

THE VODAFONE-Y WAR

AS ANTI-CUTS PROTESTS DIAL IN FOR MASSIVE TAX EVASION

In the past week as many as 21 Vodafone stores have been hit with direct action. The phone giant have become a widespread target for the national anti-cuts campaign following their multi-billion government-sanctioned tax-dodging shenanigans (see SchNEWS 745, 739)

It kicked off all over the country, with 'mobile' hit squads in Glasgow, Edinburgh, York, Manchester, Liverpool, Leicester, Birmingham, Oxford, London, Brighton, Hastings, Worthing, Portsmouth, Weymouth and Bristol - with two or more branches being shut in most cities.

Many stores were already braced for action after the public announcements of the planned demos, and as soon as protesters turned up at one branch, others in the city started to shut down in nervous solidarity. Pickets and blockades in some cities were

made up of splinter groups from larger anti-cuts marches that were going on at the same time.

While the police haven't taken kindly to the campaign, with arrests seen in Birmingham, Brighton and Oxford among others, there has been strong support from the man and woman on the street. Squirring out of an alleged £6 billion tax bill seems to have stuck in the craw of a cut-shocked public and there have been widespread displays of solidarity with the campaigners. One Brightonian passerby even remarked, 'shame we're not French'...

More action is planned for this weekend, including more Vodafone demos and city-wide marches against the cuts.

* For more and details of an upcoming action near you see www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2010/11/467227.html

STUDENTS DO IT DUB-STYLE

A 40,000 strong student protest against education cuts and increases in student fees ended in brutal clashes with the Gardai after an attempt to occupy the Department of Finance in Dublin on Wednesday (3rd). The protest was the largest student mobilisation in a generation as over 200 busloads descended on

the capital from all over Ireland.

In what had been a largely peaceful march, with placards waving such messages as 'Pay my fees or pay my dole', things heated up when a 1000-strong breakaway group got closer to the Dail - the Irish parliament - chucking eggs and bottles. At around 2.30pm, around 50 students pushed past the Gardai into the Department of Finance building and staged a sit-in.

Both the students in the building and the several hundred outside were then subjected to the Gardai in full-on riot mode. Baton-happy cops began attacking protesters, some of whom were trampled and kicked by police horses and dragged by their hair.

Despite even the likes of the *Belfast Telegraph* taking a sympathetic line to the day's events, the two-faced Union of Students in Ireland (USI) distanced itself from the occupiers and appeared to be siding with police. In a statement the Union claimed to be "saddened by the actions of a small minority", who resorted to "anti-social behaviour". All this came after the president of the USI had addressed the march saying "the sleeping giant that is the student movement has been awoken."

He didn't know how right he was.

* See www.indymedia.ie

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MINE CAME WITH 5 BILLION FREE TEXTS AND AN APP TO ACCESS MY SWISS BANK ACCOUNT...

GRAP PLUG OF THE WEEK

It's the final part of the fantastic trilogy of SchNEWS benefit gigs this Sunday and, unlike massive letdowns like Return of the Jedi, Alien 3 and erm Die Hard with a Vengeance, we promise it won't be soulless derivative dross. So get yerself down to Hectors House, 52-54 Grand Parade, Brighton for an evening of ewok-free live music and catch Brighton's finest cheeky-chappy legends The Don Bradmans, plus The Meow Meows and Crispian Baker. From 8pm. £5.

NEED SCUMBODY TO LOVE

The Tories are in power, there's a recession in full swing and at last it's kicking off with cops coming up against free parties in central London. The police operation against last weekend's Scumoween Monster Squat Party Ball made sure it hit the headlines.

According to the likes of the *Daily Mail*, the evening basically consisted of dishevelled halfwits high on the sorts of drugs which normal folk have never even heard of, battling riot police through the night.

The bash, part of a running series put on by Scumtek, was held in an empty sorting (sorted?) office on New Oxford St in High Holborn.

According to one munter "The news reports totally underplay it if anything. It was essentially a riot outside and the biggest rave of the year inside, lawless all night and fairly chaotic for an hour or so."

At around 11.30pm cops flooded into the area, including elements of the TSG. They succeeded in closing the main entrance, but enterprising revellers broke through at the rear and cops were forced to stand by and watch events unfold.

According to one comment on copper's blog <http://inspectorgadget.wordpress.com> (by someone logged-on as Metcountymounty), "Even with force mobilisation we would have had a problem clearing it, it would have been brilliant but messy, and no good news would come out of it. Back to the days of mass raves now, they've tried and won, and we're now screwed."

We leave the last word to one Dr Manturtle "...defo, you know, sod the cuts, as long as no-one has cut my dancing powder with anything..."

* For more on this kinda stuff www.squatjuice.com

PARTY & PROTEST

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

COAL-ITION POLITICS

Happendon Woods are holding their Autumn Gathering 5th–10th November with info- and skill-sharing, action workshops and opportunities to get involved in the campaign and camp. The Happendon Wood Action Camp (THWAC) was occupied on September 12th to resist the destruction of the Douglas Valley by Scottish Coal and SRG Estates (see SchNEWS 739).

The camp are saying “The eviction at Mainshill was not an end but just a beginning. We’re back to finish what we started. If Scottish Coal want to obliterate what’s left of the Scottish countryside, we will obliterate them. We’re calling for affinity groups to come to the site with energy and ideas for action to destroy Scottish Coal’s plans.”

Last week (28th) an anonymous overnight action in solidarity with THWAC caused extensive damage to borehole drilling machinery at the nearby planned Glentaggart East open cast mine.

Meanwhile, as part of what they’re calling their ‘forward strategy’, Scottish Coal have begun the process of closing the circle of open cast mines around the communities of the Douglas Valley by announcing three new open cast applications.

Get there: The camp is near junction 12 of the M74, between Carlisle and Glasgow. The nearest train stations are Lanark and Hamilton and there are frequent direct buses to near the site - call if you need a lift from station. Site mob 07806 926040 contact@coalactionscotland.org.uk http://coalactionscotland.org.uk/?page_id=1974

Not to be outdone and still holding out strong, campers at the **Huntington Lane** anti-open cast site (see SchNEWS 744) are urging all to join them for a weekend of action on November 12th–15th.

One camper told SchNEWS “There’s still thousands of acres of beautiful deciduous woodland around the site. We’re busy building defences and as UK Coal have set up next door it’s what you might call a target rich environment”. There’ll be free vegan food, fireside music and dogs are welcome.

Get there: The entry point is on New Works Lane, New Works, Telford, Shropshire. Nearest train station is Wellington (Telford West). Site mob 07503 583419 defendhuntingtonlane@hush.com www.defendhuntingtonlane.wordpress.com

Meanwhile at Titnore Woods (see SchNEWS 714) controversy has reared its ugly head with landowner Clem Somerset, no doubt frustrated at the utter collapse of his plans to tarmac the woods, threatening to personally chop down the trees if the victorious campers don’t leave forthwith. Does the axe-man cometh? There’s an emergency meeting to discuss the response at the camp starting at 1pm, this Sunday 7th November. Site mob 07804 245324 info@protectourwoodland.co.uk www.protectourwoodland.co.uk

ABOVE THEIR STATION

No Borders activists marched on St Pancras station on Saturday (30th), taking their message of “Life’s Too Short to Be Controlled” up to and through one of the UK’s internal borders.

In an action demanding an end to both borders and surveillance society, the march began at Piccadilly Circus, home to Westminster Council’s underground CCTV control cave. Around 60 people set off early in the afternoon with banners and a sound system blaring out revolutionary tunes.

The lively protest made it to St Pancras at around 5pm before entering the station and marching up to the passport control, where a handful of feisty activists hopped the barrier and made a break for it. After being collared by security, one man was arrested.

* See www.london.noborders.org.uk

G4S DEPORTATION DEATH

Migrant rights activists will be marching on the Home Office next Friday (12th) in protest against the killing of refugee Jimmy Mubenga at the hands of deportation heavies G4S.

On October 12th, Jimmy was to be deported to his native Angola, a country he had fled fourteen years earlier after facing persecution for his political activism. Three G4S security guards escorted Jimmy onto a British Airways flight where, after talking to his wife for the last time, he became agitated and according to eyewitness accounts began screaming and shouting “They are going to kill me”.

The G4S thugs handcuffed him and pinned him down in his chair. Stunned passengers listening to his cries of pain were reassured by his ‘escorts’ that “He’ll be alright once we get him in the air – he just doesn’t want to go”. One passenger estimated they restrained him in that position for 45 minutes. For the last ten minutes he was repeatedly heard to say he couldn’t breathe.

When Jimmy lost consciousness, paramedics were called and he was taken to hospital where he was pronounced dead. He left behind a wife and five children.

In 1996 Jimmy fled the oil-fuelled cycle of conflict, repression and abuse that has blighted Angola for decades. After making a life for himself in Ilford, his world began to fall apart in 2006 after he became involved in a bar brawl. For this one mistake, a first offence, he was sentenced to two years for ABH.

After serving his sentence he was sucked into the blackhole of indefinite incarceration in an immigration detention centre. His desperate attempts to be reunited with his family – who are legal UK residents – were frustrated, with at least seven applications to be released on bail rejected. After spending 14 months in detention, he was finally released on bail, but was to spend two further stints in detention centres over the next two years – the last of his life.

The three G4S security guards involved were arrested but released on bail til December and have not yet been charged with any offence. G4S has a long history of abuse and violence while carrying out the UK Border Agency’s dirty work, having re-branded from Group 4 in an attempt to escape their negative public image (see also SchNEWS 419).

In addition to dragging migrants back to countries torn apart by war, conflict or repression, they have also been running four of the UK’s eleven immigration detention centres and most of the UK’s short-term holding facilities at ports, airports and immigration reporting centres. While raking in the millions through these lucrative contracts, G4S have time and again been involved in scandals over abuse of migrants (see medicaljustice.org.uk and corporatetwatch.org.uk for reports).

G4S have since lost the contract to remove deportees and are to be replaced by Reliance Security Task Management Limited, a firm currently to be found lurking in police stations and prison systems around the country.

With Jimmy’s death bringing the brutal treatment of migrants in the UK immigration centre to the country’s attention, migrant rights groups alongside many migrants themselves have been calling for not just for accountability over his death, but also an examination of the dehumanising system responsible.

The march will assemble at the Angolan Embassy, 22 Dorset Street London, on Friday 12th at 10.30am before heading to the home office.

* See www.corporatetwatch.org.uk, www.ncade.org.uk

3-PRONGED ATTACK?

Around 200 peace activists blockaded HMNP Devonport in Plymouth on Monday (1st), in protest against the nuclear Trident submarine stationed at the base. Coming from all over the UK and joined by a Swiss affinity group, the protesters managed to close four of the main access gates for the morning.

The first autonomous group arrived at about 5.30am and set up a blockade across the Camelshead gate complete with a customised protest car parked across the road. Other groups set up at different gates during the morning, locking on and lying across the street to stop traffic coming in and out of the base.

Police had most of the gates cleared by midday, making a total of 14 arrests for obstruction of a highway, failure to comply and aggravated trespass. All were bailed and are due in court over the next couple of months.

Despite a concerted effort by the local rag to turn public opinion against the anti-nuclear campaign, locals on the day reacted positively. As well as giving support to the campaigners, emails and letters were sent to Trident Ploughshares showing there are people in Plymouth who don’t want nuclear missiles in their area.

Solidarity actions popped up in other locations during the day with one group sailing down the River Tamer to Drake’s Island just south of Plymouth and occupying the island with a banner, while there were vigils in London and Wrexham. * See www.tridentploughshares.org

...and finally...

So Wikileaks published a new shed-load of documents evidencing the extent of systematic torture perpetrated in Iraq, and the official policy of tolerating it (see SchNEWS 728). A damning indictment that even the mainstream media couldn’t quite afford to ignore. Here at last is cast-iron proof of the horrors committed in ‘our’ name (i.e. the masses who consume and pay for mass media). The fourth estate rising up and holding the elites to account? Outrage, calls for heads to roll, a vote of no confidence in the powers-that-be and the launch of national campaigns demanding complete reform?

Er, no. With a sprinkling of exceptions, the loyal lackeys working for Murdoch and other assorted media moguls and corporate paymasters zeroed in instead on the public frontman of Wikileaks, Justin Assange. They immediately ‘honed in’ on the most newsworthy angle of the whole story: analysing the attire and personal appearance of Assange.

Cue a rash of articles condoning the release of the inconvenient truth as ‘morally irresponsible’, mixed with smear-tastic attempts to infer Assange’s appearance meant the whole thing was somehow shadowy, creepy or slightly sinister. I mean, compared to pointy winklepickers, what’s a bit of torture?

This has all conveniently acted as fodder for a PR damage limitation exercise by the military, attempting to steer the masses into a collective shrug of a shoulder rather than a violent retch of outright disgust.

Yet more proof, as if we needed it, of how the elites control the masses, setting the dominant discourses and frames of acceptable political thought. Luckily for us, an award-worthy group of disaffected journo and unabashed Chomsky fans are out there everyday trawling through all this mass propaganda and documenting the most obvious hypocrisies and mass distortions - in this story and many others. It saves us from having to read any of it. See www.medialens.org

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