesting, or being a foreign national. The usual overflow is police station cells but with these also rammed to bursting it means that the newly incarcerated are being put into court cells. Not only are conditions at yer local magistrates or nick even worse than your average prison - often even more cramped, lacking natural light or exercise facilities, it's costing a fortune too. It costs £420 a night in a police cell and £300 in a court cell, compared to just 75 quid usually (you wonder why they don't just sentence everyone to a stay in a Travel Lodge - but then there is human rights to consider.)

Meanwhile it's been revealed that Jack 'Boot' Straw from the Orwellian Ministry of Justice is out trawling ebay looking for second hand prison ships. Rule Britannia!

## PECKING ORDERS

With a four-pack of Tesco 'Luxury Soft' bog rolls coming in at two and a half quid, it'd be cheaper to wipe your arse with a roast chicken. While celebrity chefs have been getting busy with a campaign to boycott battery-farmed chickens, last week Tescopoly responded by cutting the price of a whole bird to £1.99 - and the media obligingly spun a story about the bold sacrifice the company had made on behalf of the poor. Low income families can now benefit from a roast dinner with all the trimmings for 99p a head - although well-heeled Tesco executives, no doubt, won't be joining in, preferring to spend their millions on altogether more gourmet fare.

The Every Little Hurts gang have been trying to outdo Wal-Mart-ASDA which slashed the price of a chicken to £2 a few weeks earlier. Clearly unsatisfied at the £65 profit Tesco makes every second, there's to be another dash in the 'race to the bottom' that is supermarket competition. And of course it's bad news for for everyone else in the food chain - with farmers only making 2p on every chicken they sell and the chickens themselves being crammed into massive sheds capable of containing 40,000 birds, each having an area smaller than an A4 piece of paper in which to live their short and miserable lives.

Research by the Department for Rural Affairs found that more than a quarter of all 'broiler' birds had difficulty walking and moving around. One study at Bristol University found that the chickens, which are subject to 'intense genetic selection' (inbreeding have been growing quicker than ever before. 50 years ago chickens used to grow at 25g per day, but that has increased 300% to 100g today. And 20 billion chickens are bred in these horrendous conditions every year. Um yummy. For more on the benefits of going vegan, see SchNEWS 608.

## Sorry Is The Easist Word

This Wednesday saw a big moment in Australia when the Prime Minister did what the outgoing conservative John Howard refused to do - say 'sorry' to Aboriginals. You may be thinking 'so what?', but for years the whole 'sorry' issue became a big symbol of an Australian government refusing to admit to its genocidal history. New Labour PM, Kevin '07' Rudd, read out a set of generalised, non-committal statements in parliament, sprinkled with liberal amounts of 'sorry', broadcast live and put up on public screens around the country - with large gatherings in city centres watching and scenes of open weeping. On this occasion it was specifically to apologise for the 'Stolen Generation', Aboriginal kids who were forcibly taken into orphanages - and often abused - between around 1910 and 1970. It will no doubt prolonging Rudd's honeymoon with the liberal-centre left after two months in office.

However, while it was a powerful day for Aboriginal Australia, it was an easy - and media friendly - gesture in the long road towards reconciliation. Indigenous people and those 'stolen' called it a 'tokenistic five letter word', and it doesn't act on key points made in the 1997 'Bringing Them Home' report about the Stolen Generation, a Kevin 07 pre-election promise. The 'sorry' soundbite glosses over monetary compensation and other concrete restitutions. Admittedly this complicated process can't be solved overnight and lump sums agreed upon instantly, but even so it remains to be seen whether the whole national 'sorry' day can help shift suburban Australia towards realising that they're in fact living out 'Neighbours' in an illegal occupation.

In the build-up to the 'sorry' day, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy site, one of the longest continual protest camps in the world since 1972 (See SchNEWS 339), grew to a tent city as Aboriginal groups camped after long treks from all around the country. On Tuesday thousands marched from the Tent Embassy to Parliament House against the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 - a set of law enforcement and welfare tightening legislation aimed at Aboriginals, masquerading as a knee-jerk response to domestic abuse in remote communities. This law, commonly known as the 'intervention' - and sent the army into 70 communities - broke international human rights conventions by suspending indigenous Land Rights claims in the NT, as well as 'quarantining' (withholding) benefit payments and introducing a voucher system, plus making it easier to enter remote communities without permits.

\* For more see [perth.indymedia.org](http://perth.indymedia.org)

## FREE-BOARDER

Money money money. Why haven't we got any? Well, perhaps we've got the right idea and it's everyone one else that needs to change. That's the idea behind the Freeconomy website which allows people to sign up and trade skills and labour without any lucre in sight.

To spread the word further (and without paying for any advertising naturally), the site's founder, a guy called Saoirse, is walking from Bristol to India without using any cash, relying on the generosity of people he meets along the way.

After a tough time crossing the prosperous home counties, things have apparently improved for him since passing through ever-friendly Brighton in the last couple of days. He is due to be in Dover on Saturday before crossing the channel and heading east... To find out more about the freeconomy, read his travel blog, or contact him to meet up on his pilgrimage, see [www.justfortheloveofit.org](http://www.justfortheloveofit.org)

## SchNEWS in brief

**Gagged** - the South Wales anarchist newsletter - has issue 22 out now. Get it online, download, print and distro... [info@gaggedanarchist.tk](mailto:info@gaggedanarchist.tk) web <http://gaggedanarchist.tk> \*\* **A new occupied social centre** opened in **Hackney** this week - having fought off raids by police and landlords, it is now open - get involved! 231 Lower Clapton Road, Hackney (former Chimes nightclub) <http://therampart.wordpress.com> \*\* Last weekend 8000 protested in **Munich** against the **NATO Security Conference** - a gathering of defence ministers and presidents - which went ahead despite police attempts to ban it. Around 3700 rossers, and 110 armed soldiers protected the conference, leading to eight arrests. <http://news.infoshop.org> \*\* **Bristol No Borders** blockaded the Portishead Border & Immigration Agency this week, getting there at 3am and chaining themselves to a car to block entry. The centre is a base for the dawn raid squads which snatch and detain asylum seekers from their homes to begin the process of deportation. [www.noborders.org.uk](http://www.noborders.org.uk) \*\* **Earth First! Winter Moot 2008**, Nottingham, February 22-24th. Skill sharing, planning for action on climate change, GM crop trials, mega-dams in Iceland and more. Open to those experienced in ecological direct action, and those who want to get involved. £15 including accom. and food, at Sumac Centre, Gladstone Street Nottingham, Tel 01508 531636 web <http://earthfirst.org.uk>

## FUR FLYING

Fur is flying as campaign against fashion house Escada hots up, with over 100 actions since October 2007 by the Global Network Against the Fur Industry and the ALF. Earlier this month there were three days of action across Europe and the US, and the campaign is having such success that Escada are threatening to sue it for using its name.

The campaign kicked off big-time at the head office in Munich, which was severely trashed one night with butyric acid sprayed inside, paint splashed, windows smashed and clothing and material destroyed. There has also been a series of sabotages, paintbombs, glued locks, graffiti and more at Escada shops and its subsidiary firms BiBA, Apriori, Cavita and Laurèl in France, Spain and Germany. [www.escada-campaign.org](http://www.escada-campaign.org)

## ...and finally...

There are 25 million army veterans in the US (and a whole lot more to come back from Iraq and Afghanistan...eventually) and their experience of life in the US military does not on the whole seem a happy one. Whether it's a failure to come to terms with no longer being able to kill people indiscriminately to a hard rock soundtrack or, more likely, post traumatic stress from being subjected to the full horrors of war as a naive teen, the suicide rate among the vets is now twice that of the non-military population.

Officials may not be focussing on pro-active solutions like not going to war in the first place, but at least some help could be on the way. Three years ago the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) was given the go-ahead to trial giving MDMA to ex-soldiers - a trial which has gone pretty well (unsurprisingly, some pill-popping party-goers may claim).

They are now ready to submit their findings to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with the hope that they will shortly approve it for medical use. Maybe one day soon, marines will be swapping guns for gurns...

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - spending £3 at Hallmark won't save your relationship... Honest!

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