



wake up! wake up! It's yer trip'd out

SchNEWS

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DRUG-CRAZED

The anthrax crisis in the United States has thrown into sharp contrast the double standard world of the 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

In the wealthy corner we have America and Canada who this week threatened drugs manufacturer Bayer that unless it reduced the price of its anthrax antibiotic drug Cipro, it would change its laws, override Bayer's patent and get other companies to make cheap copies of the drug. Tommy Thompson, US Secretary of Health and Human Services, said "They are going to either meet our price...or else we're going to go to Congress and ask for some support to go in and do some other business." Not surprisingly Bayer caved in and will now sell America and Canada cheaper Cipro at the knock down wholesale price of 95c a pill—rather than the original \$4.50.

Bayer, who had initially threatened to sue the Canadian government for breach of patent, were one of the 39 corporations that took South Africa to court when the country said it would use emergency legislation to make cheap generic drugs to treat people with AIDS. The corporate court action collapsed after worldwide condemnation (see SchNEWS 290).

The hypocrisy of America and Canada must be *sickening* for the developing world. For many years, the US has been acting as the pharmaceutical industry's policeman, threatening trade sanctions against any country that wanted to make cheap drugs for its population.

FANCY SOME TRIPS?

Following intense lobbying by US corporations, the World Trade Organisation introduced TRIPs. Sorry readers, this isn't some mind expansion drug but stands for Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights. TRIPs set enforceable global rules on patents, copyrights and trademarks, for the first time this included living things. This means that genes, cells, seeds, plants and animals can be patented and 'owned'. By 2006 even the poorest member states in Africa will have had to pass their own national legislation to become TRIPs-compliant and fully signed up respecters of patents on new drugs – or face the trade sanction consequences.

Only last month nearly sixty developing countries asked for a declaration to be agreed at next months World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Qatar to re-interpret WTO rules to give governments the right to have access to affordable medicines. For example, AIDS medicine, which costs \$20,000 with patents costs just \$200 without. However, this declaration was blocked by Switzerland, Japan - Canada and the United States. Mimicking the line of the pharmaceutical corporations, they argued that the protection of pharmaceutical patents is necessary to encourage research into new drugs. Unless of course those cheap drugs are needed urgently for those countries with the financial clout to cover corporations and break world trade rules.

Number of people in Africa infected with AIDS: 25 million
Number of people in Africa who have died of AIDS: 17 million
Number of people who have died of anthrax in America: 3

TRICK OR TREATY?

President Bush recently refused to sign an agreement strengthening the 1972 Convention on Biological Weapons, despite it being ratified by 140 other countries. Last month it was revealed that the Pentagon had secretly built a germ factory in the Nevada desert capable of producing enough deadly bacteria to kill millions of people. One proposal awaiting approval is the manufacture of a more potent version of anthrax using genetically engineered biological agents. So while the American public is worrying about anthrax attacks, their own government is developing biological weapons, but rest assured readers the development of lethal germs to wipe out millions of people is for 'defensive' measures only.

The threat of severe biological weapons attacks probably doesn't come from terrorists but countries. As Prof. Barbara Rosenberg, from the Federation of American Scientists' Working Group on Biological Weapons says: "... these attacks now are nothing compared to what is waiting

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For making a joke!

5 merry US flag burners were arrested at a protest outside the US Embassy in Belgrade and charged, according to our information, with "making a joke of the United States." SchNEWS wonders if a burnt flag is needed for the US to be a joke...

for us in the future when it becomes possible to genetically engineer new kinds of agents. These things are not easy to do it's much more likely that these attacks would come from a country, not a terrorist group."

Another threat to the world comes from chemical weapons; Russia has 40,000 tonnes of the stuff it is supposed to destroy in the next few years. The USA is committed to destroy its stockpiles as well, but how will we know it has destroyed them? Go and inspect their stockpiles? Er, well you can't, you'll just have to take their word for it. The 1997 Chemical Weapons Treaty allows "challenge inspections", where any country can demand to inspect another countries stockpiles, but the USA has a unilateral exemption from this. There is an Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), whose job it is to inspect military/industrial premises, but the OPCW's work has been severely hampered by the USA not paying its dues and blocking OPCW inspectors.

The US have become experts at opting out of and blocking weapons treaties, justifying this with excuses of self-defence and national security. But while they say they do not use chemical or biological weapons directly against populations, they have been poisoning people through its "war on drugs" in Colombia where over 300,000 people have been displaced because of the US funded spraying of poisonous pesticides in their country. Now that's what SchNEWS calls paying a high price for 'freedom'.

* For information on biological weapons check out www.sunshine-project.org

* For more information about America's secret biological warfare programme read "Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War." By J. Miller, S. Engelberg and W. Broad (published by Simon and Schuster).

Terror Attack

On 17th October, Rehavam Zeevi, an ultra-nationalist member of the Israeli cabinet, was assassinated by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Zeevi, ironically, was about to resign from Sharon's cabinet the next day because they weren't right-wing enough for him as his views made Atila the Hun look like a woolly liberal. He thinks Palestinians should be expelled from Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem, are 'lice', 'vermin' and 'a cancer', Jordan should be "annexed" and no one should be allowed to enter Israel unless they can speak Hebrew. Western governments, predictably, condemned this killing in strong terms - Blair said it was a "contemptible act of violence", Bush called it "a heinous crime", and Koffi Anan, the UN Secretary General, said it was an "appalling murder." So let's get this straight when Palestinian civilians are massacred by Israeli tanks, F1-16 fighter jets and Apache helicopter gun ships the most that is said by Bush, Blair and their cohorts is that the killings are "not helpful" and would "jeopardise" the peace efforts - *whatever they are*. But when a racist bigot is assassinated the shit hits the fan. Double standards we think.

Since September 11th 110 Palestinians including women and children have been killed by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) as tanks blast their way into Gaza and The West Bank supported by jet fighters and helicopters. As SchNEWS went to press Beit Rima, a West Bank village was attacked by large numbers of the IDF and, sinisterly, was closed off to ambulances and the media. "What is amazing about this situation is that medical teams were not allowed inside the village and we know that there are people in there who need our help" said Yunnis al-Khatib, the president of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, "What happened there was a massacre." With the number of casualties rising each day it's a scary time for the Palestinian population. Ata Manasra, who lives in Bethlehem, says in a plea to the world "We are not safe at all. We might be targets of their bullets of hatred at any time. What can you do for us? Please don't leave us alone...We are targets of terrorism. We are a target of a state terror."

For more info check www.indymedia.il.org or www.gush-shalom.org

* Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh wrongly fitted up and jailed for 1994 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in London (see SchNEWS 278, 286) have just had their appeal heard and the judges will be giving their verdict sometime in the next two weeks. The campaign are asking people to go to Appeal Courts, The Strand when they reconvene for the verdict. More info 07958680449 or check www.freesaj.org.uk

Pipe Dreams

Actions are planned around the world in support of resistance in Ecuador to a new oil pipeline through the Amazon rainforest. It will allow Ecuador to double its oil production, and create a boom in new oil exploration in the Amazon. The pipeline runs through 11 protected forest areas including the Mindo Nambillo Cloudforest Reserve, home to some 450 species of birds. The government squashed the public review process three weeks after the release of a 1,500-page Environmental Impact Assessment and by fast tracking licensing for the project. The oil is destined for consumption in the United States, which gets oil from Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia.

See Amazon Watch's Report "The New Heavy Crude Pipeline in Ecuador: Fueling a Second Oil Boom in the Amazon" at www.amazonwatch.org

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SchNEWS in brief

Benefit for Afghan Refugees this Sunday (28) with The Brighton Agitators, Tragic Roundabout and DJ Bin Liner and the Funky Jihad plus video propaganda by Guerrillavision and comedians from Voodoo Vaudeville, 7-10.30pm, at Gloucester Club, Brighton, free food before 8pm, £3.50/£4. ** **Hallowe'en Fun-Raiser for 9 Ladies Anti Quarry Protest Site**, 9pm-late, 31st Oct. Technocauldron and Raggadubdungeon DJs and SchMovies at Volks Tavern, Madeira Drive, Brighton. <http://pages.zoom.co.uk/-nineladies> ** **Another SchNEWS victory** - last Friday Brighton and Hove voted an emphatic no to plans for a directly elected city mayor (see SchNEWS 325) ** Budding activists should get along to the **West Country Activist Gathering**, to discuss everything from genetics, anti-globalisation, Afghanistan etc. Nov. 10th, St Werburghs Community Centre, Horley Rd, Bristol 10am-6pm. Full disabled access. £3 donation on the door, No dogs, alcohol or hierarchies, www.geocities.com/westcountryactivist ** **Hackney** now has its very own site on <http://uk.indymedia.org> letting community groups, workers and residents to post their own info about how the cuts in the bankrupt borough are affecting them and link up with similar struggles around the country. There's also a newsletter now out Hackney NOT 4 Sale. Details 07950-539254 hackneynot4sale@yahoo.com ** No war but the class war (Now **Brighton Against the War**) meet every Monday 7.30pm upstairs at the Hobgoblin Pub, Brighton. ** There's a new group being set up to start a **small school/learning centre** in Brighton and there's a meeting all about it on 2nd Nov 7pm at the Phoenix Community Centre Brighton Tel 245042 for more details ** This Sunday (28th) at 6pm there's a meeting upstairs at the Albert, Trafalgar St, Brighton, to discuss **council funding cuts** to essential voluntary and community groups and the fact that homeless people being disallowed benefits if they can't prove a connection to Brighton ** **Arjuna whole food co-op**, in Cambridge who have been running for 31 years are desperately looking for new members to get involved - otherwise the shop could close. Contact: 12 Mill Rd, Cambridge, CB1 2AD, 01223-364845 ** The **Colombia Solidarity** delegation has returned from Colombia and want to give talks for next 6 weeks. They want events on International Human Rights Day (10th Dec.), to focus on Colombia. colombia_sc@hotmail.com ** The big blockade of **Faslane Naval base** saw cops arrest 170 people. Info www.tridentploughshares.org/ 0845-4588366. ** **Schwoops!** The Reclaim The Streets number printed in last weeks SchNEWS was wrong: it should be 020-7281-4621

Positive SchNEWS

LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is a charity that aims to help farmers adopt sustainable and viable agricultural practices. They aim to create a better public understanding of farming through a nationwide network of demonstration farms. They are holding a series of open meetings exploring the current state of UK agriculture and how farmers are moving forward in positive ways. Issues covered include sustainability, local food production, conservation, countryside management and a visit to the LEAF Virtual Farm. There are meetings in Chester, Sussex, Harrogate and Peterborough. Details from LEAF 02476-413911 www.leaf.org.uk

NATSy Boys

Only three months since it was controversially part privatised (so called public-private partnership), it looks like the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) is set to become the 'Railtrack of the skies'. Faced with massive debts the company may soon have to beg the government for emergency cash, as well as cutting a fifth of their management and support workforce. NATS bosses are blaming their problems on the recent collapse of the aviation industry after Sept 11, but even before this the safety of our airspace was sliding off the rails. Faced with a predicted 50% increase in the number of flights in next ten years NATS cunning solution was to make cuts of £60million over two years with massive redundancies. Yet they still weren't able to make the investment in the service that they were required under the terms of the privatisation. It now looks likely that NATS maybe re-nationalised in a Railtrack-type deal. Coming next in the successful public-private partnership trilogy is the privatisation of the London Underground, which is already running into problems before it's even left the station.

Rent Boys

Newham Council, the poorest borough in the country, has ditched the privatisation of its Housing Benefit after the wholesale cock-up of the service by the CSL group. New claims were taking three months to process, while three UNISON shop stewards were dismissed by CSL for the "gross misconduct" of exposing the working conditions and procedures within the company. The three had brought attention to the fact that thousands of documents were being closed without processing to 'massage' the back-log figures. The contract is expected to return to the council before Xmas, by 'mutual' agreement. Email: housingbenefit@hotmail.com

...and finally...

It's alright sisters, the battle is over! According to the adverts in shop windows of Thornton's "1975 - women get equality" (*did we miss this happening?*), "2001 - women finally got what they wanted - 5 new Belgian chocolates." Forget freedom from oppression, sexual harassment, discrimination and violence, what we need is corporations selling us sugary junk at the expense of exploited workers across the world. Four women from Manchester were so outraged by this offensive propaganda, they visited two of the shops in central Manchester to show them what they thought, graffiti-ing window displays with "2001 - women get what they want - freedom, justice and equality" and "Smash Patriarchy!", and plastering them with posters about exploitation of women. When intrepid SchNEWS reporters tried to get Thornton's opinion on the advert, first response was a terrified 'no comment'. A cagey Press Liaison told us that complaints had been 'minimal' and denied the extent of attacks on the shops. Let Thornton's know what you want via their website www.thorntons.co.uk, which also has details of local branches. (The Manchester women note that spray glue is very quick drying and strong.....)

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers we reserve the right under guarantee to limit without prejudice the taking of our TRIPs. Honest.™ This does not affect yer statutory rights.