

POST APOCALYPSE

POSTAL WORKERS STRIKE AS YET ANOTHER PUBLIC SERVICE IS NEO-LABOURISED

Selfish postal workers are threatening to ruin Christmas as thousands of aunty knitted jumpers get caught up in a mail back-log thanks to a series of commie strikes.

Just think of your local bus service or overpriced, unreliable trains if you want to see what prospects are in store if private companies take over the Royal Mail. Yet the government are at it again, and want to break the union, cut workers pay and conditions and parcel up the service to the highest bidder, heralding a privatised, fragmented service.

One postie told SchNEWS why he is supporting the strike: "Royal Mail recently announced that mail traffic was due to fall by 10% a year

and to counter this they were going to engage in a period of 'modernisation'. The reality is that they're going to lay off 30% of the workforce, freeze pay indefinitely and engage in a period of Executive Action which would see a postie's workload increase between 30-40%. All of this bypassed a previously negotiated agreement with the Communications Workers Union.

"Not a single one of us wants to go on strike and lose money but neither do we want to be exploited for poor wages while the guys at the top continue to earn massive bonuses for what, they keep telling us, is a failing company. A company in so much trouble that they managed to make profits last year of ONLY £321 million.

A FAR RIGHT PALAVA

POOR LEED-ERSHIP

Last Saturday (31st) the racist English Defence League (EDL) hit Leeds, after a distinct lack of success last month during planned demos in Swansea and Newport (See SchNEWS 696). Around 500 dragged themselves out of pubs for the afternoon to assemble their football firm-styled crowd, and were again significantly outnumbered by up to 800 anti-fascists in a counter-demo organised by Unite Against Fascism (UAF).

Reports suggest that both groups were kept well apart – and it wasn't just the police with horses doing the crowd control, as apparently the UAF stewards kept a tight rein on the anti-fascist demo. It was reported that as one of the few groups who did break out to attempt to meet the EDL face-to-face were being told not to by the UAF over the sound system. Apparently one group of 20 did make it as far as the EDL demo, but of course they needed more of the numbers to be effective. Again, all protesters are calling for continued mobilisations against the far-right, but autonomous from the UAF.

FRIENDLY FIRE

Also last Saturday, an array of demonstrations and counter-demos were due to assemble in central London for something akin to a three-sided football match around the planned rally at Downing St by the Muslim fundamentalist group Islam4UK, who are calling for strict sharia law in Britain. Directly opposing them was to be the Islamophobic assemblage of EDL, Combat 18 and other assorted fascists. And countering them - and also not too keen on the Islamic fundamentalist nutters - was to be an anti-fascist mobilisation. Added to the mix was the British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD), a

liberal group opposing Islam4UK, but probably not big fans of the racist fascists either.

In fact the Islam4UK demo at the centre of it all was called off because of threats of violence from the far right; the BMSD and supporters still took to the streets for a rally. On the anti-fascist side there was no UAF mobilised demo on the scale of the EDL counter-demos - they were probably all up in Leeds. That left the far-right...

There were apparently around 300 from the far right out on the streets looking for a barney, and when one wasn't coming from their political enemies they managed to have one with themselves: it seems that the 200-odd EDL/Casuals United group and the 60-odd collection of proper fascists coming from the ranks of the NF, Combat 18, RVF and Blood & Honour all had one thing in common – hate – but they didn't quite hate the same things.

It started when EDL lads milling outside a pub started chanting anti-German songs in their English nationalist football-fan idiom. This evidently wound up those with Neo-Nazi leanings - who look at Germany with some admiration - and a group of fifteen C18 boneheads approached the EDL and started calling them 'EDL c*nts' and 'Jew lovers'. They were outnumbered by EDL, who started throwing pint glasses, fire extinguishers and other objects at them. A chase ensued, which headed across Trafalgar Square, with C18 getting a battering and one smashed across the head with a fire extinguisher and left unconscious in a pool of blood by his comrades, who promptly left him to be sorted out by police.

You might think the left are fragmented and divided, but at least we don't wage violent street battles against one another, as our common enemies look on and laugh.

Come on Jess, we're going down the picket line. They're having a fucking laugh if they think we're gonna stand for this.



"Of course really Royal Mail is worried about the massive self-inflicted pension deficit, not to mention their desperation to sell off the loss making deliveries sector to the highest bidder. So, for modernisation read privatisation. Try and send a birthday card to your relatives in Inverness for 39p after all this happens."

While 3,500 post offices have closed across the country, the wages of Royal Mail boss, Adam Crozier, have shot up from a just-scraping-by £114,000 a year when he started in 2003 to over a million quid today. Meanwhile he has been busy telling the union to shut up and is employing 30,000 scabs to break the union resolve.

The CWU are going to the High Court to apply for an injunction against RM taking on workers to cover strikers, an employment practice which is illegal. RM claims the temps are there to clear backlogs in the run up to the festive mayhem. In Slough, Manpower has even set up a recruitment office to get scab posties - more short-term insecure contracted posts and money to middleman recruiters.

Continued overleaf...

LIGHTS OUT

In June police raided Brighton film-maker and SchMOVIES stalwart Paul Light's house, taking all his digital media, film-making equipment, computers and other personal belongings (See SchNEWS 680). However, there may be light at the end of the tunnel for Paul after it was announced this week that charges against him were to be dropped and his stuff returned. Almost.

Police reckoned he had filmed the EDO de-commissioners action in January when a group broke into the Brighton arms equipment factory and did around £250,000 worth of damage in an accountable action (See SchNEWS 663). Paul wasn't there, and there was no evidence on him. But that didn't stop the police putting him on the same charge as the de-commissioners – conspiracy to commit criminal damage - and raiding his house in what amounted to a fishing expedition looking for footage of other demonstrations.

While the police are due to arrive in a convoy of vans next Monday to return all of Paul's stuff, they are telling him he won't be getting his computer back, because it is due to be an exhibit in another EDO-related trial next March and, wait for it, they are also now saying it contains images and material relating to Al-Qaeda! Paul has been left to imagine what on earth they might be talking about.

This latest pathetic attempt to hang something-anything onto Paul - as they manufacture reasons to hang onto his gear in search of video evidence - turns what was already a complete farce into a rollicking nonsense.

Nine-lives-Mandelson says not enough capital will be raised in the current climate if the Royal Mail is put on the market, so privatisation has been deferred. But when it's pared down after 'modernising', it'll be a different story.

Whatever happens over the next couple of days, the post office faces considerable squeezes now and in the near future. This means more ordinary folks will lose their jobs and the likely just-as-expensive-to-run RM will offer a service which is less affordable and equitable (especially for those in the sticks).

The talks with Royal Mail continue behind closed doors at the TUC, with all sides posturing and brandishing their plans of attack. David Barber of the CWU says that the last three days have been productive, but strikes will go ahead, on November 6th and 9th. Well over a hundred and twenty thousand are set to strike unless the proposal they have tabled is accepted. At least we won't have to wear those f***ing jumpers.

FUC-TOFF

Monitoring hunts can be dangerous – not so much avoiding all the horses charging around – but from direct violence dished out by those 'otherwise law abiding' toffs out to hunt foxes regardless of the ban.

There have been numerous cases of attacks on sabs, with heavy intimidation tactics used often (See SchNEWS 623, 664). On October 24th two sabs were run down with a quad bike and injured by a member of the Tedworth hunt in Wiltshire.

The latest, even more chilling, incident took place last Saturday, October 31st. Regular monitors at the South Downs and Eridge hunt near Fittlehampton in East Sussex were victims of an organised attack by a team of heavies.

Monitors became suspicious when some of the huntsmen slipped away from the main group while the remainder of the hunt seemed to be trying to hem them in a car-park. Shortly afterwards, a couple of land rovers and a quad bike turned up to block the sabs in. Ten hunt supporters jumped out and launched an unprovoked assault.

One sab driver trying to regain access to his vehicle had the door slammed on his head and was then repeatedly punched in the face, causing severe facial cuts, bruising and a suspected broken nose. He was then threatened with a clasp knife and told repeatedly he would be stabbed. His female companion was knocked to the ground and attempts were made to steal her mobile phone.

They eventually managed to get into their vehicle and escaped, chased all the way. The police were informed and later that day one man was arrested, whether charges will follow is unknown.

* See www.hsa.enviroweb.org

COURT OF CARMEL-OT

Last week saw the first trial over protests against Israeli produce exporter Carmel Agrexco in three years. Two women were found guilty of obstructing police officers while one was acquitted for assault police. All were arrested at a blockade of the company's warehouse led by 15 women during the 'Bloody Valentine Week of Action' this February (See SchNEWS 666).

Carmel Agrexco, which exports flowers, fruit and vegetables grown in the illegally occupied West Bank, has been a direct action target for over five years. However, there has only been one previous trial, which collapsed after evidence of Carmel Agrexco's links to illegal settlements was disclosed. The charges were dropped and, despite a consistent campaign of warehouse invasions, de-

BORDERING ON INSANITY

With winter approaching, the situation in Calais is increasingly desperate. Since the destruction of the Pashtun 'jungle' in September (See SchNEWS 692) French police have continued destroy camps and evict squats, often hauling migrants into Coquelles detention centre before dumping them on the outskirts of Calais days later.

Without the comparative safety and community of the basic shelters built in the 'jungles', the mainly young (often very young – 10-13 years old) migrants have resorted to sleeping under bridges, which the cops then clear, destroying tents and blankets. The police have now also taken to spraying irritant chemicals over an area once it has been cleared. The Prefect of Calais (cop in charge of the operations), Pierre de Bousquet, said last week "It is not the right of the police to destroy blankets and clothes", yet that is exactly what they have been doing.

No Borders remain active in the area. Recent actions have included chaining the entrance to Coquelles detention centre before dawn raids; flyposting Calais centre with photos of police violence and harassment that can go by unseen; banner drops on motorway bridges surrounding Calais; and dying the town hall fountain red.

Benjamin, recently part of a hunger strike with eight other Iranians and two No Borders activists (See SchNEWS 694) said, "I like No Borders, they treat us with respect. The police have got worse recently, and I am scared to be returned to Greece. If I get sent to Iran I will die."

More importantly, activists have been distributing desperately needed tents and blankets. The French state has transformed such simple offers of help into political acts through their use of legislation making it illegal to help migrants.

One activist said, "When we stand together to resist a raid, work together to occupy buildings, stop deportations to 'safe' third countries like Greece or Italy, or challenge charter flights to Iraq or Afghanistan, when we take action or hold demonstrations, this is when we are strong".

Two vans of tents and blankets from Cardiff and Bristol No Borders groups are leaving for Calais today (6th). A second Bristol van is going on November 26th. (<http://bristolnoborders.wordpress.com>).

There have also been benefit gigs held around the UK which are vital to support migrant solidarity work in Calais. The next is on Friday 21st November at the Hare and Hounds, Brighton

* For more information see SchNEWS 676, www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com www.calais9.wordpress.com UK contact number 07534 008380. Calais office (from UK) 00 33 6 34 81 07 10

* Donations to 'Calais Migrant Solidarity', Unity Trust Bank, sort code 086001 account number 20233983

struction of goods and lock-ons no further cases were brought to trial until this week.

A statement by the defendants said: "This action, undeniably feminist in spirit, has resulted in the first people being brought to trial for activities against Agrexco since 2006. The systematic and entrenched sexism we know exists within the police force was clearly reflected in the misogynistic comments and treatment these women received during the action. In this gendered context, we ask ourselves why the police and CPS have decided to try this case, rather than the 30+ others preceding it."

* On November 20th there will be a demo against Carmel Agrexco in London.

* See www.bigcampaign.org

PARTY & PROTEST
For events listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

LAWLESS-CRUTTENDEN

An attempt to ban animal rights campaigners from wearing animal costumes, 'blood' splattered lab coats and face masks and carry banners with the words 'murder', 'torture', 'kills', 'abuses' or (wait for it) 'Novartis' was rejected in a ruling by Mr Justice Sweeney at the Royal Courts of Justice last Friday (30th).

The application under the Protection From Harassment Act was made on behalf of Novartis by, surprise, surprise, Timothy Lawson-Cruttenden (aka TLC) - the go-to lawyer for oppressing civil liberties. TLC had claimed a demonstration held on Saturday (31st) would incite criminal activities through "subtle" means.

TLC attempted to argue the demonstration would violate Article 8 of the Human Rights Act - the right to privacy in the home and workplace - and this should override Articles 10 and 11 - the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

In last Wednesday's (28th) hearing TLC was unable to provide any case law to support his claims and the application was refused.

The representative for defendants Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC), Dr. Max Gastone, said, "Novartis were seeking to control the atmosphere on a protest, which would have been a very draconian ruling. Even the police were wary about how what Novartis sought could have been enforced." Had Novartis won the case, the ruling would have set a dangerous precedent in curtailing freedom of speech and the right to protest.

Harriet O'Shea, a protester at Novartis in H sham, said, "They are trying to make a mockery of legal protest. Why should I not be allowed to wear a beagle costume or a blood splattered lab-coat to make my point visually?"

Saturday's demo went ahead as planned, complete with giant dissected bunnies, placards of abused monkeys and a banner with the slogan "Novartis: Animal Abuser". There were no arrests despite the subtle subliminal urgings to commit crime.

* See www.myspace.com/sussexactionforanimals

...and finally...

After their pisspoo attempts to catalogue the most hardcore 'domestic extremists' on their infamous spotter cards (See SchNEWS 697) – including such dangerous zealots as comedian/activist Mark Thomas – you'd think cops might have done a better job when it came to football hooligans. But no.

Presumably with all their top intelligence gatherers busy following banner-wavers around, the Met were forced to use Sky TV news footage as they looked to spot the key ringleaders during the big West Ham vs Millwall ruck in August.

Unfortunately they completely failed to notice that the report also contained footage of 'The Firm', a movie set in the 1980s about football-fan thuggery.

They duly released over 60 stills of their 'most wanted' fans – including some of the actors involved in the film.

Maybe the police should go one step further than the spotter cards and start handing out gongs for political agitation, and the NETCU Awards could compete with the BAFTAS... 'best supporting rioter', 'best ringleader', 'best riot choreography' – '*...and the nominees are...*'

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