



WAKE UP! WE'VE RUN OUT OF SUMMIT TO SAY...

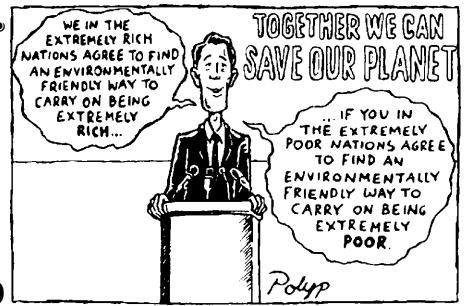
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RETURN TO SENDER

"The least important global environmental issue is potential global warming, and we hope that your negotiators at Johannesburg can keep it off the table and out of the spotlight."

- Excerpt from a letter sent to George W. Bush by a group of Exxon Mobil funded lobbyists.

As if dodging out of the Kyoto treaty, supporting rabid fossil fuel consumption, and making money at the expense of all forms of life on earth weren't enough to keep them busy, it now seems that some of the big business lapdogs in Washington have taken it upon themselves to sabotage the upcoming Earth Summit in Johannesburg. In a letter to George W. recently leaked to the media by Friends of the Earth, thirty-one lobbyists - many funded by Exxon Mobil - told Bush that "we applaud your decision not to attend the Summit in person ... the Johannesburg Summit will provide a global media stage for many of the most irresponsible and destructive elements involved in environmental issues. Your presence would only help to publicise and make more credible various anti-freedom, anti-people, anti-globalisation, and anti-Western agendas."

So let's get this straight—this lot doesn't want Bush to attend the conference because they think it's been taken over by irresponsible and destructive tree-huggers who, unlike them, wouldn't sell their own grandmothers to make a buck. They're upset because they think the Earth Summit is actually going to be a meeting of concerned environmentalists, gathering to discuss what can be done about the impending ecological disaster brought on by capitalism and free trade. They think the Summit is a threat to all the things they hold dear—greed, gain, and globalisation. But for once, dear readers, the joke's on the corporate whores. They needn't bother sabotaging the conference because it's already been sabotaged by their favourite things—multinational greed, corporate gain, and the push for globalisation at any cost.

If the American big business butt kissers would simply pause a moment to review some of the people who are planning to attend the Summit, they'd quickly realise they have nothing to fear. Just for kicks, let's look at some of Blair's hand-picked delegates. Blair's posse contains a number of his Big Business cronies including Bill Alexander, chief executive of Thames Water. The largest water company in the UK, Thames Water has been prosecuted for pol-

lution over 20 times since 1996. Just two days after it was announced that Thames Water would become an official defender of the global environment in Johannesburg, its parent company, RWE, threatened to cancel the creation of 4,000 new jobs unless the European commission dropped its plans to impose stricter controls on carbon dioxide emissions. During the Summit, Bill Alexander will be making a speech outlining how private water companies can make immense contributions to environmental and humanitarian interests. Try telling that to the hundreds of South Africans who contracted cholera from drinking polluted river water after their unaffordable privatised water was cut off (See Schnews 368).

Chris Fay, another of Blair's prime choices, is not only a non-executive director of Anglo America, another of the world's mining giants, but he's also a director of British Airways and was formerly the chairman of Shell—mining, aviation, and oil being three of the most sustainable industries, of course. This is a particularly sensitive choice on Blair's part, as many South African communities are currently involved in seeking compensation from Shell and BP following leaks from an oil refinery. Fay is also a director of Weir Group Plc., whose subsidiary, Weir Pumps, has been implicated in human rights abuses and genocide in Sudan.

And last, but certainly not least on Blair's stunning list of eco-warriors, is Sir Robert Wilson, executive chairman of mining company Rio Tinto. As the world's largest mining conglomerate, Rio Tinto has destroyed ecosystems the world over and is currently the focus of one of Australia's highest profile environmental rows ever. The company's plans to mine uranium in one of the planet's most valuable wildlife sites - Kakadu National Park, a World Heritage Site - has sparked protests that have led to more than 500 arrests.

Speaking sensitively about environmental issues in underdeveloped countries, Hugh Leggat, a Rio Tinto spokesman, has remarked:

"When you get there, you can find the locals have chopped all the trees down. So perhaps it would be advantageous to allow in a mining firm which could then in return promise to do regeneration work." Cross your heart and hope to die, Mr. Leggat? But, as Leggat has pointed out, "We are already just about the most regulated industry in the world." Apparently he doesn't remember his company's brilliant track record in Bougainville.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For being Ash-Holes!

17 people were arrested earlier this year during a protest against incinerated waste being shipped to the Danish island of Langoya. They bared their bums in a collective moonie with the words ASH HOLES spelt out on their backsides.

Deadbeat Delegates

With a group of delegates like this, one might wonder just what kind of an environmental conference Blair's going to? But at the heart of Blair's seemingly contradictory delegate choices lurks his pet project - public-private partnerships. He, along with many other Western governments, seems to think that by inviting reckless corporations to the party and allowing them to control things like water, energy, and forests, they will then start to behave sensibly, protect these crucial resources, and sustainable development will naturally follow.

But the craziest part is this - even if corporations weren't in the thick of the decision-making process, it would still be a bogus summit. Why? Because none of the agreements that the involved parties sign will be legally binding. Legal regulations (covering such issues as human rights and the environment) have been dropped in favour of voluntary codes. The draft plan now calls only for the "promotion of corporate accountability and responsibility and the exchange of best practices." Believing in the actual existence of "corporate accountability and responsibility," the powers that be have decided that voluntary self-regulation is all that's needed to fix the environmental problems caused by free trade. As George Monbiot says, "To defend the world from the destruction brokered by multinational capital, governments will tie a ribbon round it and hand it to multinational capital."

EARTH SUMMIT ACTIONS:

Global Day of Action has been called by ASEED 31st August. www.aseed.net
Brighton "Sunny Day" Sept 1st at the Ellipse on Brighton seafront (11-4pm). Energy efficiency, climate change, electric bicycles, biodiesel, Brighton's earthship, Rising Tide, bands and music. 01273 725077 RTtrad@aol.com

For more Earth Summit stuff visit:

- * <http://climate.indymedia.org/>
- * <http://southafrica.indymedia.org/>
- * www.corporatewatch.org.uk/news/blair_and_earth_summit.htm
- * www.corporateeurope.org/observer12/wsslobby.html
- * www.monbiot.com

Mobil Phoney

Eleven Indonesian villagers, backed by the International Labor Rights Fund, are trying to sue oil giants Exxon Mobil in an American court claiming that the company knew of the murder, torture and rape of residents near its natural gas plant in the northern province of Aceh.

Since 1990, there has been a bitter war of independence being fought in Indonesia. Human Rights Watch reports that in the last decade, "Over 1000 people were killed, tortured or have 'disappeared' ... Thousands of Acehnese were detained without charge, often for years at a time, in military camps; Many never returned." The current law suit says that under an agreement with General Suharto, the former military dictator of Indonesia, Mobil paid the Indonesian military for protecting its facilities. One of the plaintiffs described how troops held him in a building at a Mobil plant and tortured him for three months. Before they released him, the soldiers showed him a large pile of human heads. Another plaintiff claims he was tortured by soldiers at a building inside the company's compound. Others have reported similar accounts of abuse.

This legal wrangle all started in 1998 when several Indonesian human rights groups accused the company of sponsoring the violence because it had provided the army with earth-moving equipment used to dig mass graves.

In April, addressing a US federal district judge, an Exxon Mobil lawyer said "This is a very difficult time in Indonesian-American relations because al Qaeda fighters are residing in that large Muslim nation." He continued that it would be bad for trade relations and bad for the so-called war on terror if a US court accused Exxon Mobil and the Indonesian government of murder. The judge's decision on whether to proceed with the trial is still pending.

After the bankrupt Enron corporation, Exxon Mobil were the second largest campaign contributor to the Bush administration. In 2000, Exxon Mobil refused to sign a code of conduct for businesses working in developing nations where governments might commit human rights abuses. They have constantly denied that global warming is happening and even claim that covering ourselves in crude oil is actually good for us.

The lawsuit against Exxon Mobil is one of a series of suits brought to U.S. courts by human rights groups against multinational companies under the Alien Tort law, which allows victims to sue in US Courts for alleged human rights violations perpetrated in other countries.

Corporations like NatWest, Barclays Bank, ICL and Vickers are currently facing a multibillion pound lawsuit claiming they profited from collaborating with apartheid in South Africa. One of the lead plaintiffs in the campaign for compensation said, "We want reparations from those international companies and banks that profited from the blood and misery of our fathers and mothers, our brothers and sisters."

Positive SchNEWS

In a time when everywhere is being McStandardised, Common Ground is working on a big encyclopaedia all about 'Local Distinctiveness,' championing the regional differences still to be found across England. They tell all Schnews readers, "You know much more than we do, and with your knowledge and help, we can bring the book and the web-site alive. We would like to hear your local stories, details, examples, and observations about the particularity of everyday places: from houses and woods to food and legends, from dialect words and endemic wild life to vernacular greetings and breeds of sheep." If you've got something to contribute visit <http://www.England-in-particular.info/>

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SchNEWS in brief

Catch up with everyone's direct action summer adventures at the next **Rebel Alliance**, 4th September 7.30pm upstairs at the Albert Pub, Trafalgar St. Brighton. ** On the same night, SchNEWS will be hosting our annual **Book Launch Party** at the Volks, Madeira Drive, Brighton 9pm. Please arrive early! ** Great news - **Steward Community Woodland** in Devon has been given a 5 year temporary planning permission to continue their sustainable woodland low-impact living project www.stewardwood.org ** Film premiere of **'Drowned Out'** about the **Narmada Dam** protests in India. It's on at Curzon Soho Cinema, Shaftesbury Ave, London W1 £7/5, Wed 28th, 7pm, the screening will be followed by a Q&A session. www.spannerfilms.net ** **The Colchester Radical Collective** have opened a social centre in a Grade 2 listed building. The building had been left empty by Capita (big friends of New Labour's Private Finance Initiative) who have been trying to turn it into posh flats. Capita is taking the squatters to court today (23rd). If you're going to the **Colchester Free Festival** (www.colchesterfreefestival.co.uk) this bank holiday Monday, why not pay the centre a visit? 87 East Hill, 0798 6654583 squat@nogm.cjb.net ** Meanwhile in nearby **Southend**, two people let everyone know about a road widening scheme that could destroy 100 trees by spending eight hours in the threatened trees' branches www.ppps.org.uk ** Worthing cops are continuing to hassle people they suspect might be 'ringleaders' of the campaign to stop the destruction of ancient **Titnore Woods** by property developers. The next action planned on September 1st is delivery of a letter to the landowner urging him to consider preserving the area as a nature reserve. Fancy dress if you can. Meet 1pm Coach and Horses on the A27 Arundel Road www.worthinga27.freeserve.co.uk ** Copies of our new **SchNEWS OF THE WORLD** book will be on sale at a S.C.R.A.P. Records music alldayer next Saturday (31st) at Windmill Pub, 22 Blenheim Gardens, Brixton, London. 3pm onwards www.dirtysquatters.com ** **The Fylingdales Star Peace Camp** in the North Yorkshire Moors is desperate for more people to come and stay - otherwise they might have to shut up shop. 01274 730795 cndyorks@gn.apc.org

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Inside SchNEWS

At a demo during the recent No Borders protest camp in Strasbourg (SchNEWS 366) Ahmed Meguini, co-founder of the French anti-racist group Mouvement Spontane (Spontaneous Movement), was violently arrested, receiving a broken wrist from the French riot squad. From his arrest on 24th July to his trial date on 21st August, Ahmed was held in solitary confinement, which meant, amongst other things, he was not allowed to receive visitors. At his trial, Ahmed was sentenced to 8 months but luckily 5 of these will be probation which means he will be out in 3 months. He also received a fine of 700 Euros (£500). Incidentally Ahmed was the only person from the No Borders camp who was locked up the entire time before his trial and the charges against him were the heaviest. This Saturday (24th Aug) there will be a benefit to help pay his fines at the Radical Dairy, 47 Kynaston Rd, Stoke Newington, London, with food and DJs. www.noborder.org

Justice?

* The 'Fair Justice For All campaign' which represents the families of people imprisoned after the Bradford riots last year (SchNEWS 313) are holding a rally on bank holiday Monday outside the city court house. They are protesting against harsh sentences given to 94 people convicted of riot, people such as Istifar Iqbal, who received 11 months for picking up, but not throwing, two stones and Ashraf Hussain, who got four years for throwing three stones.

Campaigners contrasted the length of the sentences with maximum terms of 18 months given to white youths who rioted on the Ravenscliffe estate the day after the disturbances in Bradford.

This 'special treatment' is also reflected in the team that was appointed to look into the causes of last years riots. Muslims on the community cohesion review team told one member of the review team "At the first team meeting we were informed our purpose was not to focus on any one community, but to look for solutions to bring communities together. This was disappointing, as I felt that the specific issues of the Muslim community needed to be investigated and dealt with. Often Muslim participants would tell me in private of their frustration with this review. When I asked why they didn't speak up at the meetings they answered: "What's the point? They're not going to listen."

...and finally...

After banging on and on about the leaked letter to Bush on the front page, we thought you might be interested in who it was exactly that sent the letter. Many of these organisations have been involved in anti-environmental activities before. More to the point seven of them are known to be funded by Exxon Mobil. Signatories include:

* Fred L Smith and Myron Ebell of the Competitive Enterprise Institute - *funding from Exxon \$280,000 in 2001* ** Craig Rucker from the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow (CFACT) - *funding from Exxon \$35,000 in 2001* ** Steven Hayward from the American Enterprise Institute - *funding from Exxon \$230,000 in 2001* ** Terrence Scanlon from the Capital Research Center - *funding from Exxon \$25,000 in 2001* ** Joseph L Bast of the Heartland Institute - *funding from Exxon \$90,000 in 2001* ** Derooy Murdock of the Atlas Economic Research Foundation (AERF) - *funding from Exxon \$150,000 in 2001* ** H Stirling Burnett of the National Center for Policy Analysis - *funding from Exxon \$20,000 in 2001*

This is, of course, absolutely typical of the way Exxon works..... They pay other people to do their dirty work and then—with breathtaking hypocrisy—deny that they are trying to influence anybody or are the tiniest bit anti-environmental!!

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers to not take everything we say literally. Honest.