



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER GENES ARE UNDER ATTACK

SchNEWS

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TRIPS, D.N.A. & ORGASMS

“Right now, the US is supporting a loop-hole so large that ship-loads of genetically engineered grain could go through there.”
Sarah Newport, Friends of the Earth

Surprise, surprise! The first major international trade talks since the Seattle debacle look set to fall apart, just like the stomachs of the poor bastards eating the crap..

Representatives of 150 nations began talks in Montreal on Monday in another attempt to come to an agreement which would regulate trade in Genetically Modified foods. However, the U.S. and four other nations in the so-called Miami “Mice” Group, Canada, Australia, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay – basically the world’s biggest grain exporters – plus their lobbying mates from the Global Industry Coalition representing 2,200 biotech companies worldwide, are once again trying to put the boot into any agreement

The European ministers arrived at the talks on Wednesday, except for the French minister who thought there was more chance on him dining on British beef than this bunch of G.M. freaks coming to a consensus. One U.S. official put it more bluntly: “It would be a miracle if we succeed in hammering out an agreement.” Meanwhile, the Italian minister, contrary to popular belief did not surrender when he saw the protesters, but was in fact at home with the flu. SchNEWS202)

PIE THE GM GUY!

Proponents of biotechnology were holding a news conference to extol the virtues of genetically altered food when a pie-wielding protester found his mark. “Down with biotechnology!” the assailant shouted. “We have to eat those foods — not you!” Joyce Groote, the receiver of this well aimed flan stated “at least it was to my taste” Unlike the shite he throws at us.

In London banners bearing the slogan ‘Gene dictators - the world is watching’ were hung outside Canada House, with the area being symbolically sealed with biohazard tape by protesters in decontamination suits. Anti-GM activists around the globe also joined the demonstrations this week, with a march in Montreal and actions as far afield as South Korea and Australia.

With massive pressures from consumers European Union ministers are pushing for clear labelling on foods. They are part of the ‘like-minded’ group (many of whom

are ‘third world’ countries) representing over a hundred nations, who are arguing for the right to be informed of and refuse to import genetically modified foods, seeds and other GM products. The US reckon not only will this break ‘free trade’ rules but will cost them billions of dollars just to separate GM and non GM food. Our genetically modified hearts bleed.

And if an agreement is signed? Well, the US could once again use the strong arm tactics of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to say that the agreement was a barrier to trade. The stakes are high with the bio-technology industry worth billions, and the US complaining that it is already losing £120 million annually because of the European Unions resistance to GM foods. But force feeding us all frankenstein fodder will not go down well with the public, and will make the WTO, still shaky after the kicking it got in Seattle (see SchNEWS 240) about as popular as a socialist at a New Labour Conference

* Look out for the Trade Related International Property rights talks in Geneva, in February. TRIPS (not as fun as they sound) give the multinationals the right to patent life. They’re already selling living organisms and robbing indigenous people of their DNA. Watch out for protests in Geneva. Hooray!

* Genetic Engineering Network (GEN), PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY, Tel 0208 374 9516 www.geneticsaction.org.uk/protocol

* ‘Animal feed and genetic engineering’ available for 40p SAE to Corporate Watch, 16b Cherwell St., Oxford, OX4 1BG www.corporatewatch.org

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MIAMI MICE

“The Biosafety talks have been stalled for too long... if the Miami Group wants to remain isolated, so be it. The rest of the world cannot be their hostage forever”. Benny Haerlin, Greenpeace

At the international trade talks in Seattle an attempt was made to form a “biotech working group” within the World Trade Organisation. This would mean that trade in genetically modified organisms would fall under WTO regulations. Luckily for people who eat food, this motion was defeated. If no protocol agreement is reached in Montreal by Saturday, talks will continue in Nairobi in May – a less friendly atmosphere for U.S. based multinationals.

WOT A RELIEF!

Midland Expressway Limited (MEL), the company behind the Birmingham Northern Relief Road, are in a little financial strife thanks to a long public enquiry and the occupation of the site by protesters. After a 3 year delay the cost of the road has doubled, and now MEL is being relieved by a shortlist of eight of yer favourite banks. MEL are looking for a little spare change from the banks, somewhere in the region of £700million, to make sure the road goes ahead. As Birmingham Friends of the Earth points out “Investment into this road is the achilles heel for the Highways Agency and the Department of the Environment.”

* The **HOCKLEY** protest camp in Essex, set up to prevent 66 luxury houses being built on greenbelt land, are in court today (Friday) and expecting eviction within the next 2 weeks. Legal aid for an appeal has been mysteriously withdrawn, but a friendly local lawyer has offered his services for free. Tel 0831 717815 or check out www.angelfire.com/mt/GBH

* Clearance work has started on the **Glen of the Downs** protest site near Dublin. The nature reserve is being destroyed so a road can be widened to a dual carriageway. People needed now. www.emc23.tp/glen

REVOLTIN' STUDENTS

Students at School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London went into occupation this Tuesday in defence of over 30 tuition fee non payers who are threatened with disciplinary action. The occupiers took over the college's management offices on the 1st floor to demand that the college does not expel non payers, that they refuse to collect fees and that they lobby the Government for their abolition. SOAS management continually winge about how they're not responsible for tuition fees, and students should lobby the government. However the head of SOAS, Tim Lankester has considerable influence in government circles, since he has been an executive director to the World Bank and IMF, and was permanent secretary at the Dept for Education for a while.

Management decided to evacuate all 5 floors of the SOAS building. They even shut down the college's telephone and internet system as well for a while, so no-one on campus could use their e-mail! Management claim that this was done under Health and Safety law, but it is more likely to be a tactic to try and turn students and staff against the occupiers. However, the lecturers' union said that closing down the building amounted to a lock-out under trade union law, and contested it. Some sympathetic lecturers have even been holding lectures in the occupied building. Management agreed to reopen most of the building on Thursday morning, but the floors above and below the occupied corridor are still locked. They also agreed to meet the occupiers to negotiate, but they are still up for eviction in the High Court this Friday, and could be evicted at any time after.

* Campaign for free Education, PO Box 22615 London. N4 1WT Tel 0958 556 756 cfeg@gn.apc.org.

BLAIR WITCH-HUNT

SchNEWS readers may remember that last November 40+ students from Sussex University stopped Cherie Blair coming to a posh Uni dinner. She was supposed to talk about increasing access for women to enter higher education, but the Sussex Non-Payment Campaign saw this as complete hypocrisy when it was her husband's government that had abolished grants and brought in fees during the last two years. They occupied the dining room where the dinner was to take place and eventually the dinner was cancelled. The University weren't best pleased, and in retaliation are now victimising some of the students who were there. Seven are to be disciplined and 3 of these are to be done for breaking and entering. On top of this the Uni have also sent the cops round to people's homes. This victimisation and harassment is a political move to break the Non-Payment Campaign. These students need your support now.

* Sussex Non-Payment Campaign, Falmer House, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 8DN or susxnonpay@hotmail.com.

VIVISECTORS SHOPPED

The Shopworkers Union, UDSAW, this week announced that it was withdrawing its investments in Huntingdon Life Sciences. Huntingdon vivisect dogs, cats and monkeys among other animals and were secretly filmed by Channel 4 showing workers punching and beating Beagle puppies. Apparently the union was not aware of the involvement which came from Labour's staff pension fund. * National Demo against HLS on Sat 12th Feb. Phone 0121 632 6460 for transport and more details.

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SchNEWS in brief

Riotous Assembly is a forum for direct action campaigners in Manchester to meet each other. Their next meeting Tuesday 1st February, 7:30pm, Yard Theatre, 41, Old Birley Street, Hulme (opposite the Junction Pub) This month's short discussion is "World Trade Organisation / Seattle - What Next? www.snet.co.uk/ef/ ** On the same lines in the Capital, is the **London Underground**. Next meeting Friday 4th February at the Arsenal Tavern, Blackstock Road, London, N4 (Finsbury Park Tube). With cheap food and music from 9pm and a suggested donation of £2. And if you're in Brighton, then check out the Rebel Alliance. Next meeting Sunday February 6th at Brighton Unemployed Centre, 6 Tilbury Place 6pm (turn left past Hectors Pub up very steep Carlton Hill) ** A demonstration has been called in London to oppose the Russian war in **Chechny** on Saturday 5 February . The march starts at 12 noon at Tothill Street (behind Westminster Hall, Tubes: St James's Park) Tel 0171 207 3997 ** **Showcase for Kosova** Headmix Collective, story telling and films. Sunday 30th, 5pm-10:30pm, The Gloucester, Brighton. Free food before 7pm! + SEATTLE FILM ** There's a **The Land Is Ours** Winter Gathering at the Exodus Collective Manor Road (the A6), Nr Luton on the 18th - 20th February. Sleeping space available, bring a mat and money (£1 charge for each meal). Tel 0181 357 8504 www.oneworld.org/flio ** **Peace 2000** aims to "promote a culture of Nonviolence for the New Millennium". For a diary of events ring 01273 620125. ** On 1st Feb there will be a talk and video showing about Shamrock monkey farm, followed by a discussion of the Terrorism Bill. Contact Worthing eco-action, PO Box 4144, BN14 7NZ. ** Protesters took Pie-rect action against Dolly the Sheep's father this week. While promoting his new book, The Second Creation, Keith Campbell was planted a lovely fresh pie in the face, while being told to 'fuck his sheep'. ** Congrats to **Chumbawumba's** Alice Nutter and Keir on the birth of baby Mae.

Inside SchNEWS

Two more people have been sent down for June 18, and would all love to receive your witty scribbles: Jeff Booker, DN 7071, and Stuart Tokham, DN 7072, both at HMP Brixton, Jebb Avenue, London, SW2 5XF. Jeff got 21 months for violent disorder, while Stuart received 12 months.

***URGENT WITNESS APPEAL** - Danny Penman is a sympathetic journalist, who has covered such issues as the M11 campaign. He was viciously attacked and hospitalised by the police in Euston, November 30th. You can Call Danny on 0850 751575. *If there are any witnesses from **J18**, or **Euston** that may help someones case, call: Legal Defence Monitoring Group 0171 837 7557

SPUD-U-LIKE

Fed up with the choice of potatoes in your local greengrocers? Want to get your hands on an *International Kidney* or a *Yukon Gold*? Then why not get along to Ryton Organic Gardens on the 5th and 6th February for the 7th National Potato Days. On offer for spud lovers will be seeds and tubers from 120 varieties of potatoes. The event organised by the Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA) who are keen to increase the number of potato varieties available, will also include talks, gardening advice and cookery demonstrations. Entrance is £3, or free to HDRA members. More information: 024 7630 8211. www.hdra.org.uk

DEATH IN CUSTODY

"The Home Office has confirmed that, early on the morning of Monday 24th January, a 49 year old asylum seeker from Lithuania, committed suicide in Hammondsworth Detention centre".

Figures announced by the Commons Public Accounts Committee, reveal that 71,000 asylum seekers entered Britain last year, a 55% increase from 1998. Downing Street blames the conflict in Kosovo for the significant rise, MPs criticise the Home Office for not doing enough, whilst Barbara Roche, the immigration minister claims that the problem is under control! BUT WHAT ABOUT THE REFUGEES??? Welcome to the lovely world of refugee detention!

Yes, the Government's answer is to lock asylum seekers up in Detention Centres and prisons whilst they wait for their cases to be heard. One of these places is HMP Rochester where refugees make up almost half the prison population. A report compiled by Sir David Ramsbotham, the chief inspector of prisons, showed the appalling treatment that the asylum seekers receive. The denial of basic rights, and disregard for regulations was revealed to be commonplace. Refugees are given no opportunity to work and earn money, being forced to survive on the generous amount of £2.50 a week. Prison guidelines are issued to them only in English, despite the majority being unable to speak the language. The list goes on...no visits, no right to exercise, no choice of menu, no access to the gym or library...

So what's being done about it??? Surprise, surprise...not a great deal. Prison officials admit that Embassies are not informed of the refugees' detention. Even more worrying is the confirmation that the Immigration and Nationality Directorate has "no recognised input into the treatment of detainees". So there we have it, Great Britain, what a wonderful place to be a refugee! Hardly suprising that one took his own life, is it?

* National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, 110 Hamstead Road, Birmingham, B20 2QS. Tel 0121 554 6947.

...and finally...

"I don't like doing this" Judge Leahy told defendant Kenneth Saasta while pronouncing sentence, "because cocaine dealing carries a mandatory prison sentence. But after looking at all the evidence, I'm gonna have to let you off with community service, because you're so goddam fat you'd break the jail." The prosecuting attorney begged the judge not to impose a custodial sentence: "Saasta weighs more than 47 stone and there isn't a jail in the state that can hold him. We have to prise him through the cell doors. The night he was arrested, he demolished all the bunks in the police cells by lying down on them, and smashed three toilets simply by sitting on them. No prison uniforms will fit him, he can't stand for more than 5 minutes but chairs collapse when he sits on them, and because of this problem with constant diarrhoea, we have to hose everywhere he's been. The jail would need to buy reinforced beds, chairs and toilets and worse, he's so fat he can't even cut his own toenails or wipe himself in the bathroom." Someone has to do it for him and the sheriff's department is threatening strike action if Saasta is sent to jail." Judge Leahy also ordered that Saasta be tagged with an electronic monitoring device, but this was overruled when it was discovered that none of the devices were large enough to fit round his ankles. Stolen from Merseyfin, who nicked it themselves from San Jose Mercury News

disclaimer

SchNEWS wams all gen'ies not to grant any wishes to profit mad crazy genetic scientists. Honest!