



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER NICE AS PIE!

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NICE BUT NAUGHTY

“(Enlargement) will bring great economic benefits. These countries will bring... material resources including land and energy, and they will bring markets for our products.”

European Round-Table of Industrialists

Up to 70,000 demonstrators rallied last week on the streets of Nice before the European Union summit. At the same time as a charter of fundamental rights was being discussed counter-summit meetings were being cancelled or raided while others fought battles with police who wouldn't let them into France!

On the day of the summit a few thousand people tried to storm the centre and were met with the usual greetings of tear gas and stun grenades. A bank was burnt, a few shops were trashed and the French President Chirac said the anti-capitalist demonstrators were “contrary to democratic principles.” Yet behind the clouds of smoke, the un-elected and unaccountable faces of big business were once again pushing their agenda onto the centre stage, using the EU as a Trojan horse for more corporate global carve-ups.

Carve Up

Countries, we are told, are desperate to join the EU club. However, before any can play, their economies must be ‘harmonised’, y’know, public services slashed and privatised, etc. In fact, you could call it the European version of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SchNews 256) forced onto the ‘Third World’. As Green MEP Caroline Lucas points out “In short, governments are expected to give up control over their own economies – spelling destruction for local businesses.”

Take Slovakia. With approximately 50,000 staff, the Slovak Railway Company is the biggest employer in the country. In 1998 the Slovak government announced plans to sack nearly half the workforce, and a year later they signed a loan agreement with the European Investment Bank. With strings attached.

The strings will result in a rise in fares of 30%, a cut of two thirds in both state subsidies and in staff pay, a reduction in rail freight and a cut in railway lines. There was no public discussion about these conditions. Instead the media reported that the government and the rail company were given two weeks to accept: if they agreed to meet them, the Bank was ready to provide the loan immediately.

When a Slovakian environmental NGO sent a protest letter to the President of the Bank, he replied: “The proposed restructuring measures in this case mirror those agreed over recent years between the Bank and virtually all railway companies in the ten Central and Eastern Europe Countries which have applied for EU membership.”

So that's all right then.

Fast Track To Profits

They call it ‘qualified majority voting’, which basically means countries can't individually veto decisions. Instead the European Commission gets to make decisions without having to answer to anyone. It's called ‘fast-tracking’ and is popular with big business who are fed up with their great ideas being watered down or blocked altogether by interfering governments or nit-picking protestors. They want swift, centralised decision-making, making it easier to push their demands through an already industry-friendly European bureaucracy. And up to a point, they got their way with more trade decisions passing out of national control. National and the European Parliaments now have little control of Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (see box) and some services.

If you think this is all confusing, EU bureaucrats estimate that it will take two months to produce a consolidated text of the Nice Treaty, i.e. to come to agreement about what has been agreed! To help decipher it read:

* ‘From Seattle to Nice’ by Green MEP Caroline Lucas & Colin Hines. Large SAE to 58, The Hop Exchange 24 Southwark St. London, SE1 1TY www.greenparty.org.uk/homepage/reports/2000/meps/enlargementreport.htm.

* ‘Europe Inc’ (Pluto Press) co-authored by the Corporate Europe Observatory crew www.xs4all.nl/~ceo

* Nice Public Meeting Mon 18. Asian Cultural Community Centre, Manzil Way, Oxford

Intellectual Property Rights –ugh?

This is another one of those scams where corporations get to be in control, and this time they get to control knowledge by patenting it! Biotech companies get to own our vegetable seeds and genetic companies are in charge of the human gene. Meanwhile pharmaceutical companies are in charge of the drugs. Right now, the American Pharmaceutical Manufacturer's Association has pushed their government to threaten trade sanctions on India and Egypt for having the cheek to produce low cost drugs of patented equivalents to help HIV and Aids sufferers.

Short Change!

“One of the enduring myths about globalisation is that it is bad for the poor.”

Philippe Legrain, WTO advisor

So this week Clare Short-Fuse and her cronies in the Department for International Development (DFID) released their much anticipated white paper on globalisation. And surprise, surprise, they found that “while globalisation brings with it opportunities and risks, free trade for the poor people of the world is beneficial”.

But did anyone really expect anything different? I mean Claire Short, a woman who believes that “developing countries, governments and their people, want development and multinational companies to invest in their countries”. A woman who attacks protesters as rich kids “ who sit in the predominantly wealthy rich parts of the world” who “are morally wrong”! Conveniently she doesn't mention the millions of protesters in the Third World fighting quite literally for their lives.

A key phrase that we keep having rammed down our throats is that of “a level playing field”. But in reality the game of free trade takes place between two teams where one team has access to the best equipment (the West) while the other team turns out in hand me downs, suffering from malnutrition & kicking an old tin can (the Third World).

A level playing field: One where the West spends annually \$361bn on subsidies of environmentally destructive intensive agriculture and free trade. The mother of all free traders, the US has increased subsidies on over the past decade to the extent that each US farmer receives on average \$20,000 per year in subsidies, to compete against Third World farmer who live on less than \$1 per day.

A level playing field: Since 1980 the Third World has lost 40% of its trade in the world market as protective barriers against trade from the Third World, mainly food and textiles, are implemented by the rich Western countries to protect their own home market. For every \$1 in aid and debt relief given to the Third World the same countries lose \$14 because of trade barriers erected in the West.

According to Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva “Development is a trick played on the people of the Third World, especially rural communities, to rob them of their resources and wealth.” But then what would she know...

LIVE WILD OR DIE

“The tribal warrior cultures of the native Papuans would rather die fighting than live another minute under the brutal, destructive and genocidal Indonesian regime. I have to say I agree with them”.

Western observer in West Papua.

This week Indonesian soldiers stormed the university in the West Papuan capital of Jayapura, killing several students and arresting over 100 more. In a show of force in the mountainous, rainforested province, 26 warships are currently moored off the coast and 25,000 troops and a battalion of tanks have been mobilised within the last month. And for what? To gently remind the people of West Papua that the freedom to run their lives themselves just ain't on the cards.

On December 1st, 37 years since Indonesia invaded the ex-Dutch colony, the rebel West Papuan Freedom Movement (OPM) declared West Papua independent. The banned West Papuan flag was raised in towns and villages across the country, provoking a violent response from the Indonesian army.

West Papua is one of the few really wild places still left on earth. The stunning jungle landscape, rich in biodiversity, is home to rare wildlife like the beautiful bird of paradise and to dozens of different tribes of the Papuan indigenous people who live traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyles close to nature. Over a third of all the world's languages exist here, spoken by remote clans who shun outside contact.

Sadly, it is also home to some of the largest deposits of minerals in the world - which is why Indonesia won't let go of West Papua without a fight. Multinationals Freeport McMoran and Rio Tinto are just two big name mining companies making huge profits from West Papua with serial offenders BP and Shell also in on the action. Cash from mining concessions is being used directly by Indonesia to repress the Papuan people.

The OPM has been in existence for as long as the Indonesian occupation and resistance to the Indonesian military is ingrained in West Papuan society. “We are all OPM in our hearts,” says student leader Jatin Wakerkwa.

Rebels believe the massive Indonesian military presence and the attack on the university are intended to provoke the OPM into retaliation, providing an excuse for an assault on the independence movement and the West Papuan people. As in East Timor, Indonesia is busy recruiting an anti-rebel militia and British-made Hawk jets are being used to terrorize civilians. But unlike East Timor, there are no UN resolutions supporting West Papua. The OPM and the West Papuans are on their own. There is nowhere like West Papua on earth. People have a human right to live wild and die wild. Fight for it or lose it.

*OPM support group UK: 43 Gardner St. Brighton.
Support people arrested during the university attack, protest to Chief Daud Shomping at Jayapura police station. Showing that the world is watching could save their lives. Fax 0062 967 533763. www.eco-action.org/opm

Small Talk

“We're a country where people are moving from a time when they could not speak to a time when they can speak - but they are saying too much.” said a Moroccan government official following a violent crackdown on demonstrators marking the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. SchNEWS understands he studied at the Widdecome and Straw Academy of Free Speech - and came top of his class.

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SchNEWS in brief

Following on from last weeks SchNEWS, for more info on preventing workers deaths check out ‘Fighting to Win’, under the RPM section on www.redstar-research.org.uk ** Picket of Father Scrooge McKitterick's Service at St Peter's Church, Brighton this Sunday (17th) 10am. Father McKitterick has publicly backed the government and council campaign that money should be given to charities instead of beggars. Brighton Against Benefit Cuts 01273-540717 ** **Candles For Peace**. For a Just Peace Between Israel and Palestine. 23rd December 6:30-8:30 pm, Edith Cavell Statue, junction of St Martin's Lane and Charing Cross Rd., Trafalgar Square. ** Visit www.nuclearcrimes.org as soon as possible because it may be shut down soon as a result of Shell's intimidation of the web provider. (See SchNEWS 285 for full story) ** **BUDD** are having a festive season gathering at the Pub With No Name, 58 Southover Street, Brighton, at 8pm this Saturday (16th). ** **World Voices** is looking for people who are addressing social and ecological concerns from across the UK to profile in a new book entitled ‘Choose’. www.worldvoices.org/choose.htm or call 020 7372 7117. ** Non-GM US farmers are suing **Aventis** for crop contamination by GM crops from cross pollination and contamination of conventional supplies with GM maize ** www.freenorwich.co.uk is a new website that keeps you up to date with what's happening in **Norwich** ** **Picket the US Embassy** in protest at their response to climate change. Every Saturday 11am-1pm, Grosvenor Square, Mayfair, London. A member of Hackney Foe is currently maintaining a vigil opposite the Embassy and could do with some support. ** **Chile** has asked for Santiago to become the hosts to the World Trade Organisation's next round of talks next year.

Ethical disinvestment (1)

The campaign by the indigenous U'wa people of Colombia to prevent the Occidental oil company from drilling on their sacred tribal lands received a big boost this week when US financial outfit Fidelity Investments dumped 18 million shares in Occidental, worth over \$412 million! The disinvestment followed actions by U'wa supporters who mobilised to shut down Fidelity offices, occupy the company's investor centres, and dump blood and oil on their premises. Nice one - proving that people pressure can make big business back down! Next on the hit list is the Sanford Bernstein company - the largest institutional investor in Occidental Petroleum now that Fidelity have jumped ship. Rainforest Action Network www.ran.org

Ethical disinvestment (2)

Another nail in the coffin of Huntingdon Life Sciences - the vivisection company who have killed 171,000 animals this year. HSBC - the world's second largest bank-is pulling out its investment in Huntingdon following a successful campaign by Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty. SHAC's action has caused a sharp fall in Huntingdon's share prices with Phillips & Drew's selling an 11% share in the company and broker WestLB Panmure leaving them as well as HSBC. Who's next?

* London demo 19th Dec. Meet 11am Liverpool Street Station, Bishopsgate exit.

* Also Christmas Party at HLS's Occold lab, from 11am 22nd Dec. www.welcome.to/shac

POSITIVE SchNews (sort of)

In November residents of Steward Community Woodland, a sustainable community in Dartmoor, were refused planning permission to continue living on their own land. The planning authority said it was outside the defined settlement zone on a site classified as woodland of conservation importance and that the residents didn't need to be live there. Strangely the local Council had no problems in granting permission for a 148 housing development on a green field site nearby, or a concrete ‘eco’ office building in an English Nature owned woodland. Undaunted by the refusal, the community remain onsite and are preparing to appeal. They bought the 32 acre woodland a year ago and moved there in April. They have since erected personal dwellings and a workshop, kitchen and communal space. The community is open to visitors by arrangement and willing workers are welcome. Contact Steward Community Woodland on 01647 440233 or find out more on their web-site www.stewardwood.org - created using laptops powered from solar, pedal, and more recently hydro power!

Crap Arrest Revisited

A woman who was arrested at Brighton Reclaim the Streets in 1996 for trying to buy a sandwich (SchNEWS 61) was in Court last week for a civil case against Sussex Police . She was nicked for obstruction for asking why she had to go all the way round the block to reach her fave lunch-time café. The jury found in her favour on 2 counts of wrongful arrest and false imprisonment, but not on the third count of malicious prosecution. The judge awarded her the minimum amount of money possible, but she was also made liable for a third of the Police costs, and now faces financial ruin. Her barrister concluded that if you question the Police you are liable to be nicked for obstruction- so just do what they say, and don't answer back!

Carbon Con

Activists in Leeds have staged a protest at the offices of a company who are proving themselves to be major players in the decay of our environment. PriceWaterhouseCoopers have a keen interest in the so-called ‘Carbon Trading’ agreement, which could eventually become a part of the UN climate treaty. Carbon Trading is a devious scheme which allows major polluting countries to actually increase their carbon emission quota by taking on emissions from countries who may not have filled their quotas. Activists managed to blockade the main entrance whilst police closed the two large car parks at the rear of the offices, preventing any staff from entering or leaving the building. Leedsaction@mail.com

...and finally...

Beam me up, Scotty...

Not only do US Police have a fetish for Darth Vader riot gear, they also may soon get Star Trek type phasers. HSV Technologies of San Diego have just introduced a prototype weapon that shoots laser beams to stop people in their tracks. Known either as the “Anti-Personnel Beam Weapon” or “Non-Lethal Tetanizing Beam Weapon”, it releases two ultraviolet laser beams that can paralyze the skeletal muscles of people and animals. SchNews scientists are already busy inventing a “Beam us up out of this police cell please Scotty” machine to counter their dastardly plans.

Don't believe us? <http://www.hsvt.org>

disclaimer

SchNews warns all readers enlargement is always necessary for a successful union. Honest