

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER CROSS-CONTAMINATING...

# Weekly SchNEWS

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## AGAINST THE GRAIN

RESISTANCE STARTS AGAIN AS EU OPENS THE DOOR TO GM CROPS

This week sees GM firmly back in the spotlight. On Wednesday the EU took a huge step in pushing forward the genetic modification agenda by copping out of regulation and putting the decision on whether to grow GM or not back into the hands of national governments. The European Commission approved changes to the rules that may break the deadlock which has prevented any significant cultivation of GM crops in Europe. What does this mean for GM production in the UK and other nation-states? And where does this leave the resistance movement?

### CORN STARS

Whatever happens, activists in Catalonia, Spain are showing the way forward. On Wednesday (14th) dozens of environmental campaigners dressed in the customary white bio-hazard suits sabotaged two experimental maize trials taking place in Catalonia.

In a communiqué the crop-trashers stated "We destroyed Syngenta's open-air genetic experiment

because we understand that this kind of direct action is the best way to respond to the fait accompli policy through which the Generalitat, the State and the bio-tech multinationals have been unilaterally imposing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in our agriculture and our food."

Syngenta are the third largest seed company in the world. Trials such as this are an important stepping stone for new GM crops to be tested before gaining EC approval. However the results of such trials, and the inevitable reassurances that the crops are safe, are more likely to serve the interests of profit-hungry corporations than those of nature or human health (see SchNEWS 319, 346, 622).

The activists stated their reasons as being the dangers of cross-contamination between GM and non-GM crops, citing the extinction of varieties of traditional wheat that has occurred since the expansion of GM in Catalonia, concluding that, "We fundamentally reject both GM crops and the techno-industrial capitalist society that makes them both possible and necessary. We therefore

call for people to take the step to action to destroy their genetically modified crops and the social order perpetuated by those that promote them."

It looks as if such resistance may be more important than ever since the EC policy change. The move was considered necessary to break the twelve-year deadlock within the EU on the approval of GM farming. In a nutshell, those pro-GM states such as Spain and the Netherlands will be able to increase production, whilst those traditionally opposed - such as Germany and Austria - will be able to keep their restrictions.

However, the change has been slated as 'not worth the paper it's written on'. Although states now have increased power to ban GM within their own territories, authorisation will be easier to achieve at EU level. This effectively opens up European agriculture to more GM crops.

### SEEDY MIDDLE-AGED MEN

The EC's 'roadmap' for the legislation proves that the supposed autonomy given to individual states is actually part of a play-off. Bans on specific GM varieties may be allowed after the trial process, but only in exchange for government's 'flexibility' in allowing quick authorizations of the trials in the first place. The legislation has also left open the possibility that individual countries' bans could be overturned by expensive bio-tech lawyers. This is all good news for the powerful bio-tech transnational corporations such as Syngenta, Monsanto and Dupont. Yet despite these gains, the pro-GM lobby is still griping that the policy removes choice for farmers - just not enough freedom to grow trademarked, potentially lethal, mutant moneyspinner crops it seems.

Of course UK Plc's new management (being a bit of an unnatural mutant hybrid itself) is quite keen on a bit of profitable tinkering with DNA. Mirroring New Labour's GM zeal, one of the ConDem's first moves in government was to authorize new GM potato trials by Leeds University - putting mutatoes (see SchNEWS 583) back on the menu.

Perhaps hoping that the 'Franken-food' furore of the nineties had died down, and that those pesky eco-warriors may have hung up their scythes and shovels, the Leeds trial is the first to be authorized - with several more in the pipeline. A further potato trial is planned to take place near Norwich by the Sainsbury's Laboratory at the John Innes Centre. The Leeds trial is due to last three years, Norwich for two, beginning this year. The trials are partly funded through taxpayer money. A similar potato trial in Norfolk is estimated to have cost the taxpayer £1.7m over the last ten years through research done by pressure group GM Freeze.

These new EU developments to push through GM production are sure to cause a resurgence in the wide public opposition to - and direct action movement against - GM crops. In the past decade GM trials in this country were made politically and practically impossible after almost every one of the 54 crop trials attempted in the UK since 2000 were sabotaged or destroyed (see SchNEWS 583). See you in the fields!

\* The grid references of both trials' locations can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/gm/regulation/documents/trials-rev100524.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/gm/regulation/documents/trials-rev100524.pdf)

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

## BORING NONSENSE

### DIRECT ACTION AT ROSSPORT HOTS UP

The 'Beat The Boreholes' campaign - the latest chapter in the long-term protests to stop Shell building an offshore gas pipeline and refinery on the west coast of Ireland at Rosport (see SchNEWS 730) - got off to a dramatic start this week with several sea actions.

At 7pm on Wednesday night (14th) a group of Shell-to-Sea protesters took to the waters of Broadhaven Bay in kayaks and rafts to stop a borehole drilling platform being brought in. They were met by a flotilla of five Garda water boats, with 16 cops on board. Kayakers were capsized by police, with one protester who managed to get near the platform, Eoin Lawless, being tipped overboard. Garda jumped into the water, grabbed him and dragged him onto their boat, where he was violently manhandled with one policeman throttling him with a hand to the throat for 90 seconds. According to Lawless, the copper told him, "I have your last breath in my hands." Afterwards Lawless called for



human rights observers to be present at the site.

The following morning at 7am, more protesters were back on the water to continue to protect the bay from drilling. Again the five Garda boat with 16 on board were out, as well as 10 security boats. Again the police overturned their small boats, and three kayakers and the ribbed-inflatable boat were seized and two protesters arrested for public order offences.

The 80 planned boreholes into the estuary are to survey the ground for the intended gas pipeline, which will go inland to the proposed refinery. Protests will continue and all are urged to get to Rosport to stop the boreholes.

\* See [www.rossportsolidaritycamp.org](http://www.rossportsolidaritycamp.org), [www.shelltosea.com](http://www.shelltosea.com)

## GAZA DEFENDANTS APPEAL

Following last year's violent protests in London against the attacks on Gaza (see SchNEWS 661-662) the first ten appeals against the harsh sentences dished out were heard on Tuesday (13th). Around 100 people were originally arrested, charged with offences as minor as throwing a plastic bottle. Some were sent down for up to 2 ½ years.

The majority of those in the appeal court on Tuesday were aged 17-21 (and mostly Muslim) and all had received custodial sentences, one of which the appeal judge termed as 'manifestly excessive' (see SchNEWS 710). The judge also criticised the way the cases had been handled by the CPS as they had been randomly brought to court in a way that didn't allow for proper comparison. He also stated that as most of the defendants had pleaded guilty on the day they were arrested, their cases should have processed much quicker, especially because of the young age of most of the appellants and the negative effect on their education.

During the appeal the defence barristers stupidly failed to mention any of the provocative or violent action taken by the police during the Gaza march, and relied on pointing out that the Muslim defendants' sentences were unjust as their actions were directed at the police rather than the public, therefore a less severe crime - something the appeal judge didn't take to too kindly.

Despite the failings of the defence counsel, six of the younger ones appealing got a reduction in their sentences and two were released on the day, one of whom had already served 12 months in prison - a punishment which the appeal judge swapped for a one night curfew. Three of the older defendants were not granted any reductions.

Judge Dennis who handed out the sentences in the first place had taken the 2001 riots in Bradford (see SchNEWS 313) as a precedent from which to derive the severity of the punishment given. Luckily the judge on Tuesday recognised the huge difference between a violent uprising of the public due to social injustice and a march that descended into brutal conflict at the hands of the police - changing the starting point of sentences to 27 months rather than 36.

Outside the court buildings a demo of 50-60 supporters had gathered and the public gallery inside was full of friends and relatives, causing the hearing to be moved to a bigger room so everyone could fit. There were many representative from the Stop the War Coalition, although one of those in the public gallery noted the marked absence of any of the leaders of the movement, despite their repeated emphasis that there needs to be more active support of the defenders.

Controversially, on Monday (12th) the Met awarded £25,000 to twin brothers who were at the march last January and also suffered police violence, both having been batoned over the head while demonstrating. These two (white, non-Muslim) men made a complaint to the police which was quickly dismissed, and had since pursued the matter in the civil courts.

Many more appeal hearings against the sentences given out to others are lined up although dates have not been confirmed.

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

### SCHNEWS BENEFIT GIG

Help pay the rent for the free weekly direct action newsheet you're holding in yer hand. Live music with **Primeval Soup** - ska/punk, **Spanner** - Bristolian anarcho punk/ska, **Los Albertos** - ska/dub/reggae. Friday 16th July at The Gladstone Pub, Lewes Rd, Brighton. £5.

## PARTY & PROTEST

For events listings updated weekly see [www.schnews.org.uk/pap](http://www.schnews.org.uk/pap)

## ON THE RIGHT TRACKS

The eighteen activists who brought Bristol coal trains grinding to a halt in April (see SchNEWS 720) were in court last Friday (9th). Five walked out of the Merthyr Crown Court free with all charges dropped. But the other 13 pleaded guilty to Section 36 of a 149-year-old Malicious Damages Act. The charges under Section 35, which carried a ludicrous maximum sentence of life imprisonment, were dropped. They will be sentenced on August 13th, when they will get a chance to explain exactly why they were justified in blockading a coal train.

This Sunday (18th), Bristol & Bath Rising Tide host an evening at Kebele Social Centre in Easton, recounting train blockades carried out by Bristolians over the past 30 years opposing social injustices from climate chaos to nuclear waste. Film, food and discussion from 6.30pm.

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

## THREE IMPRISONED IN IRAN

In July 2009 three US anti-war activists were visiting a village in Iraq near the Iranian border when they were seized by Iranian forces and taken to Evin Prison in Iran, where they remain. At the time Sarah, Shane, and Josh were working at a Palestinian refugee camp in Damascus. Author/activist Shon Meckfessel is currently on a thirty-city tour of Europe from July to September, to raise awareness and increase the pressure to have them released. The talk includes films and photography. For more info and to help promote or organise extra dates email [shonmeck@gmail.com](mailto:shonmeck@gmail.com), for tour dates see <http://freeourfriends.eu>

## INSIDE SchNEWS

### SPEAK ACTIVIST GETS TEN YEARS

An animal rights activist who police promised to wage 'a dirty war' against received a ten year sentence this week after his third trial for the same offence.

Mel Broughton was initially convicted for conspiracy to commit arson in February 2009 and then successfully appealed the decision (see SchNEWS 715). Unfortunately the Court of Appeal demanded a retrial. Mel is involved in animal rights group Speak, campaigning against Oxford University's animal lab. He is accused of causing £14,000 of damage by arson to Queen's College cricket pavilion back in 2006. The two and a half years he has already spent in custody will be knocked off his sentence.

In 2007 senior police officers were caught on tape saying they were going to 'wage a dirty war' against the Speak campaign and 'prosecute the shit out of them' (see SchNEWS 590).

\* For more see [www.arprisoners.org/mel-broughton](http://www.arprisoners.org/mel-broughton)

## OUTSIDE SchNEWS

Anti-war campaigner and Afghanistan veteran Joe Glenton was released on Monday (12th) after serving four months in a military prison for going AWOL (see SchNEWS 713).

After witnessing first-hand some of the horrors of war, Joe wisely decided to take no further part in Britain's imperialist crusades and did a runner in 2007 after he was refused treatment for post-traumatic stress and ordered back into combat. On his return to the UK in 2009 he turned himself in, but not before going public with vocal criticisms of the war in Afghanistan.

\* See [www.counterfire.org/index.php/news/73-joe-glenton/](http://www.counterfire.org/index.php/news/73-joe-glenton/)

## NO OIL PAINTING

Culture Beyond Oil campaigners poured molasses over an Easter Island statue in the British Museum to protest against its sponsorship deal with BP. The group said in a statement that they chose the object because it "represents the way in which civilisations once considered invincible can collapse in a short period of time". Three members of the group wore death masks as they seemingly sleepwalked to the statue last Tuesday (13th) and drenched it with the non-toxic black slick out of decanters tarnished with BP's logo.

Last month saw a similar slick action take place in the Tate Britain whose summertime soiree got disrupted with oil and feathers. Not forgetting the Tate Modern getting gatecrashed in May by dozens of dead fish and oil-soaked birds hanging from huge black balloons.

\* See <http://just-do-it.org.uk/oil-spill-at-the-british-museum>

## FIGHT OR FLIGHT

Activists in Athens delayed an El Al flight to Israel this Wednesday (14th). Thirty demonstrators from the Greek Leftist organisation, PAME, swooped in to block five check-in counters, in protest against Israel's genocidal policies. Being an international airport there was a sizeable police presence but they decided not to muscle in. Flight 542 to Tel Aviv left the runaway two hours late as a result. "This was an action taken in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their effort to establish a Palestinian state," said union spokesman Giorgos Pontikos.

The incident coincided with a Libyan ship trying to break Israel's monopoly over the coastal waters of Gaza. They were eventually turned back after a face-off with Israeli navy vessels - avoiding a repeat of June's murderous attack on the Freedom flotilla (see SchNEWS 725). They subsequently docked in Egypt to unload their 2000 tons of aid for transportation overland.

\* See [www.imemc.org/article/59127](http://www.imemc.org/article/59127)

## ...and finally...

Are you disillusioned with the sell-out Liberals? Do you find the Tories a bit nasty, Labour a bit useless and think the Greens are sandal wearing losers? Do you think party politics is a sham and a circus? Are you a bored housewife with voyeuristic tendencies? Then your time has come.

Britain's top selling women's weekly *Take a Break* has launched its own political party, 'Voices for Women'. Eight lucky ladies will be selected to face a readership vote; the three winning candidates getting their big break and the chance to stand in real elections with their magazine mentors footing the bill. Their agenda includes to tackle why there are "fewer women MPs, fewer women in cabinet, a budget which penalises women much more than men, a sense that women are being ignored and sidelined". Fair enough - and they will also be sure to heed *TaB* editor John Dale's previous advice to politicians courting his readership - "Cuddle a fluffy dog, look after your family, be kind to others".

And it's not *Take a Break's* first attempt to break through the glass ceiling of male-dominated politics. The suspiciously masculine-sounding John Dale is listed as the leader of two other political parties, Mums' Army and Mums4justice, in addition to Voices for Women. Which all leaves SchNEWS wondering, is Mr Dale manipulating women for his own devious ends or is he just a big mummy's boy?

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, the re-animated corpse of GM foods is stalking the land. Honest.

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