



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER TRIP OF A LIFETIME

SchNEWS

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DYING FOR PROFIT

"Imagine witnessing devastating plague and sitting on a cure for fear of incurring shareholders revolt." - Ben Jackson, Action for Southern Africa

With AIDS sweeping through Africa like the plague, the world's most powerful drug companies are showing the usual corporate compassion by taking the South African government to court to stop cheap drugs being used to help people with HIV.

In 1997 former President Nelson Mandela passed a law which gave the country the right to buy huge amounts of generic drugs and sell them cheaply to help people with HIV. The law also gives South Africa the right to 'compulsorily license' HIV drugs - allowing a drug to be produced more cheaply by someone other than the patent holder, if it's in the public interest.

The response of the pharmaceutical industry, the US and EU governments was swift and deadly. The US threatened trade sanctions, and the European Commission argued the law broke World Trade Organisation rules. Meanwhile 40 pharmaceutical companies took legal action to declare the law unconstitutional.

This has meant, in the words of the South African's health minister *"pioneering legislation...has, to date, been crippled by legal challenges, cynically mounted by multinational companies, in order to preserve their narrow self-interest in exorbitant financial profit"*.

First Aid

25 million people are currently infected by the HIV virus in sub-Saharan Africa, yet only 25,000 Africans (0.1 per cent of those infected) receive the drugs which are available in the West to help prolong lives.

The big drug firms are scared that if they turn a blind eye to cheap drugs in South Africa it will set a dangerous precedent and hit their future balance sheets. Yet just 1 per cent of drug revenues comes from the entire African continent.

One of the most blatant examples of a company profiteering from AIDS is Pfizer. Pfizer manufactures fluconazole which is used to treat two common infections associated with HIV which are often fatal if left untreated. Fluconazole costs over 10 times more in South Africa than high-quality equivalents available from countries like Thailand and India. The result of Pfizer's profiteering is that many hospitals in the country have insufficient stocks of fluconazole, and many people suffer or die

because they cannot afford the private sector price for the drug.

The Treatment Action Campaign is currently preparing legal action against the company.

TRIP'ed Out

"We cannot allow global trade rules to be used to put the commercial interests of drug companies over the public health interests of millions in Southern Africa." - Ben Jackson, Action for Southern Africa.

The South African government has come under fire because they have signed up to the World Trade Organisations TRIPS - Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. This allows owners of 'intellectual property' to control the exploitation of their inventions worldwide, determining the price at which they can be sold and the royalties they receive. Brazil meanwhile - which has not yet fully implemented the WTO TRIPS agreement - has cut the cost of anti-retroviral treatments by 72 per cent since 1996 by using locally made versions in a national treatment scheme. In Sao Paulo AIDS deaths have fallen by 53 per cent since 1995.

Still, what do the drug companies care? Well, another one of those companies taking part in the legal action is GlaxoSmithKline who recently became the world's biggest drugs group. It's mission statement says how it "is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer." But that is, of course only if you've got the cash.

* The court date is scheduled for the 5th March at Pretoria High Court and could run for years. Whoever eventually loses will face costs running into tens of millions of pounds.

* Action for South Africa 020 7833 3133 www.actsa.org

* Read 'The Constant Gardens' by John LeCarré

AIDS - THE FACTS

* More than 31 million people are currently living with HIV in developing countries

* Over 90% of HIV Positive people live in developing countries

* There are 13.2 million orphans from AIDS

* Over 1,000 children die each day as a result of AIDS

* 1 in 4 adults in Zimbabwe have AIDS/HIV

* It's been predicted that unless something is done the number of people in Africa infected with HIV could reach more than 50 million - the equivalent of the population of the UK.

CRAP ARRESTS OF THE WEEK

For saying Boo! Last October, during a demonstration against the Biomedical Primate Research Centre in Holland an activist was arrested for saying boo to a cop.

For dragging a flag! Veteran peace campaigner Lindis Percy has been charged with causing harassment, alarm or distress after she dragged a US flag in front of cars driven by Americans at the US Spy Base Menwith Hill. www.gn.apc.org/cndyorks/caab/

Crude Operators

If you tried to think of a company that is working to improve our environment, we doubt that Shell would spring to mind. So SchNEWS was shocked to hear that last week they were awarded 'The World Environment Center's Seventeenth Annual Gold Medal for International Corporate Environmental Achievement'. Come again! The judges for the competition choose Shell because of 'their clear commitment to sustainable development'. We must be missing something. Even if you believe, as Shell alleges, they are cleaning up their appalling environmental and human rights record. They're still an oil company that is continuing to make vast sums of money out of shafting our climate. Our message for Shell is that they are gonna have to paste their greenwash a lot thicker to suck us in. Check out the dirt on them at www.corporatewatch.org

In Da Area

*SPOR Community Space in Brighton 23-28 January. Featuring performances, installations, a kid's space, cafe, sculpture, photography, video, and music. The space is to be organised around the theme "The Shape of Nature", there will be events around climate change, alternative energy, permaculture, and other related topics. At the same time there will be a host of information about the people and institutions that are responsible for the current problems we are facing, and creative solutions to those problems. Contributions are welcome.

The venue is in central Brighton and will be announced on Monday. Call 01273-321112 for details, or check www.spor.org.uk, spor23@yahoo.com

*The Rebel Alliance. Brighton's occasional direct action get together will take place next Wednesday (24) at the Spor community space. Ring SPOR for directions. Food will be served from 6.30pm, meeting starts 7.30pm with films afterwards.

CRASS PAD

They re-activated the peace and anarchist movement, gave punk a good kick up the backside, had a record label that sold thousands of records with 'pay no more than' stickers plastered all over them and generally trumpeted the DIY get off your arses ethos. Now ex-members of CRASS are trying to save the commune that spawned these and many other ideas from the developers.

They've already saved Dial House from the developers once, arguing successfully in court that the grade 2 listed 16th-century cottage on the outskirts of North Weald was a cultural outpost (described as the punk equivalent of the Bloomsbury set's Charleston House!). Supporters are now trying to raise the £80,000 needed to buy the house. To find out about giving donations email geecrass@southern.com

*The Stonehenge Free Festival was one of the ideas that came out of Dial house. Read Penny Rimbaud's *Shibboleth: My Revolting Life* (AK Press) to find out what happened to the man who dreamt it up.

Positive SchNEWS

If you fancy learning the basics about renewable energy, or if you're interested in perhaps installing your own green energy system. The University of Aberystwyth is running a 3-day course on the following dates: 3, 24 February and the 17 March. Interested then contact Green Dragon Energy, 'Panteg', Cwm Llinau, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9NU Tel: 01650 511378 The course costs £35/25 cons, and needs to be booked in advance.

SchNEWS TRAINING DAY

Live in Brighton? Want to get involved in your favourite weekly direct action newsheet? Then come along to our next training day on Wednesday 7th February

12 noon. To book your place and get directions call the office. (It's National Doughnut Week so no-one will be allowed in the office unless they bribe us with a doughnut or two).

Help! We currently need help with putting SchNEWS on the web every Thursday evening, and need someone to drop SchNEWS round Kempston once a week.

* We are putting our 6th book together at the moment. So if you've pictures, cartoons, articles etc you think would be suitable. Send 'em to us along with your name and address on the back if you want stuff returned to SchNEWS Towers (please write on photos where and when they are from)

BRIGHTON BRIEFS

Whitgift Homes want to build 35 houses and 54 car parking spaces on **Whitehawk Hill** in Brighton (despite there being over 2100 empty private houses in Brighton). This ancient site's threatened habitat is home to rare downland species. A Planning Inquiry will determine the fate of the site next Tuesday (23rd). Demonstrate outside the hearing, 9:30am, Brighton Town Hall, Bartholomew Square. Contact Friends of Whitehawk Hill for more details 01273-620815 **The A27 Action Group is opposing a new superhighway through the downs between Lewes and Polegate. They produce an excellent newsletter. Subs are £3/£1 concessions from **A27 Action Group**, 56 Firlie Village, East Sussex, BN8 6LG.** There is a new website for the Brighton free/squat party scene www.partyvibe.com/brighton23, contributions to steve@spiralize.co.uk

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SchNEWS in brief

Corporate Watch have produced briefings for anti-GM campaigners on the two major global grain companies, Cargill, and ADM. 01865-791391 www.gm-info.org.uk ****Stop Privatisation, Invest in Council Housing** lobby of Parliament and rally with speakers at Central Hall, Westminster, 1-5pm. 0207 2759994**

Rally for the Kurds in solidarity with those threatened by the Ilisu Dam. 27 January marks 40 years since the Tryweryn Dam built by Balfour Beatty drowned this area of North Wales. An information session 10.30 to 12.30am, at the Canolfan Bro Tegid. The Rally will at 1pm, on the banks of Llyn Celyn.**

Action against Aviation - 4pm, 4th February for briefings and dinner. Yard Theatre, Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester. Action on the 5th to co-incide with the opening of Manchesters 2nd runway. Please contact 0161-226-6814. **

Women Speak Out. 3-4 February. Discussions, films, practical skill sharing workshops, entertainment, kids' space, cheap vegan food and accommodation. The event is free and the exact location will be confirmed in the week before the Gathering but it will be in central Bristol 07979 211897/ 0117 303 9261 **

Anti Private Finance Initiative Demo called by The Save Leeds NHS Campaign to stop privatisation of Leeds Hospitals, 3.30pm, 26 January, Leeds Town Hall. 0113-2408184 or dwharton@representative.com **Yesterday at Manchester Crown Court today two **Trident Ploughshares** activists were found not guilty of conspiracy to commit criminal damage after their attempt to decommission a Trident nuclear submarine.

Witness Appeals: Anybody who witnessed the events leading up to the arrests of 7 anti-fascists at the Cock Tavern, Euston is asked to contact Tony Martin of Moss & Co. Solicitors on 020-8986-8336. *Anyone who was held in Trafalgar Square on Mayday under Section 60 whether arrested or not. Is asked to contact Tim Green of Bernberg & Co. Solicitors - 020 7911-0166. There is a case against the legality of police actions on the day. Your information may make the difference in a possible prison sentence.**Remember to check SchNEWS Party and Protst guide on our website.

International Briefs

Bosses at Microsoft Poland are reported to be none to pleased after it was discovered that the thesaurus for **Word 2000**, comes up with "exploitation" and "inequality" if you enter a search for "capitalism". **At least 10,000 "monkeys" occupied government offices in New Delhi, India, in protest at the governments solution to the City's monkey problem, which is to round up the animals and take them to outlying areas, that are already overpopulated with the primates. ** Meat eaters in India are being shocked into thinking about their carnivorous habits - **PETA** the animal welfare group unveiled billboards in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) depicting a chicken tucking into a nice juicy human leg on a plate. This campaign is to extend to the rest of India then to US, UK, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. **150 people were arrested in **Bhopal, India** as they marched in protest against the Development Forum taking place in the city, attended by the World Bank and Asia Development Bank. **21 protesters were arrested in **Ankara, Turkey**, for protesting outside a meeting between Turkish officials and the IMF. The country was bailed out of financial crisis by the IMF in 1999, and is now being forced to implement severe austerity measures.

Inside SchNEWS

Turkey's political prisoners remain on hunger strike in protest against their removal to isolated cells containing 1-3 people with no access to lawyers or medical treatment. The move comes as an attempt by the Turkish authorities to break up the solidarity and self-regulation of political prisoners. The hunger strikers have now been holding their fast for around 85 days and many are in a critical condition.

In recent weeks 4 police have been killed and around 30 injured through retaliation attacks to the storming of 20 prisons on December 20th in which 30 prisoners were killed.

The Turkish government has imposed a censor on the press, with all reporting relating to the situation of the detainees prohibited, whilst 5 branches of Turkey's Human Rights Association have been closed with members detained.

Last week four activists were arrested whilst laying a wreath outside the Istanbul offices of the Democratic Left Party, they are currently held in prison awaiting trial which could result in 1 year sentences.

For more information and updates on the situation contact The Free Captives/Anti-Fascist and Anti-Imperialist Prisoners Support Group at London Information Bureau, BM Box 8253, London, WC1N 3XX, 0207 254 1266 www.ozgurluk.org

...and finally...

A cyber version of Tales of the Unexpected

The Centre for International Legal Studies was stuck for a speaker for a conference on international trade last October in Salzburg. So they visited the website www.gatt.org and sent an invitation to Mike Moore, the World Trade Organisations Director General. They received a reply he couldn't attend, but that he'd send Dr Andreas Bichlbauer to speak in his place.

Dr. Bichlbauer attended the conference and gave a speech entitled "Trade Regulation Relaxation and Concepts of Incremental Improvement: Governing Perspectives from 1970 to the Present". The gist of the speech was that Italians have a lesser work ethic than the Dutch, that Americans would be better off auctioning their votes in the presidential election to the highest bidder and that the primary role of the WTO was to create a one-world culture. The speech didn't go down too well, not because of the brutal truth of the role of the WTO, but because of its reference to Italians. Despite receiving a pieing on leaving the conference, Dr Bichlbauer, defended his speech, "While we of course do not advocate vote-selling or siesta-banning at the present time, it is quite true that efficiency and the streamlining of culture and politics in the interests of economic liberalisation is at the core of the WTO's programme". A few days later Dr Bichlbauer was on his deathbed. Allegations began to fly that perhaps the Dr had been targeted by his own organisation who were none too impressed by his honesty. A week later Dr Bichlbauer's death was announced by e-mail.

The twist in the tail then became apparent. Dr Bichlbauer was an impostor - the organisers of the conference had been the victims of a hoax. If they'd looked at the website a bit more closely they would have perhaps realised that it wasn't run by the WTO, but by anti trade campaigners "The Yes Men". A spokesman for the group later stated "We think the ethical thing to do is to represent the WTO more honestly than they represent themselves". Full story at www.theyesmen.org/wto.

disclaimer

Sony too tripped out to write one. Honest, Man.