



WAKE UP! wake up! The alarm's gone off...

# SchNEWS

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## FIREBRANDED

As SchNEWS went to press the Fire Brigade Union were planning an eight day strike over Neo Labour's refusal to pay them a decent wage. Because some people in authority are lining up to condemn the firefighters, SchNEWS has come up with a new Are You Worth It? Quiz and asked three leading figures just how much they think they're worth...

"I do not think we impress the public if we set too low a value on our own worth... If we believe our work here is important we should not shrink from putting proper value on it." Who said this? Step forward leader of the House, Robin Cook, voting with other MPs for an inflation busting 42% pay rise last year.

Bank of England governor Sir Eddie George, who over the weekend said that a "high settlement (for the firefighters)... would be very damaging indeed", earns just under £257,000 a year and can look forward to an annual pension of £167,000.

Sir George Bain, chairman of the so-called 'independent' inquiry into firefighter pay, became principal of London Business School in 1989 and secured himself "one of the most lucrative remuneration packages in the whole of academia", according to the New Statesman. He's also vice-chancellor of Queens University of Belfast, director of Blackwell Publishers, the Economist Group, Canada Life and Bombardier Aerospace Shorts Brothers.

SchNEWS knows what these people are really worth, but we do wonder if any of them went on strike, would anybody notice?

Meanwhile, greedy, selfish firefighters want £30,000 and according to the government are putting all our lives at risk by going on strike. Which is a bit rich coming from a government that can't wait to start bombing Iraq, a war which, according to a new report by British health professionals, could lead to the death of half a million people, the majority of them civilians.

The new pay deal offers pay increases with serious strings attached - what Neo Labour likes to dress up as modernisation, but what everyone else calls job cuts, penny pinching and creeping privatisation. Already Fire Stations are being built by and leased back from private companies, while fire appliances and even fire tunics and fire boots are maintained and owned by outside companies.

As a nation we are very rich - the UK is the fourth wealthiest industrial nation. But when people ask for the wealth to be distributed a bit more fairly, we are told we can't afford it. But we can, of course, afford to bomb

Iraq at a cost of billions. And we can apparently afford to let big business fiddle their taxes. In 1997, a report by accountants Deloitte & Touche put the figure for legal tax avoidance at £85 billion! Minutes of an Inland Revenue meeting revealed the agency was soft on multinational tax returns for fear of driving investment away from the UK.

As one Fire Brigade Union (FBU) official said, "They are not serious about modernisation. They are serious about cutting costs and about breaking the fire brigades union for daring to ask for more. This dispute is highly political because the New Labour government are scared that the scandal of low pay in the public and other sectors will be exposed and the floodgates will open. The government want to break the FBU as a lesson to all public sector workers."

Perhaps Andrew Smith, Neo-Labour's Secretary of State for Work Till You Drop, spelt it out fairly clearly when he said, "The biggest challenge of the new decade is to encourage people to work longer." For less pay and for longer hours no doubt - unless of course you're an MP or company director, then of course we all know that's different 'because you're worth it.'

**Support the firefighters:** Donate to their hardship funds, take them tea and cake on the picket lines, or just tell them you support what they are doing. Get a striker to come and talk at your workplace or group. And keep an eye out for support groups around the country. In Brighton there will be a stall outside the Open Market, London Road, 10am till 12 noon this Saturday - Come and find out how to get involved. [www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/](http://www.30kfirepay2.co.uk/) [www.labournet.net](http://www.labournet.net)

**Pay the Fire Fighters, not the Fire Starters.** Join the anti-war protests at the Confederation of British Industry AGM this Sunday (24) 3.30pm at the GMEX, Manchester City Centre. Rolling protests continue till late Monday. Guests at this year's event include Gordon Brown MP, Paul O'Neill, US Treasury Secretary, Lord Browne, boss of BP, and Tony Blair MP, plus the bosses of the arms companies and private firms after our public services. [ANSWERmanchester@aol.com](mailto:ANSWERmanchester@aol.com)

**Don't attack Iraq, Freedom for Palestine - demonstration in Brighton**  
Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>, 12pm at Preston Park. Anti-war speakers before a nice stroll down to the Seafront. Info: 01273 685946 [www.safp.org.uk](http://www.safp.org.uk) (More stewards are needed - get in touch.)

**CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK**  
For stealing your own car!  
A Brighton man was pulled over in his car on a routine police check, arrested with his two passengers, and held for 11 hours for "suspicion of theft" - of his own car which was taxed and insured. When he tried to get his car back he was told by Worthing cops that he'd have to wait. Meanwhile at the police compound, cars are only kept for a week and when he didn't show up, his car was crushed!

### SICK PAY

With all the hassle these pesky fire fighters are giving our neo-labour boys, it's a wonder that they don't just privatise them. Surely there's nothing like bringing a private contractor in to stop all this nonsense about essential workers demanding decent pay. A company that has years of experience in driving down wages in the public sector and has been doing extremely well out of Neo Labour's drive to privatise and 'modernise' the public sector is Sodexho, a French multinational private service provider. The company has its fingers in lots of pies - defence, schools and colleges, asylum detention centres and prisons.

Sodexho is a perfect example of the private sector's drive to suppress wages in order to cut costs, win contracts and ultimately line their own pockets. The company has come under fire from labour groups and government bodies in nearly every country it operates in, having been involved in labour disputes and court actions from Australia to the US. Now it's UK workers are biting back.

Hospital service workers at Glasgow Royal Infirmary were the first to decide that they were worth more than the miserable £4.15 an hour Sodexho were forking out for their services. In August, around 300 staff won increased pay and conditions despite Sodexho's attempts to draft in scabs from Liverpool to break the picket lines.

Service staff at Liverpool Royal Infirmary, also on Sodexho's generous £4.15 an hour, followed Glasgow's success. They took strike action last Friday, during which a Sodexho manager on £70,000 a year showed his solidarity by helping to give out tea to patients (presumably not at \$4.15 hour). Negotiations are underway, but threat of further action still looms over Sodexho.

The porters, cleaners and caterers of Glasgow and Liverpool may not be in the business of saving lives. But their success has shown that collective action by workers getting shat on by the privatisation of essential services in 'New Britain' has still got teeth. As Caroline Leckie, UNISON's branch secretary said, "We won because we organised. We set our own agenda, we did not work to management's agenda." More on Sodexho disputes - [www.labournet.net/default.asp#sodexho](http://www.labournet.net/default.asp#sodexho)

Excellent articles on privatisation - [www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com)

# SCHOOL OF THE ASSASSINS

"The order was to take everyone: parents, grandparents, kids, wives, everyone. It was very rare that anyone survived after being taken by my battalion. At first the children were abandoned in the park or the marketplace. But then General Alvarez Martinez said 'These seeds will eventually bear fruit'. So we had to eliminate the children as well." – School of the Americas (SOA) graduate who was once a member of Battalion 3-16, a secret death squad in Honduras. Gen. Alvarez Martinez was also trained at the SOA.

"If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves." – George Bush on the day he began bombing Afghanistan.

This past weekend, nearly 10,000 people marched to shut down the US's number one terrorist training camp, the School of the Americas. Located in Fort Benning, Georgia, the US-Army-operated SOA has been around for the last 56 years, training Latin American paramilitaries whose victims total tens of thousands. As of January 2001, the SOA officially closed its doors and reopened almost immediately as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Co-operation, or WHISC - an attempt by school and military officials to confuse public criticism and distance the school from its violent past. Nice try, guys, but did you really think we were that thick? The name may have changed, but the underlying purpose of the school remains the same - to control the economic and political systems of Latin America by aiding and influencing Latin American militaries. Or put another way, to make Central and South America "safe" for US interests by supporting the rape, torture, and genocide of so-called dissidents.

Since 1946, the School of the Americas has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers and policemen. Among its graduates are many of South and Central America's most notorious torturers, mass murderers, dictators and state terrorists. In 1996, the Pentagon was forced to release SOA training manuals which included top tips on the use of torture, blackmail and execution. As hundreds of pages of documentation compiled by the pressure group SOA Watch shows, groups trained by the SOA have ripped Latin America apart. Here are just a few high-

lights from some of the SOA's former students:  
\*\*In Chile, SOA graduates ran both Augusto Pinochet's secret police and his three principal concentration camps.

\*\*Former SOA student Colonel Byron Lima Estrada ran the D-2 military intelligence agency in Guatemala with the help of two other SOA graduates. Throughout the 1980's, D-2 coordinated an "anti-insurgency" campaign which obliterated 448 Mayan Indian villages and murdered thousands of innocent people..

\*\*The list of atrocities committed during El Salvador's civil war is long and bloody, but none is more horrifying than the massacre in El Mozote, where in 1981, members of the Atlacatl Battalion murdered more than 900 villagers including women, children and the elderly. At least nine of the Atlacatl Battalion were former SOA graduates. In 1993, the United Nations Truth Commission on El Salvador named the army officers who had committed the worst atrocities of the civil war. Two-thirds of those named had been trained at the School of the Americas.

And the list goes on and on... As one Brazilian human rights group said, "The mark of the School of the Americas is engraved in the minds and bodies and in the histories of the families of the tortured, killed, and disappeared."

Meanwhile, protesters who dare to speak out against their government's support and orchestration of such acts are promptly arrested and jailed. Last week's demo in Georgia saw the arrest of 90 protesters, including a 12-year-old who we're quite sure posed a grave threat to the State. One man was arrested when he refused to submit to a police metal detector scan and bag search. Later, in a court hearing to determine the legality of searching protesters, police officers testified that they had never experienced a single act of violence or even the threat of violence in the past 13 years of protests against the SOA. They justified the searches, however, by saying they felt that hostility had been growing with the increase in numbers of anarchists and "bare breasted women". Bare-breasted women being decidedly more dangerous than military death squads trained and armed to the teeth by the US government, of course. For more info on the SOA's dirty dealings, check out the excellent website [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org) Protest info at: [http://indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=217835](http://indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=217835)

## It Just Ain't Cricket

Sydney residents unsure about the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in their city were enlightened last Friday by the Institute For Applied Piracy, who jammed a commercial radio station for ten minutes, replacing the broadcast with a message about the dodgy dealings of the WTO. They explained to listeners how the WTO are an unelected body who represent corporate interests and promote free trade – never mind human rights, workers rights, the environment or anything else which is a 'barrier to trade'.

Meanwhile, the first meeting of the WTO since Doha focussed discussing the use of cheap AIDS drugs to bully developing countries into free trade. And outside the guarded fence, another festival of anti-capitalism kicked off. Streets were occupied in central Sydney last Thursday and even featured a padded up, all-white, Cricket Bloc.

On Friday, 2000 protesters hit the conference centre at Olympic Park where the fence was breached several times and 35 were arrested. Aboriginals re-occupied the 'tent embassy' site they created during the Olympics at Victoria Park, re-lighting the peace fire they'd started there during the Games. <http://sydney.indymedia.org>  
\* Britain has signed a trade agreement with Thailand promising to increase imports of farm produce and find new markets for Thai goods in return for supplying weapons to the Thailand military. That's good old free trade for ya.

## No Purchase Necessary

With Christmas fast approaching, advertisers are stepping up their usual hype – "Buy, buy, buy! You're inadequate if you don't possess the latest gadget/colour/label/toy".

But why not take a day (or preferably the rest of your life) off from this consumer bullshit and join in on Buy Nothing Day. The message is simple. Shop less – live more. Spend time with family and friends, rather than spending money on them.

There's loads of events happening around the country. To find your nearest event phone 07887 608609 or see [www.buynothingday.co.uk](http://www.buynothingday.co.uk)  
\* SchNEWS doesn't like to promote consumerism but... "The SchNEWS of the World book is the ideal Christmas present for the armchair activist, 300 pages rammed full of articles, cartoons, subverts, contacts and SchNEWS issues 301-350. Only £8.50 including postage from SchNEWS."

## ...and finally...

SchNEWS has scoured the high street to find you the most ridiculous bit of consumer crap available for the holiday season- one apple for the price of five. For 49p (the price of a whole pound of apples), Sainsbury's is offering just one ready sliced apple, with the perfect added preservative—a plastic bag. What a bargain! What's next? Pre-peeled bananas? Ready chewed food? "If you are not entirely satisfied with this product, please let Sainsbury's know on 0800 636262"

And if that's not enough to make you sick, then why not join in on mass vomiting actions planned for Buy Nothing Day? A group of anti-consumers are looking for people to join them in taking a Brazilian plant which induces vomiting. After taking the plant, the group plans to visit local consumerist meccas en masse for spectacular puking sessions. Sound appealing? If so contact them at [mongrelart@yahoo.com](mailto:mongrelart@yahoo.com) or [www.fanclubbers.org](http://www.fanclubbers.org)

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers after a hard day fanning the flames of resistance over burning issues we always need a little hosing down. Honest.

## IN THE VANGUARD

While Blair is threatening Iraq with war if they don't grant access to weapons inspectors and has warned Britain to be on high alert for terrorist attacks, last Friday two people broke through totally non-existent security and spent thirty unhindered minutes inspecting one of Britain's illegal weapons of mass-destruction – a Trident nuclear submarine. They were eventually arrested after several attempts to set off faulty fire alarms to let security know they were there! The HMS Vanguard is one of four subs set to be refitted at Devonport Royal Navy dockyard in Plymouth, joining the 12 already there. More info phone 0845-458-8366 or see [www.tridentploughshares.org](http://www.tridentploughshares.org).

\* On 14<sup>th</sup> Dec there's plans for a **mass weapons inspection of US airforce base Fairford** in Gloucestershire, at the same time as US stealth bombers are due to arrive at the base. Transport is being organised from Bristol. Info: <http://bristol.indymedia.org>

\* Next **Sussex Action for Peace** meeting is Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup>, 7.30pm the Brighthelm Centre, North Street, Brighton. To join a discussion of **anti-war activities in Brighton** go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/brightonagainstarwar>

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## NO GLO-BALONEY

Last Friday, Italian police raided the homes of members of the Italian social movement No Global. 20 were arrested, denied access to lawyers, and held in solitary confinement, while another 22 have been placed under house arrest. The arrest warrants declared No Global "a subversive association" with intentions to "conspire against the Italian State" – proof of the intensification of the Berlusconi government's attempts to suppress the vibrant Italian social movement. This comes after the success of the European Social Forum in Florence, attended by 40,000 delegates, with nearly 1 million people taking to the streets for Europe's largest ever anti-war demonstration (see last weeks SchNEWS). The harmony of the week-long Social Forum and the demonstration was the polar opposite of the 'terror' and 'violence' that Berlusconi and his media mouthpieces claimed the event would bring. So 'repression' it is and even though the powers-that-be can't find anything horribly criminal to charge No Global with, they've decided to hit them with "political conspiracy" and "subversive propaganda." Protests have been called in solidarity with those arrested and over the weekend 30,000 people took to the streets of Rome and thousands more marched in Naples, Genoa, Florence and Milan. [www.resist.org.uk](http://www.resist.org.uk)