



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER GLOBE TROTTIN'

Le SchNEWS

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UNITED COLOURS OF GLOBAL ACTION

There's a woman from the Peruvian guerrilla group Tupac Amaru chatting to a Russian environmentalist. Nearby, activists from the Brazilian land squatters movement are doing some funky moves on the dance floor with a guy from the Filipino seafarers' union. Then some Brits brashly challenge a bunch of Maori indigenous people activists to a drinking contest. To where on earth have all these people come?

This is Geneva; city of Rousseau, banking, and the U. N. But alongside the city's international stature as the 'capital of capital', there exists the lesser-known reality of a place with more squatted social centres than probably any other European city. And now many of these have become venues for the first People's Global Action conference, for which grassroots activists from over half the nations of the world are trickling together; a confluence of radical currents taking place where Geneva nestles between the mountains.

Attending the gathering is like a political shot in the arm. So maybe just because half the world's radical movements are clinking beer glasses here, doesn't mean that tomorrow afternoon will see the downfall of global capitalism. But the breathtaking diversity of folks here are all awakening to each other's struggles, and sizing up their common globalised enemy with a fast sharpening sense of purpose. Beneath the flaming Spanish guitar and ethnic drumming of the evening's entertainment, it's possible to hear the tantalising sound of people's perspectives broadening.

"We were all fingers, now we're going to make a fist", enthuses Olivio, one of the organisers of the gathering. The 400 or so participants are taking forward the same process of determined international networking that was going on at the Zapatista-inspired Encuentro ('encounter') in Spain last summer, where the

idea for the People's Global Action was born. This time, the focus is clearly defined: action against the World Trade Organisation as it celebrates its 50th anniversary in May. In Geneva we are lathering up our collective forearm; the UN's institutional lackey of global capital is about to receive a global grassroots fisting.

On Wednesday in Geneva 500 people marched in carnivalesque style to the headquarters of the WTO, blocking major roads. The effervescent mixture of some of the world's most marginalised peoples came directly to the heart of the beast - the very building from whose corridors a handful of suits quietly plot the onset of world corporate domination. Activists blockaded the car exit and scaled pillars, dropping anti-free trade banners over WTO's gateway. A handful of cheeky activists sneaked into the building, eventually being chucked out after bringing up their concerns with people inside.

An inspiring few days then. Look out for actions and campaigns coming outta this one over the months to come. In the words of another of the PGA participants

"We must realise our small struggles are part of the global struggle. 1998 must be a new spring, such as that of 1848 and 1968"

Yer SchNEWS scribes felt so inspired by the experience that they're just dying to spread around some of that international energy. So we're putting together a booklet of interviews with many of the amazing people who were in Geneva, packing those diverse struggles told in their own words, into one easy-to-read volume, with plenty of subversion, and loads of pop pix n' fax.

"We are writing the constitution of a single global economy"
Renato Ruggerio, World Trade Organisation

DIARY DATES

7-8th March Zapatista Challenge Conference, Praxis Centre, Pott St., London E2 (Bethnal Green tube) 0181 682 2402 ***18-20th May demos against the 50th anniversary of the WTO playfair@asta.rwth-aachen.de ***People's Summit May 15-17th Birmingham to get your head round Globalisation 0161 224 4846 ***June 14-16th Reclaim Europe! Cardiff against Eurosummit 98, the finale of Britain's six-month UK presidency Contact 115a Jerningham Rd., New Cross Gate, London SE14 5NH www.geocities.com/rainforest/5581 ***An impressive little booklet produced by A SEED Europe called Hot Spring '98 Copies from P O Box 92066, 1090 AB Amsterdam, Netherlands, Tel. +31 20 668 2236 www.antenna.nl/aseed

Trade agreements are not exactly sexy material, but here's yer quickie SchNEWS Economics Lesson.

First there was GATT - the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, opening the doors of 'free trade' to multinationals, since renamed the World Trade Organisation. Different name, same insanity. The WTO has been a vehicle for multinationals to squeeze blood and tears from every corner of the globe. Following its 'success' NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was rushed through in 4 years and is now rampaging through Mexico and Canada.

Now we have the MAI- the Multilateral Agreement on Investment stitched up by the 29 richest nations of the world behind closed doors. (SchNEWS 141)

If you can't get your head round all this then steer well clear of the TRIPS-

Trade Related Intellectually Property rights, which give the big boys the go ahead to patent life. The 'gene rush' has already started, with American corporations already buying up blood samples of the indigenous peoples of Ecuador! And the big boys are getting bigger....the newly merged United Bank of Switzerland earns 23 times more money than the Swiss government itself!

Fair Trade? All these agreements make the assumption that a small Indian peasant farmer is on the same level playing field as a multinational company.

UNHOLY ALLIANCE

"We are marshalling the Peasantry" *The Duke of Northumberland*

The 1st Countryside Rally, held last July, kicked into action the usually complacent county fat cats. Michael Foster's Wild Mammals Bill (Hunting with Dogs) is symbolic of more than the protection of our wildlife. Important as that is, it is the first battle in the war on the elusive 1% who own between 50 -75% of the land we live on. (Because of evasive tax laws nobody knows the true figure). This time around however, in an attempt to gain the sympathy of us 'townies' the rich Landowners are hiding behind the very real grievances held by the rural population: 93% of villages have no railway, 71% no buses, 80% no doctor and 1 in 3 agricultural workers live in tied accommodation (homes that go with the job). Are we to believe, then, that the hunting fraternity has suddenly decided to stand up for the rights of the 'peasants'?

"With just over a week to go, we are aware of 1,891 coaches, and 23 chartered trains with block booking and extra carriages on a further 40 booked by local hunts." Janet George, Countryside Alliance.

The baying pack of an endangered species descends on London this coming Sunday (1st March). This, the second event to be organised by the Countryside Alliance claims to be able to attract some 150,000 pissed-off country folk "It is the purpose of the Countryside Business Group (CBG) to provide the necessary financial resources to restore the balance" Hugh Van Cutsem, Chairman.

Restore the Status Quo more like. Who are the Countryside Alliance? Well, **The British Fields Sports Society** are easy enough, their members are the scum who like to kill things, **The Countryside Movement** was set up to counter animal rights campaigns, **The Countryside Business Group** is the most interesting. In an alliance of everything British, we find the founder is the American millionaire Eric Bettelheim, the chairman is Dutch and their press officer Janet George is Australian! SchNEWS has found it almost impossible to find out who is in the CBG, but we do know that the companies who are members are using a green lion logo in their advertising (check out 'Country Life').

Yet hiding behind all of these, (you won't find their name on any publicity), is that modest little group **The Country Landowners Association**. Lord David Steel, ex Liberal, is their spokesman for a cool £90,000 a year, and one known member is the Duke of Westminster, the countryside's biggest landowner and leaseholder of much of the high value property in London. Hmm, just the sort of people that you would expect to be to concerned about farm labourers wages or the lack of a local bus service. It would seem that the main agenda remains the same, i.e. preserving the rights of a privileged few to do as they please in their own homes on their own land (which their ancestors stole from the commoners in the 18th century Enclosure Acts). The fact that the inclusion of certain issues in the C.L.A.'s agenda smack of blatant hypocrisy seems to have passed them by. For example, according to its own publicity, the C.L.A. represents 'people dismayed about plans to allow speculative building on greenbelt land'. The owner of the Sutton Estate in Newbury upon discovering that the

bypass was to cross his land, was so "dismayed", he requested permission to build 1,600 houses, an hotel and an 18-hole golf course next to the road. A letter from the House Builder's Federation, to the C.L.A. professes full support for hunting: 'The intrusion of urban activists into country sports, surely equally offends most right thinking people in the towns as well as the countryside'. He goes on to state that he wishes to counter 'the deliberately misleading impression that thousands of square miles of Britain's rightly cherished heritage is under threat from house building'. According to the C.L.A., everyone attending the march will be there to air some grievance relating to the countryside. What they fail to mention, funnily enough, is the fact that many people are being ordered to attend by their Feudal employers, under threat of losing their jobs, and in some cases their homes, as many rural workers still live in accommodation tied to their work.

Stately Roams

Welcome to the SchNEWS 'Places to visit' section. Under the 'conditional exemption' scheme owners of historic houses, and landscapes and sites of scientific interest, do not have to pay inheritance tax or capital transfer tax on them if they agree to preserve and maintain their properties and 'allow reasonable public access to them'. However, because of 'taxpayer confidentiality', the scheme has been shrouded in secrecy ever since its introduction. We, the public, are not allowed to know where these properties are, much less take advantage of any 'reasonable' access. **But**, SchNEWS' best friend Mark Thomas has sent us a list! Each week we will publish an address for you to visit on those sultry summer week-ends. First two coming up:

*Sorn Castle, Ayrshire, Scotland, KA5 6HR TEL: 01292 268 181.

Open by appointment

*Bradley House, Maiden Bradley, nr Frome Tel: Estate Office 01803 866633.

Alternative Countryside Rally

Sunday March 1st, 10.30am, at the petrol st. on A272/A24 junction, east of Cowfold*London Animal Action Embankment tube 9.30am. *Also demo outside Parliament on Wed 4th March 1pm. For more info 0171 278 3068

Demolition Derby

After Derby Council demolished the Grade 1 listed Mill Flean for a 'Filter Rd'. Locals reclaimed the city centre site at 6 in the morning last Saturday telling the busies they were setting up a party, (try that down south!) One of the plod pointed to a Section 6. "We know what you're up to, we're just here to monitor the situation and make sure you don't interfere with the public and they don't interfere with you". The site was bequeathed to the people of Derby by the Bass family as a wildlife site. There are already 20 people on site with tree houses being built and nearby residents donating food and beer from from day one. A local television company ran a vox pop which turned up 8 locals against the road for every two that wanted it so it should prove to be a lively one. Contact: Friends of the Earth 01332 727237

Masts madness

Mobile phone masts have been torn down by angry locals in Ireland in recent months. Using portable angle grinders, Leprecauns [those Irish cousins of the Newbury Pixies] took five minutes to waste a mast. Phone company, 'Orange', often work at night to avoid publicity. There is concern over the health effects of mobile phones - they are pulsed at the same frequency as the cells in your body use to communicate (the "bioband" - 0-400 Hz). Health authorities say that more research is needed. The mobile phone companies translate this as: Business as usual. Contact: Colette O'Connell +353 58 41910

SchNEWS in brief

Noel Molland of the Gandalf 3 has a new address: CK4321 HMP Channings Wood, Denbury, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 BDW***The case against 41 of the 44 innocent sabs arrested for the **Hunt Retribution Squad** action against the Hursley Hambleton Hunt back in Dec 97 has been dropped. A support campaign for the three who were charged has been set up. Contact PO Box 1119, Dorchester, Dorset***In NW Devon, thousands of mink are calling YOU to attend a peaceful demo on Sat 14th March @ 11.30am, near East Youlstone, near Bradworthy. For more info call 0370 430989.*****The Advisory Service for Squatters** really need people to answer the phones, they are desperate. Help 'em to help you, coz if you dont, next time the police or bailiffs are kicking your door in and you need help and all you get is an ansaphone, you'll know who to blame - won't you? ASS 0171 359 8814***Got any wood you don't want? Need some really cheap timber? Then the Brighton & Hove Wood Recycling Project is for you. Volunteers also needed. For more info call 01273 276000***.***Fans of Sainsbury's superstores beware: **BUDD** and the **Stop the Store Alliance** are meeting weekly to discuss the Brighton proposal's 4-day Public Inquiry which starts @ 10am on March 24th at Brighton Town Hall. To get involved or just listen in, go to the Ray Tindall Centre, Upper Gardner St @ 6.30pm on Mondays *****Revolutionary anarchism '98** will take place Sat 14 March 10am - 5.30pm at Conway Hall Red Lion Square London. The nearest tube is Holborn. More info and advance bookings from ACF 84b Whitecapel Street London E1 7QX*** **LONDON ORGANIC FOOD FORUM** are holding a meeting on 3rd March @ 7.30pm, St Anthony's School, 90 Fitzjohns Ave, Hampstead, Tubes Finchley Rd/Hampstead, Call 0181 968 1699 for more info.***

...and finally...

Orange - a necessary mixer A bid to allow RUC constables to pinch alcohol at processions such as The Orange Order Parades may have been blocked in the Lords thanks to Lord Fitt. Having lived in Belfast most of his life, he explained how Orangemen need alcohol at the end of their marches due to having to listen to, "...the most boring speeches they've heard all year". Wouldn't it be better if they forgot about marching and just got pissed instead.

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers not to spend hours at international gatherings, writing manifestos that try to capture the aspirations of diverse movements, but to stay at home content in the knowledge that there is no-one out there worth talking to, Honest!

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STOP PRESS National Front will be marching through Dover again, 12 noon Saturday 28th. For counter demo 0121 554 6947