



# CHOKER-COLA

## THE REAL THING

As all SchNEWS readers will no doubt know the Coca-Cola Company "exists to benefit and refresh everyone it touches." Which will come as great news to the villagers in the Kerala State of India who, thanks to one of Coca-Cola's 'refreshing' factories, are suffering water contamination and shortages.

Coca Cola's bottling plant at Plachimada was set up three years ago in the middle of fertile agricultural land and has sucked the local aquifers dry. Worst hit are the indigent and Dalit (oppressed castes) communities who live near the factory. They have seen their wells dry up while they wave goodbye to truck loads of soft drinks that are making their way from the factory to distant markets. Barely six months after the factory set up, villagers and farmers living nearby began noticing changes in the quantity and quality of well water. Water from a well in Plachimada became unfit for drinking, cooking and bathing. Complaints and requests to the company and the Government repeatedly fell on deaf ears so on the 22nd April locals began an indefinite picket outside the factory gates demanding its closure. For 49 days the peaceful protests continued until police violently arrested 130 people including nine children and infants.

As Nityanand Jayaraman from CorpWatch India said "As the summer and the water crisis intensifies, the hardships of the local people have worsened. But Coca Cola has continued its production and groundwater extraction uninterrupted with police protection."

The water scarcity has now even hit Coke. Until recently, the company was drawing 1.5 million litres a day from the common groundwater resource - now it is only able to extract 800,000 litres. The remainder is brought in by truck from borewells in neighbouring villages. According to local estimates, Coke's water mining has now parched the lands of more than 2,000 people living within 1.2 miles of the factory.

Dr. S. Janakarajan, an economist working on groundwater issues said, "The trouble with Coke [in Plachimada] cannot be seen in isolation. In this case, a community may have lost its access to water for drinking or agricultural purposes for the sake of supplying Coca Cola. The same has happened in other places where industries have privatised common groundwater resources or polluted them... In this race, those who have the resources are the winners; the poor are the losers." Or as one famous French woman might once have said 'Let them drink Coke.'

For more on this story [www.corpwatchindia.org/action/PAA.jsp?articleid=1703](http://www.corpwatchindia.org/action/PAA.jsp?articleid=1703)

The United Steelworkers of America have filed a law suit against Coca Cola accusing the company of failing to ensure that workers at the plants were protected against persecution of trade unionists. "This case involves the systematic intimidation, kidnapping, detention and murder of trade unionists in Colombia, South America, at the hands of paramilitaries working as agents of corporations doing business in that country," the lawsuit said.

"With respect to their business operations in Colombia, the Defendants hired, contracted with or otherwise directed paramilitary security forces that utilized extreme violence and murdered, tortured, unlawfully detained or otherwise silenced trade union leaders of the union representing workers at Defendants' facilities".

Colombia Solidarity Campaign 07950 923448 [colombia\\_sc@hotmail.com](mailto:colombia_sc@hotmail.com)

## NO MAR DAMS

Four villagers from the Narmada Valley in India who had been fasting for 29 days in a suburb of Bhopal, ended their protest on Wednesday. All four, who have been directly affected by the huge Narmada Dam Project, began their fast to demand the fair resettlement of the 6,000 people who are going to be displaced when the Maan reservoir fills up during the monsoon season. All four were willing to die unless their demands were met.

The Maan dam is one of the dams in the Narmada Dam Project, a massive irrigation scheme that will according to the development crazy Indian government 'provide large amounts of water and electricity which are desperately required for the purposes of development'. In reality the project is sucking money from truly long term sustainable water solutions in this drought prone region, and will leave the majority of the people waterless, as big agricultural projects suck up the lion's share.

As the Maan reservoir fills up during the monsoon season 17 villages will be submerged, displacing 6,000 people. The villagers had been promised that they would be resettled land-for-land by December last year, but in reality as has happened with other villages in the Narmada valley, there is no resettlement package. Those affected by the Maan Dam have already identified land that would be suitable for the resettlement of the villages. The local government though had refused to consider the option, which they thought would set a precedent.

Instead of being resettled, the villages were

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For doing a handstand!

A protestor at the recent Reclaim the Streets in Dublin was arrested, according to his charge-sheet, because he "engaged in the act of a handstand in the middle of a junction so as to cause or was likely to cause the traffic through such a place to be obstructed". Phillip Thompson claims he is the victim of a miscarriage of justice because he was practising yoga.

forcibly evicted in May when police and bulldozers moved in and sealed hand pumps, demolished school buildings and clear felled trees. The hunger strike began on the 21<sup>st</sup> May as part of a wider protest against these evictions. Finally on the 29<sup>th</sup> day the fast was called off after the Chairman of the Grievance Redressal Authority agreed to ensure that the rehabilitation of the Maan dam oustees would be completed no later than July 31<sup>st</sup> this year. Thousands of people face submergence over the coming monsoon, which will start next month and many have vowed to drown rather than leave their homes. Keep an eye out for solidarity actions happening around the globe. [www.narmada.org](http://www.narmada.org)

## BLOOD FROM A STONE

"Since the mine started taking the water, the Mound Springs have gone right down and they don't function like they used to. Our traditional story is that if the water dries up, then so do the people." - Kevin Buzzacott, of the Arabunna people.

The Western Mining Corporation's Beverley Uranium mine in central Australia is sucking the life juice out of an area the size of Texas. Slurping a whopping 42 million litres of water a day from the Lake Eyre Basin, the mine affects hundreds of river systems, tributaries and creeks, and threatens the livelihoods of the aboriginal peoples in the vast desert area.

The uranium mine - the largest in the world - relies on underground water, using a process called 'in-situ leaching' where millions of litres of sulphuric acid is pumped into the groundwater to dissolve the uranium, which is then pumped out. This leads to the permanent radioactive contamination of the underground water system. To top it all, once they've used the water they put it back into the ground, radioactive as hell.

A protest camp of local traditional people, and others has been held since the mine started in 1999, though it has been trashed several times by the mining company security.

Earthdream are throwing a solstice party this weekend (20-21st) on mine land next to Lake Eyre, in support of local Arabunna people. For details contact: [www.active.org.au/sydney](http://www.active.org.au/sydney)

## GRIZZLY GOINGS ON

The G8 summit, the annual meeting of the seven major industrialised nations plus Russia, is taking place next week in Kananaskis, Canada. As usual they will be plotting and scheming on how to take more from the world's poor by promoting slave labour and environmental destruction (AKA 'globalisation' and 'development') and claiming that they're good for us by branding them 'sustainable'. Devised by the big three, the WTO, IMF and World Bank, this year's lucky theme is Africa – lucky because the unholy trinity will focus all of their manipulative money making scams on it.

After last years massive protests in Genoa (see SchNEWS 314/5) it was decided to move to the remoteness of the Rockies for the summit and put up a security fence stretching 6 1/2 kilometres. There will also be hundreds of police and soldiers, with a top-level military commander commenting, "we are very serious ... we have lethal weapons and we will use force if we think there is a serious threat," warning that protesters and "limelight seekers" who intend to test summit security in Kananaskis will be risking their lives.

Potential terrorist threats – such as the native grizzly bears – are being used as an excuse to bring in these new hardcore security measures. Apparently the bears pose such a threat in the rockies that the cops will be kitted out in some very fetching outfits (check out [www.onf.ca/grizzly/suit.html](http://www.onf.ca/grizzly/suit.html) and [drool](http://www.drool.com)). Activists are still urged to go to Kananaskis, to disrupt as much as possible using roadblocks and "Ewok" tactics such as tree climbing. Masses of demos will also be going on around the country and thousands of people will head to the capital. Unfortunately Canadian cops are known to respond to anti-capitalist demos with the subtlety we'd expect, at the last one in Ottawa, protesters at the G20 summit, were zapped with stun guns, mauled by badly trained police dogs and threatened with rubber bullets as riot cops held loaded MP5 machine guns with their fingers on the triggers.

For more info on the various actions, different coloured blocs and tactics see [www.takethecapital.net](http://www.takethecapital.net) and <http://g8.activist.ca/event/>

## SchNEWS in brief

Plans for **everyone and their dog** to spy on our every email/phonecall (see last years SchNEWS) have been shelved for the time being after massive protests. Still, as one our readers pointed out, we shouldn't forget about America's Echelon - the worlds greatest surveillance system, which captures and analyses virtually every phone call, fax, email and telex message sent anywhere in the world! <http://fly.hiwaay.net/~pspoole/echelon.html> \* On **Working Links?** Think it stinks? AWOL (Abolish Working Links) meeting for benefits claimants in Brighton and Hove this Thursday (27) at Queens Head Pub, Queens Road , Brighton 7.30pm. Info 540717 \*\* There's a meeting about the selling off of **Brighton's council housing**. It's at Leech Court, Albion Rd next Wednesday (26) 7pm 608704 for more details \*\* Go to [www.huntingdonsucks.com/ecd/](http://www.huntingdonsucks.com/ecd/) and join in the online protest to shut down the website of **evil** vivisectors Huntingdon Life Sciences. \*\* Activists managed to halt work on a new **incinerator** in Basingstoke by suspending themselves in cargo nets for 3 days. The action was one of 50 held throughout the world on Global Anti-Incineration Day [www.greenpeace.org.uk](http://www.greenpeace.org.uk)

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## Inside SchNEWS

Great News! After 8 years of wrongful imprisonment anarchist prisoner, **Mark Barnsley** is due to be released next Monday (24). The Mark Barnsley campaign would like as many supporters as possible to be outside the prison to welcome Mark. Meet 9am, at HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road, March Cambridgeshire. There is a slight chance he may be released earlier [www.freemarkbarnsley.com](http://www.freemarkbarnsley.com) for any updates. Transport is being organised from around the country, email: [barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com](mailto:barnsleycampaign@hotmail.com) for details.

On Tuesday **Satpal Ram** was freed after spending 15 years in jail. Satpal received a life sentence after he defended himself against a racist attack, his attacker later died. His release came after David Blunkett was forced by a European Court ruling to overturn a previous decision by former Home Secretary Jack Straw that kept Satpal in jail because of his refusal to admit his guilt. Satpal's release does not mean that his conviction has been quashed. There is still a massive legal battle to clear his name. [www.appleonline.net/satpal/](http://www.appleonline.net/satpal/)

\* 1 year on from the EU summit in Gothenburg and 71 people have been prosecuted, mainly for rioting. The average length of the sentence has been 14 months. Many of the prisoners would appreciate letters, addresses are available from [abc-stockholm@autonom.zzn.com](mailto:abc-stockholm@autonom.zzn.com). The Gothenberg Solidarity Group desperately need donations. All money will go directly to help the prisoners. Money payable to 'Nisse-Latts minnesfond' at Solidaritetsgruppen, c/o Syndikalistiskt Forum, Box 7267, 402 35 Göteborg , Sweden Tel +46(0)733-16 42 96

\* The Infamous and outrageously moustached French farmer Jose Bove was ordered to turn up outside a French jail on Wednesday to serve his 3 month prison sentence for his part in the 1999 demolition of a McDonalds in true style he turned up on a tractor. His sentence has been postponed for two months as politicians feared his incarceration may effect the presidential elections. [www.commondreams.org/headlines02/0617-07.htm](http://www.commondreams.org/headlines02/0617-07.htm)

## Festival brief

Can't afford a ticket? Reckon Glastonbury's gone to the Mean Fiddler dogs – well some people in Glastonbury had organised a small fringe festie for locals and others milling round town to go to. And guess what the authorities didn't like that bit of initiative and so its been cancelled. [www.glastonburyfestival.flife.co.uk](http://www.glastonburyfestival.flife.co.uk)

\* Going To Glastonbury? Want to help us out at the SchNEWS stall. We are in the Green Futures field and could do with some help on the stall and handing out SchNEWS to the masses. Don't know what to do after Solstice? Free party soundsystems are promising a huge party somewhere in the South West this weekend. Call 07980401646/07815627676/07816984913 from Friday morning or [www.guilfin.net/](http://www.guilfin.net/)

## POSITIVE SchNEWS

Three hundred people, ten marquees, three days, countless workshops, discussions, advice sessions and a chance to meet people from all over the UK who are changing their own and others' lives. No, its not a Christian summer camp it's... the Groundswell self-help forum! From 16-18 July, Groundswell will be hosting the fourth national self-help forum in Sheffield, featuring loads of practical workshops to learn new skills. Groundswell are a group that promotes and supports a self-help network with people who are homeless, landless, or living in poverty. Groundswell 020 7737 5500 [www.groundswell.org.uk/](http://www.groundswell.org.uk/)

## WOODSIDE

In 1997, 27 Gypsy families clubbed together to buy Woodside, a 17-acre touring caravan park with full planning permission. But when the Gypsies moved on to the park, Mid-Bedfordshire council claimed they did not have permission for permanent occupation and issued enforcement notices. In July last year the council set aside £230,000 to finance clearance of the community. On Monday (24), the council is going to the high court to be allowed to carry out its enforcement notices, forcing the community back on the road.

The Woodside caravan park is unlike any of the 325 council Gypsy sites in this country. It isn't surrounded by barbed wire fences designed to keep the inhabitants in. It hasn't even been built near a sewage works or any other industrial facility. It looks, in fact, more like a modern hamlet than a ghetto, except that the homes are on wheels rather than stone foundations. At the centre of the community is a large green where children play in safety. Yet the council wants the site removed on the grounds that it is having an adverse impact on the environment. The Gypsies say the council is using an environmental smokescreen to hide their bigotry.

"They say we are out of character with the area, but how can we be when we've always been here?" says Woodside spokesman and National Traveller Action Group chairman Clifford Codona, who, like many Gypsies, once worked as a seasonal agricultural labourer. "They don't need us any more, so they want to expel us. They can't stand the fact that, for the first time ever, Gypsies have their own village green!"

Current government policy recommends that travellers should house themselves on their own land, yet Gypsy families who attempt to do so are often denied planning permission. While over 80% of planning applications from settled people are granted consent more than 90% of applications from Gypsies are refused.

If you believe it's time to stop shoving British Gypsies from pillar to post, they need your help to turn away the bailiffs. Come the night before the expected eviction attempt from Monday onwards. Enjoy a midsummer night of Gypsy singsong around the fires - and be ready to protest when the council and private contractors come. There's plenty of room for tents and caravans. Woodside is in the village of Hatch near Sandy, Bedfordshire just minutes off the A1. F or directions <http://www.streetmap.co.uk/>

If you can't get to the site send an email to [andy.rayment@uk.uumail.com](mailto:andy.rayment@uk.uumail.com) head of Mid Beds Council urging him to reconsider his intention to evict the community of Gypsies at Woodside Caravan Park, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

For more information on how British Gypsy sites policy has made many homeless, read "No Room to Move" [www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4427029,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4427029,00.html)

## SWITCHEROO

After days of massive protests in six cities, the Peruvian government has suspended the privatisation of two power plants. The governments initial decision to go back on election pledges and sell the two state-owned companies sparked protests that led to \$100 million of damage to infrastructure including one airport being attacked and all flights grounded. Two people were killed and more than 140 injured when a "state of emergency" was declared and 5,000 soldiers sent to repress the popular protests. [www.indymedia.org/](http://www.indymedia.org/)

### Disclaimer

SchNews warns all Stonedhengers looking for a golden age goal when it comes to a world cup full of coke y'knows the score. Honest, ref!