



wake up! wake up! It's yer summit to remember

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GRAVY PLANE

"South Africa is in the hands of global capital. That's why it can't meet the legitimate demands of its people."

- George Soros, money launderer

It's all hitting the fan in South Africa and that's before 60,000 delegates fly in for the huge talking shop that will be the World Summit on Sustainable Development coming up at the end of this month.

It all started when the ANC government (yes the same people that fought against Apartheid) began implementing a World Bank-influenced development model for Johannesburg which included privatization of public services. When the ANC first came to power in 1994, its Freedom Charter promised one million houses, universal and affordable electricity, a national health scheme and social security. But in 1996, the ANC was forced by powerful investors and the International Monetary Fund to adapt itself to the 'realities' of the global economy. Since then, health, welfare, education, electricity and housing budgets have been slashed. The gap between rich and poor has increased since the end of apartheid, with around 1 in 4 South Africans unemployed.

Now the social force that helped bring down apartheid is once again active in townships across the country - and this time the ANC isn't taking too kindly to it.

Yesterday the trial began of 87 people arrested in April as part of an action organised by the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC). The group had gathered in front of the mayor's house to protest about people's services being cut off. Some thought it would be good to give him a taste of what they have to put up with and tried to cut off his water and electricity when one of his bodyguards fired eight shots into the crowd, wounding two people. The protestors were then all nicked for public violence and damage to property. Most of the damage was done to the Mayor's swimming pool, ironic since most of the people in Soweto can't even afford to pay for drinking water.

On the official summit website they talk of "hundreds of millions of people living under conditions of abject poverty or experiencing highly unequal access to resources, living in inadequate human settlements - characterised by overcrowding, lack of access to basic infrastructure, services and economic opportunities, inadequate resources, environmental degradation, homelessness and social exclusion."

And what would you do if some of these same people lived in your country, in townships just a few miles away from the conference centre? Well you would host a summit that costs £34 million pounds to talk about it of course! And who would you get this money from? From Eskom, the electricity company who've been busy helping people stay in abject poverty by pushing up bills past the point where people can afford to pay for them and then cutting their electricity supply off.

Soweto?

Last September, 1800 houses in Tafelsig, a township near Cape Town, had their water cut off because they couldn't afford to pay the bills the recently privatised company was demanding, some of which had increased about 400%. People who resisted were shot with live ammunition while riot cops protected the people who were busy disconnecting. Within weeks, a major cholera epidemic broke out because people were forced to use rivers and stagnant ponds for water. To date there have been more than 100,000 cases of cholera and 250 deaths.

Meanwhile, the recently privatised electricity company, Eskom, started cutting off the electricity of people who couldn't pay their massively increased bills. Poor communities in Sowetan South Africa organised a boycott of their Eskom payments and the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee began illegally reconnecting the power of families left in the dark. For their troubles one ANC minister called them a "criminal gang." For nine months it co-ordinated this campaign, until last October, when Eskom announced it would no longer disconnect those who couldn't pay.

The success of the campaign inspired a similar boycott of water payments, and thousands of Sowetans took to the streets.

With the telephone system also recently privatised, 40 per cent of the new phone lines that the company Telkom has delivered have been disconnected because the people can't afford the new rates that

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For stealing his own spoon!

Tom Harris spent 12 days in remand earlier this year after taking part in an office occupation to protest against Huntingdon Life Sciences - the animal torturers. He was arrested for burglary by cops who said he'd photographed 'sensitive' documents. When they later decided that this wasn't actually illegal, they accused him of stealing a spoon and threw in section 4 of the Vagrancy Act. After 12 days inside they dropped the case after realising that section 4 doesn't apply to office blocks and the spoon was actually his!

have gone up by 35%. In contrast, the price of domestic long-distance and international calls, used mainly by wealthy South Africans, has become 40% cheaper!

Earlier this month, hundreds of residents of Mandela Park in Cape Town occupied a house before a pensioner was 'rightsized' by the Servcon Housing Company. 'Rightsizing' is a legal process whereby vulnerable people such as pensioners, the disabled, and the unemployed who cannot afford to meet repayments on houses (some of which aren't even properly built) are forced to move to tiny houses. These tiny houses are described as 'dog kennels' and are often far from their community. One pensioner recently died after being forcibly evicted.

The township of Soweto will always be known for its own 'Spirit of '76' when a thousand students were killed in an uprising, an event which radicalized a generation of anti-apartheid activists. Resistance to privatisation has once again radicalized this and other communities across the country. As one campaigning group put it, "The Summit will offer the opportunity for the social movements to demonstrate with the whole world watching. This will be the time to show that the neo-liberal model aided by the international financial institutions and profit hungry corporations do not deliver social or ecological justice to those who need it most."

* Aug. 31 will be a global day of action against big business muscling in on sustainable development. www.aseed.net

* Also on Aug. 31, many of the social movements in South Africa have agreed on a common platform to organise what they hope will be the biggest independent political gathering since apartheid ended in 1994. To keep updated with the protests visit <http://southafrica.indymedia.org>

* For more: www.earthsummit.biz/

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Hot off the presses

Batle Battered

And now boys and girls, it's time for another South American economic crisis brought to you by our old friends at the IMF and World Bank. By now it's a familiar story—the IMF lends money to an impoverished country, on condition that said impoverished country will agree to IMF demands for “structural readjustment,” i.e. privatisation of public services, unlimited foreign investment (read: allowing Nike to build as many sweatshops as they like) and free trade agreements which allow local industries to be outdone and then overtaken by foreign multinationals. Once “structural adjustment” is up and running, large amounts of cash flow OUT of the country (into the bank accounts of aforementioned multinationals or corrupt local governments), causing the local currency to plummet and the price of goods and services to skyrocket. In the beginning of August, Uruguay began to show signs of just such a disaster. President Batle closed banks and froze savings deposits in fear of bank runs amid a freefall in the value of the Uruguayan peso. Pressed to the breaking point, the poor and starving population of Uruguay decided they'd had enough. In a recent statement, the Federación Anarquista Uruguaya (FAU) describes the situation, “The tariffs of essential services [water, electricity, etc.] had been raised, supermarkets increased prices scandalously... Basic items doubled their price in little time. Salaries stayed the same, however, and there were hardly any more “odd jobs” available. Quite simply, hunger had taken over the world of the poor.” On August 2nd, the Uruguayan people took action—more than 13 supermarkets were looted in the poor neighborhoods of Montevideo to the shouts of “We are hungry!” The FAU letter explains, “Hundreds of people “looted” supermarkets in different areas. Children, women, the elderly, entire families entered and took what they could: sugar, rice, noodles, flour, oil, etc.” As a result of these “food liberations,” the government and corporate media in Uruguay have started a campaign against alternative media sources, desperate to blame the situation on anyone but the truly responsible parties. On August 3, police raided and shut down the community radio station “El Quijote”, also located in the neighborhood of Montevideo, blaming them for inciting the looting. Mainstream newspapers have published articles accusing radio stations and even Uruguay Indymedia of inciting looting at supermarkets. In articles reminiscent of The Sun or The Daily Telegraph, one paper assured its readers that “The Minister of the Interior [blames] ‘Anarchists’ for the looting... These are people who want to destroy our style of life.” (“Our style of life” which includes starvation, poverty, and suffering for the poor, of course). Meanwhile, President Batle has managed to re-open all banks. And just how did he manage this fantastic achievement?? Why, by securing a new £1 billion loan from the IMF, of course. For breaking news, visit

<http://www.indymedia.org/>
(or if you can read Spanish):
<http://uruguay.indymedia.org/>

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SchNEWS in brief

Check out the new Lancaster Re-Source centre, a fair trade café and local campaigns base, open every Wednesday 12-7pm. 78a Penny St., Lancaster Tel- 01524-383012 **Another World is Possible free festival is happening on 31st August from 1-9pm, Tankerton Slopes, Whitstable. 07753 822424 ** One of the last independent political bookshops in the country, Little Thorn Books in Leicester desperately needs money (or better still, people to go in and buy books) or they'll have to close. And of course you can always go and get the new SchNEWS book there that's out today so hurry! 73 Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Open 10-5.30 Tues-Sat 0116 251 2002 ** The Green Blayde Fayre which the Levellers were organising has been cancelled cos the nice people of Sidmouth in Devon didn't want a lot of “New age traveller” types staying there for weeks disrupting the local community ** The Ministry of Defence care so much about life that they're putting up birdboxes for ospreys at their Trident nuclear submarine base. On Wednesday activists from the nearby peace camp dressed up as birds, a cockroach and a dog commenting, “Nuclear weapons could make all life on the planet (with the possible exception of cockroaches) in danger of extinction. The ospreys have so far declined to take up residence, obviously they are aware of the dangers within the base.” So far 53 have been nicked during the summer Trident Ploughshare camp including two who swam out to HMS Vigilant and spray-painted ‘Vile’ on both sides of the submarine! 0845 4588366 www.tridentploughshares.org ** Several thousand Polish shipyard workers last week broke into the Odra clothes factory in Szczecin where women workers have not received pay for several months and are on partial strike. The shipyard workers pelted the boss with eggs and then stuck him in a wheelbarrow – apparently an age old custom in Poland when firing your boss! ** The world car-free days billed as “Fifteen Days to End the Auto Age” are coming up on September 13-27 for more info www.carbusters.org/carfreeday ** The International Longshore and Warehouse Union in San Francisco is under threat from the Bush administration who are threatening to bring in the National Guard (a division of the army) to break a threatened strike. Working for months under an expired contract, 10,000 dock workers face a threatened lockout by their bosses who want to sack staff, cut healthcare, and attack workers' rights. <http://sf.indymedia.org/>

Positive SchNEWS

A new squatted community art space will be opening at 282 Richmond Road in Hackney, London on the 24th August, running for a week with workshops on sculpture/metalwork, woodwork/speaker cabinet building, web design, and desk top publishing, plus an array of the finest underground art in the capital. Running along side this event will be Riot Squad Records, a squatted record shop devoted to underground dance music and hoping to be a vital link between musicians, artists, producers and performers. “Finally there will be a friendly place to listen to tunes, with good prices and the opportunity to get some second hand classics,” say the organisers. More info on 07092 012299 www.randomartists.org

* The Edith Cavell building, a huge modern office building in Hackney (between Enfield Road and Hertford Road, just off Kingsland Road) has just been squatted as a community centre.

* Parents at St Johns nursery, Hackney have organised a festival of resistance on Saturday 31 August as part of a campaign to fight its closure by the bankrupt council. The nursery is at 22 Milborne St Tel 07905 460472 or contact joeeamon@aol.com

Reedy Business

On Tuesday a group of people occupied Reed Recruitment Agency to protest against the company's involvement in the privatisation of education, in particular the creation of a privatised ‘City Academy’ in Leicester. 16 people gathered outside Reed Recruitment Agency in Leicester's market square carrying banners with slogans such as, ‘Keep Fat Cats Out of Education.’ Several people entered the agency and refused to leave while Reed's window was decorated with banners and ‘spoof’ job vacancies— ‘School Governor wanted: no previous experience necessary, must have lots of wonga, call inside and ask for Tony’. Staff kept asking people to leave but as one protestor said, “Alec Reed decided to interfere with education so we'll interfere with his business.”

Alec Reed, owner of Reed Executive, already owns one school in London and has a fortune in the region of £50 million. He has argued that the present school curriculum should be ‘torn up and thrown away’ and that his investment ‘buys him permission to interfere.’ Alec Reed wants free enterprise to be taught in schools to children of all ages so that they can all grow up to be wankers like him. As part of the Labour Government's new privatisation policy, 10% of funding required to establish a new school comes from the private sector. Even though the remaining 90%, along with the running costs, is fronted by the taxpayer, the private backer is considered the owner and is handed control of the whole school. With “City Academies” being exempt from the national curriculum, this gives the owner free reign over what children can be taught. leicesterisr@yahoo.co.uk

...and finally...

Still think the UN has people's best interest in mind? That the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) really cares about the health of the world's children? SchNEWS (in co-operation with our McDonald's corporate sponsors) begs you to reconsider. Last month UNICEF and McDonald's announced plans “to team up to raise money on behalf of the world's children as part of a new McDonald's fundraising initiative called ‘World Children's Day’” to be held on November 20th. How sweet... Too bad McDonald's is a global leader in the marketing of junk food that creates soaring rates of childhood obesity and diabetes. Too bad that its type of nutritionless convenience crap is disrupting traditional ways of food preparation in families and cultures, and its Golden Arches are branded on urban and rural landscapes from Bangkok to Mexico City, bright shiny symbols of a country whose children throw away more food in a year than the children of some other nations eat. The initiative, which aims to raise money for McDonald's charitable arm and a dozen UNICEF programmes, includes a pop concert in China which will be broadcast over the internet— access to which can only be obtained by buying a Big Mac burger! Handily enough, UNICEF will receive a cut of the profits from each Big Mac sold. Sensing a slight inconsistency in the alliance, an international coalition of public-health professionals and activists has asked UNICEF to withdraw from the partnership. The charity, which stands to make millions of pounds by lending both its name and resources to the event, responded to the coalition by saying that, “The partnership does not mean that UNICEF endorses McDonald's or its products.” But if this “Buy a Big Mac and Help UNICEF” arrangement isn't an endorsement, we at Schnews wonder what is? Perhaps “Buy a Happy Meal and Support Global Destruction” would have been a bit more appropriate.

Disclaimer

Schnews warns all conference goers stay home and watch tv and not to go to any legal gathering, honest.