



wake up! wake up! WAKE UP! I t's yer city wide

SchNEWS

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NIGHTMAYORS

“When we tell them that a mayor would have total power for four years; would not be able to be controlled or voted out in that time, no matter how incompetent or corrupt; and would be able to act in total secrecy, they almost universally reject the notion as frightening”. - Tom Davidson, Labour Campaign for Open Local Government.

With President Blair telling us to pull our bloody socks up and be more like America, it's good to see Councils up and down the country calling for referendums on directly elected mayors just like they've got in the States.

In Brighton ex-squatter and ex-Council leader Our Lord Steve Bassam has been spearheading the Yes-please-we'd-love-a-mayor campaign (oh and while we're at it, can I be the first one please?). In his 'strictly confidential discussion paper' Lord Bassam said the Yes campaigners "should talk the language of democracy, accountability, openness, anti-corruption and strong public services" by - er - electing a mayor. "What frustrates this sector is red tape, overlong decision-making and a lack of leadership" Bassam continued.

Mayoral Chains

'Democracy and openness' - hmmm, a directly elected mayor would be all-powerful and help to get rid of all that silly debate stuff and nonsense about 'public consultation' - that democracy is supposed to be about. SchNEWS ain't saying the present way of doing things is much copeither, but as local Green councillor Pete West argues "An executive Mayor would wield enormous influence without any formal duty to consult or the immediate control of backbench councillors."

'Anti-corruption'? Over in the U.S. the most popular hang out for Mayors when they leave office is in prison, where over 50 of them currently reside. Lets' hope Lord Bassam doesn't end up there.

'Red tape and overlong decision-making?' We think he means cutting the time given to all those pesky members of the public who complain about unwanted planning applications.

And as for 'strong public services'. Come again? Is this why the New Local Government Network (NLGN) are so involved countrywide in pushing for directly elected mayors and harp on about wanting to 'modernise' local democracy

This Network, which just happens to have been co-founded by (none other than) Lord Bassam, has generously given a £2000 interest free 'loan' to Brighton's pro-Mayor campaign.

Crapita

But just who are these Networkers? Well, you won't believe the coincidence but some of NLGN's 'corporate partners' are the very same firms that are snapping up public services up and down the country as they're privatised. Companies like Capita (Lord Bassam was a paid consultant to them. He even tried to flog them Brighton's Housing Benefit and Council Tax Service when he was leader.); KPMG - one of the world's largest accountancy firms, who've made rich pickings from 'advising' clients on the massive profits to be had in the public sector. (Busy bee Bassam was a paid consultant to them as well); Serviceteam - who are taking over Brighton's refuse collection; Amey, Jarvis and Serco, moving into a classroom near you; and of course Deutsche Bank - although SchNEWS aren't too sure why a German bank wants to 'reform British local government?'

So, why do these corporations want directly elected mayors? Capita gave it away when they told a House of Lords Committee that a strong leader who can 'personally commit the council' made it easier for firms like theirs to 'develop partnerships' - meaning making it easier for firms like theirs to take over public services and run them for profit without any fuss. And with the privatisation of public services worth £5 billion a year and rising it's no wonder firms like Capita are after an even bigger slice of the council cake.

* The Brighton Allies for Democracy Vote No campaign have produced a newspaper. Send an SAE to 192 Ditchling Rd., Brighton, BN1 6JE www.ourpower.org.uk/

“SchNUSIC” New compilation CD featuring 70 minutes of music, 18 bands (including Digidub, Inner City Unit and 2000 DS) from 8 different countries. Covering a range of music to unite and excite the underground: hip-hop, electro-mental, dub-drum & bass and more. £7 inc. p&p (cheques payable to Justice?) from SchNEWS. www.dirtysquatters.com

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For turning a bland ballot paper into a culinary delight... After last years Federal Election in Canada three people were arrested for eating their ballot papers in a polling station! Marika Schwandt turned hers into a smoothie, blending it with soya milk and fresh fruit, while Mike Hudema made a hot and spicy stir-fry with his. Chad Blackburn went for the pure raw option and ate his straight. The trio were charged under the Canada Elections Act - brought in to stop people from rigging elections by destroying *other* people's ballots- If found guilty they could face up to five years in jail or a \$5000 fine. "I guess there really is no such thing as a free lunch after all," remarked one ballot binger. www.edibleballot.tao.ca

INSIDE SchNEWS

There's one place in the world where slavery is still regarded as entirely acceptable; inside prisons. Some prisoners are having to work for pence rather than pounds per hour - if they refuse they can be put in isolation and denied 'privileges'. Last year prison labour made the tidy sum of £52.9 million for private companies and the state. New Labour has decided that all prisons to be built from now on will be financed by private companies, no doubt earning them a few new corporate friends. In the UK, for example, Group 4's Altcourse Prison has paid for itself in only 3 years, with the next 22 years of its contract making pure profit for the company. This exploitation is only viable if prisoners go along with it. Work strikes, go-slows and sabotage are some of the best weapons prisoners have, and solidarity action by supporters outside can make a massive difference, as with the recent occupation of Hepworth Plumbing (see SchNEWS 317). For more info get yer hands on the book "In the Hands of the Enemy" by prisoner Mark Barnsley and his supporters. It costs £6, cheques payable to Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddesfield, HD1 3XX Tel 07944 522001 www.freemarkbarnsley.com.

* **David Blenkinsop** has been sentenced to 3 years for assaulting Brian Cass, the despicable managing director of Huntingdon Life Sciences. Write to him David Blenkinsop, EM 7899, HMP Bedford, St Loyes Street, Bedford MK40 1HG

* **Free and Critter**, two American environmental activists who were sentenced to 22 years 8 months and 5 1/2 years respectively (see SchNEWS 308/309) are being moved between prisons by the US authorities to stop them receiving constant mail. Send Letters to them: c/o Free & Critter Legal Defense Committee, PO Box 50263, Eugene, OR 97405, USA.

* **Witness appeal** did anybody see a Womble get arrested at DSEI while he was assisting a woman who had been assaulted by police as the police were forcing people away from the Excel centre by the roundabout? Contact Mark on 07811 654721

BEACH PARTY

By the time you read this SchNEWS hacks' ll be breathing a sigh of relief as the 'New' Labour Party go home and the massive £2 million security operation winds down. Along with all the usual over-the-top policing we expect when Neo-Labour come to town - police on every corner, shoot-me-quick armed response units, random vehicle searches, evidence-gathering teams waving video cameras in people's faces - they even concreted motorway crash barriers into the seafront road in case terrorists ram-raided the delegates' hotels!

For some, harassment started even before the 'conference' began, with cops using laws designed for terrorists and criminals on - you've guessed it - protestors, and those who didn't look straight enough. Hunt saboteurs doing the usual Saturday afternoon stall were told they couldn't set up by police - who then filmed the 'highly illegal' act of handing out leaflets. Over the course of the conference one sab was stopped a record-breaking 19 times - three times under Section 44 of the Terrorism Act, where it is an arrestable offence not to give your details (unlike all other stop and searches). The same sab has two civil cases against the police - Coincidence?

On Sunday the traditional lobby-the-Labour-Party demo was changed at the last minute to a pro-peace march along the seafront, flanked on one side by driving rain and on the other by riot cops. While a samba band drummed out some kicking rhythms, assorted anarchists and others, having proclaimed their intention to gatecrash Labour's Party, decided to join the peace march. Although they didn't totally get into the spirit as they parodied the perennial lefty chants ("They say Big Mac! We say Prozac!").

During the march the level of police paranoia was higher than ever: most of the officers on the front line were wearing balaclavas under their helmets and they didn't have their numbers on. One protester was arrested for wearing a Palestinian flag as a scarf and four 'Wombles' were arrested for 'conspiracy to commit violent disorder.' They were surrounded and nicked by riot cops before the march had even started. It would seem they were nicked for standing out from the dark-coloured rain-drenched crowd because of their bright white overalls, helmets and padding. When questioned Chief Inspector Robin Smith said "They were singled out as the result of intelligence." Yeah right.

* The solicitors dealing with those arrested on Sunday mysteriously had their phone lines blocked all day.

* ID cards have been scrapped, for the time being at least, thanks no doubt to our front page last week.

* The US is bringing in the Patriot Act, because - remember kids as President Bush says - 'if you're not with us, then you're against us.' A new sinister Office of Homeland Security in the USA has also been created, headed by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge who has praised the Third Reich's efficiency and how Mussolini did well to keep the Italian trains running on time! A new state political police is being formed, this new police force will operate "with extralegal authority" and operate outside the American constitution, and will be above the CIA and FBI.

(www.almartinraw.com/)

*To keep up to date with what's happening check out www.alternet.org

* **SchWHOOPS!** Last weeks web address for Jam Echelon Day on Oct 21st was wrong. It should read <http://cipherwar.com/echelon>

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SchNEWS in Brief

The **Anarchist Bookfair** celebrates its 20th Birthday by moving to a larger venue, the Camden Centre, Euston Road, nr. King's Cross, London, 20th October 10am-7pm. www.anarchistbookfair.org ** Agency staff working on **construction sites** at government buildings such as the cabinet office are being kicked out of their jobs unless they provide security details that include where they've lived in the last 5 years, due to increased security measures after the USA terrorist attacks. ** Its getting exciting in **North Staffs**: there's a new local website for activists (www.actionnet-northstaffs.co.uk) and they had their first critical mass on Car Free day which will now be a regular event first Saturday of every month, 11.30am Queens Gardens Newcastle, contact topsyturvy@disinfo.net or 07880-841809 ** **Shortcuts to Manchester** is an ace new radical guide to taking direct action and interesting stuff to do in and around Manchester (centre of the universe - apparently) for a copy send SAE to Shortcuts, Dept 29, c/o MERCI, Bridge Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Manchester, M4 7HR. ** All you **gardeners** out there, get saving your vegetable and flower seed for a community seed swap event happening in Brighton next February. To find out more contact: 5 Wellsbourne, Findon Rd., Brighton, or call 01273 852457 ** An **anti McDonalds** protester has been awarded £1,500 damages by North Wales police for illegal imprisonment and malicious prosecution. The man was nicked for dropping a banner which read "McDonalds Makes You Sick" at Llandudno McDonalds on last years' World Day of Action ** ...and don't forget to target your local **McDogshit** during this years anti-McDonalds Day on October 16th. Get your Adopt Your Store leaflets from Veggies 0845 4589595 or contact the McLibel Support Campaign, 5 Caledonian Rd., London, N1 9DX www.mcspotlight.org ** In **Brighton** there will be a demo on the 16th outside SchNEWS favourite burger bar - meet 1pm onwards at the Western Road branch Tel 0870 7379000 or email barc@vegans.free-online.co.uk ** **Seeing Through the Spin** is an education pack produced in response to the corporate takeover of schools. It gives a fresh insight into the subtle processes of 'greedwashing'. £15 + £3 postage from Baby Milk Action, 23 St. Andrew's St., Cambridge, CB2 3AX. Tel 01223 464420, www.babymilkaction.org ** **The Pecan Centre** in Peckham offer free computer facilities for refugees and asylum seekers. 1-3 Atwell Road, London SE15. Tel: 020 7740 9200 www.pecan.org.uk ** On the 13th October there will be a **British Sign Language March** in Newcastle Upon Tyne, part of the campaign to get sign language recognised as an official language meet at 11am newcastlebslmarch@hotmail.com ** For more dates and things going on in your area check out the party and protest section on our website ** New to town and want to get involved in SchNEWS? Then why not get involved in the **SchNEWS Student Training Day**. Ring up and book your place now for the opportunity of a lifetime.

Return of the REBEL ALLIANCE.

The irregular get together of Brighton's direct action rabble. Hear reports of what different groups have been doing/will do and take part in the discussion about the war on terrorism. 17th October, upstairs at the Albert Pub 7.30pm sharp.

WASTE OF TIME

Would you believe it but composting your own kitchen waste could be illegal! The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs has in its wisdom decided that to help stop the spread of foot and mouth disease kitchen waste cannot be composted as it will be spread on land. This has already affected Chesterfield Council's collection of kitchen waste and may damage community and farm site composters. So instead of being composted this kitchen waste has to be incinerated (environmentally damaging) or put into landfill, where rats, seagulls, etc. will have access to it and spread disease. If you think this idea is crazy contact Philip Walker of DEFRA, 020-7944-6404. Philip.Walker@defra.gsi.gov.uk

*For info about composting contact Community Composting Network, 0114-2580483 www.othas.org.uk/ccn

Positive SchNEWS

21st October is the 11th national Apple Day organised by Common Ground. Apples growers and fanatics all over Britain will be throwing apple day celebrations. Events in Sussex include apple archery, pin the maggot on the apple, apple bobbing and Morris dancing. Lots of apple varieties and cider tastings to those wishing for the ultimate apple experience. Sussex Apple Days: **20th** 12-4pm - **Stanmer Orchard, Brighton** Volunteers are needed for providing transport, setting up and clearing away. Contact Anne 01273 689532, email annedaisybellis@hotmail.com. **20th-21st** - **English Farm Cider Centre, Lewes** - Apple competitions and games including the Apple Stalk, Pin the Maggot on the Apple and Apple Archery, apple pressing, tasting, trade stalls, live music all day, licensed bar, Old Time Victorian Fair, apple produce and baking, hot food marquee, morris dancing. £1.50 entry, free parking. Contact: 01323 711411 For details on Apple Day events around the country call Common Ground 020 7267 2144 www.commonground.org.uk

...and finally...

From our Free Food correspondent.

As always, the Labour Party conference provided a kaleidoscope of opportunities to sample the traditional mix of food, chat, fine wines, and violent stomach cramp for those who indulged in too much canape and grape-fuelled political debate. At events such as the Leave Country Sports Alone reception, with venison and duck on offer, meat-eaters cleaned up; though everyone contributed to draining their wine supply. Better veggie and vegan buffet options were available at the Police Federation and (along with free beer) the Liquor Licensing Reform shindigs. Some of the more right-on discussions were lacking in refreshments, (though, like the Red Pepper debate on the 'War on Terrorism' were interesting in their own right) but with events like the Fabian Society 'globalisation' debate, you could feed your mind and your stomach at the same time. Few events, though, surpassed the 'New Labour - New World Wines' wine-tasting hosted by export credit company NCM. After the bash was listed in the anonymously-produced 'Braggers' Guide' to the conference, one of the organisers from NCM noted; 'We have had quite a few homeless people come in. I didn't mind, we gave them all glasses of wine.' No cake, then.

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all culture vultures if ya wanna help in the war against terrorism and stop the economy taking a nosedive then why not rush out and buy our new CD... P.S. don't forget our bargain basement books too. Honest!