



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER BEHIND THE BIKESHEDS

SchNEWS

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CHILD PAWNS



"Educashon, Educaysbon, Edukeyshun"

Tony Blair

The school classroom looks set to become the latest scene of popular uprising, if a recent action by pupils in Hackney, east London, is anything to go by. 500 pupils at Kingsland school recently walked out of lessons en masse, in disgust at the government's new plans to open up to business the running of the school. The parents had already voted against the proposal, the local teachers' union were up in arms; but it was the kids who, clearly undeterred by the demise of student radicalism in their university-age siblings, took action by marching into the headmaster's office and seizing control of the tannoy system. The kids at Grange Hill were never so brash.

So what turned this school into such an action zone?

Funnily enough, the government's plan for the school bears the snappy New Labour title of the Education Action Zone (EAZ). The EAZ (now a 'firmly established feature of the education landscape' beams a government spokesperson) is aimed at schools deemed not up to scratch by the schools inspectorate. Undermining the traditional, more accountable Local Educational Authority, the EAZs set up an 'action forum' to involve business, police, LEAs, school governors, religious, community and other groups. The government has been cooking this one up for a while now, without saying too much of what it was about. Last year they invited bids from those wishing to run the zones, and suddenly things started to become clear.

The government wanted to see "one zone in the first five which is led and run by a business, and several like this in the programme of 25 zones." And the bids came pouring in. Zones are to be sponsored by companies like Tate & Lyle, Shell, McDonald's, Yorkshire Water as well as Nord Anglia, Britain's self styled 'market leader' in privatised education. Its shares soared by £1.6m overnight when EAZs were first announced. Nothing for the kids to get het up about? Bids to run zones include a switch to a five term year in Croydon, a 50% increase in the school day in Birmingham, and weekend schooling in Newcastle. Then there are the teachers - for whom the action forums can apply to disregard the statutory guidelines over

their pay and conditions. Meanwhile, the government's planned new elite of Advanced Skills Teachers will be getting up to £40,000 a year. And the advertised post of director of Lambeth action forum's 'Project Steering Group' carries a salary of £50,000.

And there's more: Remember the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) that SchNEWS has been bangin' on about in relation to the NHS? We know obscure-sounding government finance schemes probably don't grab your imagination but check what the PFI will mean for schools.

The government wanted to sort out the £3.2bn backlog of repairs to Britain's school buildings, but as they obviously couldn't actually do it themselves, they offered the rebuilding contracts to private firms. These contracts last for 25 years, which is quite a long time to patch up a few classrooms - but then, that's not what the PFI is all about. Just as with PFI hospitals, the companies get ownership of the site and all the non-teaching services, forcing all staff to reapply for their jobs and allowing the

If you reckon SchNEWS is being a tad paranoid, check out what's happening in the US, where such schemes are way ahead of us. Edison, a firm which pioneers "the transformation of the American public education system into a major for-profit industry", was founded by Chris Whittle, who also started Channel One, a fantastic scheme in which schools got free use of satellite TVs and videos. The catch was that they had to force kids to watch a 12 minute ad-soaked 'programme' everyday. Pepsi, Reebok and other educationally-helpful firms signed up, and Channel One made \$33m in profits in one year. It gets better: corporations have started 'sponsoring' entire towns. Here's an extract from a letter sent to school heads by the director of 'school leadership' of Colorado Springs, which is sponsored by Coca-Cola. "We must sell 70,000 cases of product during the first three years of the contract... If 35,439 staff and students buy one Coke product every other day, we will double the required quota. Here's how we can do it: 1) Allow students to purchase and consume vended products throughout the day. 2) Locate machines where they are accessible to students all day. Location, location, location is the key. 3) A list of Coke products is enclosed...."

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For being a wheelie bin!

Residents protesting at a planned dump in Glasgow used 8 wheelie bins to block the road. After being asked to remove the bins several times by the cops but refusing (groan) the bins were thrown into the back of a van and driven away. When the locals phoned the cop shop to find out when they were getting them back they were told they were needed for the pending court case. The 8 bins were later returned with a sticker reading, Charge: Breach of the Peace.

firm to do what it wants with them. Take Pimlico School, where a certain J Straw was recently removed as chairman of the governors. A private consortium has won a rebuilding and managing contract for 25 years, which gives it £22m of public cash... oh, and a big chunk of hugely valuable land in Westminster, much of which will be flogged off to make luxury housing. The consortium also gets the right to sell computer courses, car parking, and vending machines - all in all, a nice little earner.

All this offers socially-minded corporate fat cats plenty of scope to cream off cash from the public purse. As says the Socialist Teacher's Alliance: 'Business is interested in profits. If it doesn't get them one way - directly by 'productivity' deals or cutting wages - then it will get them another way - through lucrative contracts to provide IT for example.... Can you imagine business saying "Oh No we'll pick up the loss and the LEA can take the profit?"'

Perhaps most sinister is the ability of the EAZs to alter the National Curriculum. The chair of Hackney Council's education committee assures us that this is 'not business taking over schools, it's about helping pupils prepare for the world of work - and I mean proper jobs, not casual jobs.' Of course those who drafted the McDonald's bid would hasten to agree. Witness the onset of a "vocationalist" agenda, where in the Lambeth bid, 'extended work experience and classes will continue into the holidays.'

Did Mrs McCluskey see any of this coming? No wonder Sammo turned to smack.

* Trojan Horses - Education Action Zones. The case against the privatisation of Education

50p + A5 SAE from the Socialist Teachers Alliance, 1 Shrubland Rd., Walthamstow, London, E17 7QH

* Check out an article on how the Private Finance Initiative is undermining the NHS www.labournet.org

* New Internationalist mag recently devoted a whole issue to the privatisation of education. Copies from Tower House, Lathkill St., Market Harborough, LE16 www.newint.org/

ARMS IN THE AIR

"The turnout shows that fear, violence and intimidation cannot stop the people when they want to have their voice heard".

Karina Pirelli UN election official

The East Timorese people, or what's left of them, finally got to vote on independence from Indonesia this week. In what has been described as a hard fought campaign Indonesian backed militiamen have spent the last eight months trying to kill anyone or anything that moved, burnt houses and sent hundreds fleeing to the hills for safety. On the day of voting militiamen managed to close seven polling stations for a few hours while those waiting outside were systematically beaten and killed.

For twenty four years Indonesia has illegally occupied East Timor killing at least 200,000 people, proportionally more than Pol Pot killed in Cambodia. Britain has helped repress the people of East Timor by becoming the biggest supplier of weapons to the Indonesian military (see Schnews issues 78, 125, 133, 145, 153/4, 158, 181 & 198 in fact just buy the books). In 1994 when US Congress voted to ban small arms sales to Indonesia, on grounds of genocide, a spokesperson for the dictatorship said "no problem we can always turn to Britain."

In 1997 East Timorese Nobel peace prize winner Bishop Carlos Belo appealed to Tony Blair and Robin Cook "Please do not sustain any longer conflict which without these [arms] sales could never have been pursued in the first place, nor for so long". Robin "The liar" Cook promised the Bish that Britain would 'speak up' for the East Timorese; speaking up actually involved secretly approving 64 new arms shipments to Indonesia then using 'commercial confidentiality' to justify ministers' refusals to answer MP's questions.

Before taking office Robin Cook campaigned for an 'ethical foreign policy' even writing "The current sale of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia is particularly disturbing as the purchasing regime is not only repressive but actually at war" in the New Statesmen in the late seventies. 22 years later he and the government have the legal power to revoke the licences but remain happy with the Indonesian assurances that the hawk fighters and weapons won't be used in their illegal colony!

If you fancy shaking hands with Indonesia's finest torturers, murderers and bully-boys, get down to the Defence Systems & Equipment International Arms fair. Organised by UK plc, it will be the largest arms exhibition ever held in the country - and big protests are planned.

Contact Campaign Against Arms Trade, 11 Goodwin St, Finsbury Park, London N4 3HQ. Tel 0171 281 0297

email campaigns@caat.demon.co.uk

*They're 'avin a laugh. A lengthy investigation into the alleged corruption of the former Suharto regime in Indonesia may be called off "because of the lack of proof". Proof! Under Suharto's regime millions perished, while he ran the country dry becoming one of the richest men in the world!

TRAINING DAY

15th September 12 noon.

Psssst!! Wanna get involved in your favourite weekly direct action newsheet? (ok, so we're the only one). Then why not come to our next training day? Limited places, so give us a call now and book your place for the experience of a lifetime! Are you good at getting up on a Friday? Coz we need someone to print SchNEWS.

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SchNEWS in brief

Charges have been dropped against 8 women who broke into RAF Fairford and spray painted bombs. Accused of disrupting a "lawful activity", their defence was that under International Law, the NATO bombing of Serbia was itself unlawful. "The British Government is not prepared to have NATO's illegal bombing campaign scrutinized in a public court of law" said one of the anti-war protesters ** **Job of the week!** Manchester Airport need a copy writer for a book about the development of its new second runway. To apply tel:0161 489 2700 E Mail:jeanette.murphy@manairport.co.uk-give 'em hell! ** **No Birmingham Northern Relief Road Picnic** in the Park Hednesfield Rd Nr Brownhills, Sat 11th Sept 1pm. Tel:01922 860514 ** **The Comic Relief UK Grants Travellers Initiative** will provide funding for various traveller-led projects. Find out more by sending an SAE to UK Grants Team, Comic Relief, 74 New Oxford St, London WC1A 1EF by 5th Nov. Tel:0171 436 1122 ** Last November **Lufthansa Skychef**, the worlds biggest airline catering company, sacked 270 mainly Asian Transport and General Union workers, after a lawful one day strike. Even people on sick leave or on holiday got the boot. The workers went on strike after refusing to sign new contracts which would have effectively slashed their wages. Their union have now threatened to withdraw support unless binding arbitration is accepted by the sacked employees. Just like the Liverpool dock dispute, the T&G are trying to sabotage the efforts of these strikers. Demo outside the TUC Conference, the Brighton Centre. Monday September 13th pm

RED SKY AT NIGHT, MCDONALDS ALIGHT

Rotting fruit poured onto McDonalds forecourt in Martignes; six tonnes of manure dumped in front of Big Muck's doors in Arles; other outlets smashed to bits, blocked by angry farmers armed with shopping trolleys or filled with farm animals running amok. Is this the stuff that eco-protest dreams are made of? Well, yes, but the scenes are currently reality in France, as angry farmers vent their frustration at American tit-for-tat trade sanctions after a recent ruling by the World Trade Organisation (see SchNEWS 220). The ruling gave the US the green light to impose tariffs on millions of pounds worth of EU goods. That's the amount the WTO reckon America has lost because us bloody Europeans refusal to eat Uncle Sam's delicious hormone-treated cancer-forming beef. Unfortunately for the French, some of the country's poshest foods have come under the tariff scheme.

As SchNEWS went to press, the leader of the farmers union 'Confederation Paysanne', Jose Bove, was waiting to see if he would remain behind bars after he joined an attack a month ago, with 500 others, on a MacMac's outlet under construction in the south-western town of Millau. Monsieur Bove raises sheep that supply milk for Roquefort cheese—a cheese that is on the US hitlist. "I am hostage to global commercialisation" he explained. Another farmer added "We are here to defend the right of people to feed themselves with their own food in their own way and against the determination of the United States to impose their way of eating on the whole planet."

The protests are enjoying widespread public support and are expected to spread. However, they are part of a bigger picture, farmers are also unhappy about low prices, increasing domination of big retail distributors and genetically modified crops.

Meanwhile Noel Kapferer, a professor at a Paris Business School, said the campaign against McDonalds was the first sign of a European rebellion against American imposed cultural uniformity "today's consumers are rejecting the American way of life." SchNEWS will drink a bottle of yer finest chateau 'avin it' to that.

The day we went to Banga

The second conference of People's Global Action (PGA) took place last week in Bangalore in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. The hosts were the so-called 'laughing arsonists' the 10 million strong Karnataka State Farmers' Association, renowned amongst other things for their recent torching of a Monsanto test site. About 100 people from over 25 countries as diverse as Nicaragua and Indonesia gathered for the 4 day conference (6 days if you included roundtable discussions, and 2 weeks including 'exposure trips' to some very inspiring local struggles.) Western Europe, South Asia and Latin America were most strongly represented, with Africa and Eastern Europe sadly absent.

'Kill WTO before it kills us' has become a rallying cry in India, and the Conference was called predominantly to plan for actions against the looming meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle (November 29th to December 3rd). Here the world's most thirsty free market vampires will gather to carve up more of the planet under the guise of the 'millennial trade round'. The general consensus of the group was that while there had been impressive worldwide actions both in May 1998 and on June 18th earlier this year, these were spectaculars that hadn't been followed up with a concerted bout of global networking and communication.

Although many of the meetings were fantastically chaotic and necessarily slowed down by translation into Spanish and two or more Indian languages, the final mood was of a renewed resolve to make this frighteningly important experiment work properly in the coming months and years. There will be a regular bulletin, customised to suit each region, and a more dynamic website. There was strong support for a move away from elitist e-communication, that support being especially vehement in India, where such resources are thin on the ground.

Tensions (of which there were many in amongst the abounding global solidarity) were often centred around the big differences between autonomous Western activists and those who came representing large social movements, mainly, in this case, from Latin America (even with the absence of Brazil's Movimento Sem Terra and the Zapatistas.) But, notwithstanding all these problems, the final vibe was pretty positive, with plenty of energy set aside to make November 30th a powerful global day of action. There was also growing enthusiasm for a big day out on May 1st 2000 in a 'Reclaim Mayday' style.

* If you would like to be a part of making the PGA work, check out the (soon-to-be radically face-lifted) website at www.agp.org

* Turn around the WTO Conference Sunday 26th September 11 am - 5 pm Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4LR. To register contact Chris Keene, 90 The Parkway, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 OAE Tel: 01268 682820

email chris.keene@which.net

...and finally...

The old ones are the best!

Heard the one about the big financial institution that decided to mailshot 2000 of its richest customers?. One of the computer programmers trawled through the companies database, using an imaginary customer called Richard Bastard. Unfortunately, an error resulted in all 2000 letters sent out being addressed "Dear Rich Bastard". The luckless programmer was shown the door. Poor bastard.

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all kids that if you don't get no education you'll end up working on a newsletter like wot we wrote. Honest