



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER PRICELESS

SchNEWS

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It's the unreal thing.

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FISTFUL OF DOLLARS

"We want to expose the real culprits. The IMF-imposed policies, carried out by the Ecuadorian government in exchange for more loans, have resulted in more than 50% of Ecuador's national budget going to pay off the foreign debt, have burdened the country with the highest rate of inflation in Latin America, the highest levels of corruption, the most advanced rates of deforestation and environmental degradation, and the worst example of maldistribution of wealth on the continent... and this disaster, the result of your policies, is repeating itself throughout the Third World in which you have intervened to "help us rise out of poverty."

Ivonne Yanez, Acci3n Ecol3gica

Ecuador is currently under a state of emergency after thousands of protestors took to the streets to demand the government withdraw sweeping price rises across the country. Thanks to yet another one of those structural adjustment programmes so beloved by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the price of cooking fuel has doubled, petrol prices have risen sharply and bus fares have increased by 75%.

However, the government has stated that their economic policy was not negotiable "as it constitutes the fundamental backbone of the stabilisation plan for dollarisation and the predictions of growth", as agreed with the IMF.

Freedom of association has been suspended, and the army is arresting anyone leading the protests. Once again it is the indigenous people of Ecuador - who make up around forty five per cent of the population - that are leading the protests. Obviously they aren't listening to the UK's Development Minister Clare Short who reckons complaints against organisations like the IMF are from those "sitting predominately in the wealthy parts of the world."

Large areas of the country have been paralysed by blockades and 5,000 people are in the University of Ecuador with the police and army firing thousands of bullets and tear gas at them.

GOOD, BAD & THE UGLY

Just over a year ago, over one and a half million Indians marched on the capital against the privatisation of the water supply and the dollarisation of the economy. Their protests toppled the president. Vice president Gustavo Noboa took over promising that the water of Ecuador would never be sold off to multinationals, small farmers would be forgiven their debts to the government and fuel prices would be frozen for 2 years.

However, at the same time the army was given a huge pay rise with the help of US "aid" and the promises and signed accords were forgotten. Since then the currency has been dollarised, trade unions banned in the mines and oil fields (all of which are 100% USA owned) the price of petrol was raised by 200%. For poor farmers who depend on getting their produce to market that increases have been devastating. The US is also busy building 11 new military bases in the country under the cover of "fighting the war on drugs"

The Ecuadorian government have warned that "all subversive agents who are responsible for fomenting destabilisation...will be arrested for disturbing the peace."

Surely the ones destabilising the economy and fomenting unrest are the IMF? SchNEWS reckons it's about time they were shut down, their policies locked up and the key thrown away.

For more on what's happening check out www.conaie.org/ or <http://pages.hotbot.com/edu/stopwto/ecuador1.html>

NICE BLOKE

Marc Helie is a partner of Gramercy Advisors, who refused to agree to a one month extension of the pay-out on the Ecuadorean bonds that his firm held. He openly brags that he is, "the man who brought Ecuador to its knees, single-handed". In an article in The Globe & Mail Helie's firm is described as, "... specialising in making money from economies on the brink of disaster."

CRAP ARRESTS OF THE WEEK

For eating...Police in Holland arrested 13 people in a shopping mall for the crime of handing out or eating free food. The activists from Free Food Utrecht were ordered to leave as police believed they were in breach of trade regulations. A judge later called for their release, stating that free food did not constitute trading. Free Food said that they would continue to hand out 'nice dinners'.

On The Piste

The World Economic Forum (see Schnews 233) in the Swiss ski resort of Davos recently took place in "fortress"-like conditions. In a temporary suspension of democratic rights, hundreds of armed police "effectively privatised" the area, turning up to 1000 people away from the border who were not "normal-looking" or carried suspicious reading material. After deeming them abnormal and unworthy of entry into the chic resort, police had hoped to spray these folk with horseshit, but were scuppered when local farmers refused to provide manure.

Messages submitted worldwide to a Swiss website were laser-beamed onto the mountain which overlooks Davos. These included suspiciously non-commercial, environment and people-based propaganda, submitted by people probably not wearing suits.

Meanwhile in Brazil a counter-conference called the World Social Forum pissed all over Davos by bringing together 12,000 people from 120 countries. Militant farmers from all around the globe then went on to join Brazilian peasants from the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Rio Grande, storming a Monsanto biotech research station. They trashed GM corn and soybeans and took over the research centre setting up beds and hammocks.

Another 5000 protesters marched through Madrid to coincide with the WEF, demonstrating against Davos, and the opening up of borders for profit but not for people. White monkey activists dressed in white overalls with helmets and balloons for protection scaled 15 storey buildings, hanging huge banners against immigration laws and capitalism. The police tried to detain 70 white monkeys but had to return them to the crowd after the sound system truck stopped in the road along with 5000 demonstrators and refused to move on.

To find out more www.forumsocialmundiale.com, www.ainfos.ca

Casualty

Members of a London Unison branch are bracing themselves for a struggle against the ongoing march of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Three London hospitals stand to be privatised by the end of the year in a £500 million project which will result in 750 non-clinical jobs being moved to the private sector. The scheme, which affects the Royal London Hospital, St Bartholomews and the London Chest will see the Royal London completely rebuilt and the closure of the London Chest, a respiratory unit. Phil Burrows, Branch Secretary of the local Unison group, says the plans are shrouded in secrecy, "As a Unison branch, we're supposed to be kept informed, when we had a meeting with management of the hospitals we were told that they had already started informal talks with potential partners." Although the members of the future consortium are not yet decided, previous PFI schemes have shown that partners are likely to be large banks and companies not best known for their commitment to healthcare. "The NHS are jumping ship to the private sector," said Tim Martin, Unison's press officer, "this has all the ingredients for a great scandal. They want to take everything, not just the building, money is going to be sucked out of the NHS into private hands."

*Our NHS is not for sale' - public meeting on the future fate of these hospitals. Thursday 15th February, 7pm at the Jagonari Centre, 183 Whitechapel Road, nearest tube Whitechapel. Speakers include Geoff Martin from Unison and a Dudley Hospital striker.

* Contact Phil Burrows, branch secretary, Unison Office, Royal London Hospital, London, F1 1BB. phil@solidarity.co.uk

*Workers at the Dudley group of hospitals (see SchNEWS 278) have announced that they will start another strike this Saturday (11). The Trust is on the verge of signing contracts with consortium Summit HealthCare and staff transfers are set to begin on the 12th of April. 01384 244350.

* Change your mind and we're sue yer : One of the consortiums bidding to buy part of the London Underground has threatened the government with legal action and a £30 million bill if substantial changes are made to the partial sell off of the tube.

MoD Vs Ruckus

Just in case you still aren't feeling safe on the streets despite the vast array of police powers and acts (see SchNEWS 291), rest assured - the MoD Police are coming your way. That's right, the Armed Forces Bill which is currently making its way through parliament could see extended powers granted to the 35,000 MoD officers. Currently their duties are restricted to the investigation of crimes involving service people and defense contractors, intervention within the wider community is prohibited. Under the proposed legislation, officers would be able to stop and search and assist in the breaking up of large demonstrations such as last year's fuel crisis.

* If this wasn't enough, the Government will soon be extending similar powers to the 2,500 British Transport Police.

Cheers

Thanks to everyone for offers of help after our computer disasters. Because of our week off we've got dates coming out of our ears, so go to the party and protest section of our website to find out what's happening (apologies to all you lot not on the internet - but SchNEWS would just be a list of very interesting dates otherwise)

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SchNEWS in brief

Ex members of punk band CRASS have managed to buy Dial House and are going to 'develop' it into a centre for a large array of cultural and community activities. It cost £158,000 with money leant by friends which will have to be paid back and they are organising benefit events over the coming year. Check out www.southern.com/southern/label/CRC/ for regular updates of news and events ** **The Bogus Woman** is a play "from a war-torn African state to conflict in a British detention centre, one asylum seeker tells her gut-wrenching story..." It's on at the Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green from 10 Feb - 3 March. For tickets call 020 7610 4224 (there are some pay what you can nights) ** SHIWA, a ground breaking club night, will combine psychedelic, trance, techno, electronica, breakbeat, hip hop, drumming, dub and ambient in 4 different rooms all in the aid of **Amnesty International**, 10pm til 6am, 16th February @ The Depot, Bristol. Tickets £7 advance from Replay Records, Katze or Subway or £8 on the door. More info 07968 303275. ** People have occupied Atherden Road nursery in **Hackney** which has been closed as part of the Councils public service cutbacks. The occupiers plan to use the building as a community space. Tel: 020-8525-0247** **Human Scale Education** are running a series of introductory workshops for parents and teachers interested in setting up their own educational project. The first one is on 24th Feb in London, then 24th March in Bristol and 12th May in Edinburgh. It's £45, contact them on 01275 332516 www.hse.org.uk** If you're in Brighton and yer interested in getting involved in activities against genetics this year then come along to The Branch Tavern next Thursday (15th) at 7:30pm to find out more** The new financial backer of **Huntington Life Sciences** has been revealed as The Stephens Group, a US based investment firm. They have an office in London and so a campaign against them is starting. There's a demo next Thursday (15th), meet 11am, outside Stephens Inc, 63 St James's Street, London SW1, bring megaphones, whistles, horns. There is also a call for a phone blockade on that day their numbers 0207 3553377** Demonstration against **Sodexo** (asylum voucher schemes and prisons), Bristol Demo on 24th, meet 11am Queen Square. Bring placards, flags, banners, noise etc. sodaction@fsmail.net. There's a Sodexo campaign meeting at 76, Shacklewell Lane, London at 8pm this Sunday (11th)** **Third World Debt is Fraud** and World Bank Fraud, Saturday 24th, 2pm at SADACCA, 48 The Wicker, Sheffield S3 Contact 0114 222 7942. Children Welcome** **McDonalds Workers Resistance** is a group of McDonalds workers who are hoping to unite workers in the organisation. They have produced a paper called **McSues**. They are looking for help in distributing it out to McDonald workers. E-mail them at mwrposse@yahoo.co.uk** Wiltshire police have been cracking down on the **crop circles**. Matthew Williams, who writes 'The Truthseekers Review' which tells you how to make crop circles without the help of aliens, has become the first person to have ever been tried for making a crop circle. He was charged £100 in court for causing £180 worth of damage to a farmers field. www.truthseekers.freeserve.co.uk/ ** The new Terrorism Act becomes law on Monday 19th. There will be an **Anti- Anti Terrorism Act demo** on the 17th, meet 12pm Band stage, Castle Green, Bristol

Inside SchNEWS

On February 6th Leonard Peltier will have spent 25 years behind bars. He was found guilty of killing two FBI agents, despite the fact that the government say they do not know who is responsible for the deaths.

In the 1970's native American Indians began organising in a Pine Ridge reserve against European domination. The government were none too pleased with this and began waging a low intensity war against tribal traditions. Between 1973 and 1976 over sixty native people were murdered on Pine Ridge. Leonard went to the reserve to help defend his people and subsequently got involved in an exchange of fire in which two FBI agents got killed. Leonard was convicted of the murders on false evidence.

Leonard is now very ill and it had been hoped that Bill Clinton would have given Leonard a pardon before he left office, but despite calling for racial unity, he failed to do so. Write to Leonard Peltier #89637-132, PO Box 1000, Leavenworth, KS 66048, USA.

* To find out more www.freepeltier.org

* Recommended reading "In the Spirit of Crazy Horse" by Peter Mattheisom.

* **Satpal Ram** has been reassessed as a category C prisoner and moved to another prison write to him at Satpal Ram, HMP Wellingborough, Doddington road, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 2NH

* **Mark Barnsley** have been moved yet again this time to Wakefield high security prison. The Mark Barnsley Campaign are asking for letters of complaint to be sent to David Shaw, The Governor, HMP Wakefield, 5 Love Lane, Wakefield, WF2 9AG. Letters of support to Mark should be sent to him (prisoner number: WA2897) at the same address.

Shell-out Shell

Protesters in Nigeria have occupied three of Shells oil pumping stations forcing them to close. In a statement on Monday, the protesters called for the provision of amenities such as schools and roads, as well as jobs for local people. Despite huge revenues being gained from oil production, indigenous people see none of the benefits. Many villages close to oil wells still have no electricity, clinics or other basic services. The protests are reported to be costing the oil company 40,000 barrels a day. Not that Shell will notice this much as they have just announced record profits up 85 percent from last year. Shell are said to be holding talks with representatives from the community.

...and finally...

And they say cannabis doesn't rot your brain...

A man who left bags of cannabis in a taxi after running off without paying has been caught thanks to his own quick thinking.

First he rang the taxi firm asking if they'd found the bag. They directed him to the lost property department at Brighton police station where he duly turned up! Dor!

Unknown to Mr.Dopey, the taxi driver had looked inside the bag, and found 12 packets of cannabis and grassed him up to the cops.

Officers were waiting when he turned up at the station and he is now helping with inquiries. One officer commented "He gambled no one had looked inside the bag which was pretty stupid if you ask me."

STOP PRESS...Police raid bank! Spor resisted court order resulting in police smashing door and sending in the dogs. All protestors manage to escape and re-group, ready to return. www.spor.org.uk