



POVERTY EXPRESS

"Hunger is a complex phenomenon that cannot be solved by technology alone. We need political commitment and not technology." - Anuradha Mittal Food First.

Last week was a busy one for the biotech industry. In Sacramento, California a \$3 million shin-dig organised by the US Department of Agriculture was attended by government ministers from 112 countries, with the aim "to bring countries together to launch a major new front in the battle against global hunger and poverty." All very noble except the solution is being provided by the big biotech corporations who want to solve world hunger by stuffing genetically mutated foods down all our throats and lining their own pockets.

The conference was closed to the public and surrounded by robocops with helicopters and a tank. Luckily some 'killer tomatoes' and a few thousand other protestors including farmers gathered to vent their cosy world of corporate gene-fiddling. Walt Kessler, a dairy farmer said "The truth about GE crops and their impacts on family farmers is being buried in the slick multi-million dollar public relations campaign being waged by the biotechnology industry and promoted by the US Dept of Agriculture," while Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farmworkers Union told a rally "This isn't about feeding people throughout the world. It's about Monsanto or other large corporations making profits from selling GE food. If they really wanted to feed us, they would feed us healthy food. In fact, a lot of food is thrown away in the U.S. because it's considered surplus."

Even the big man Bush himself has been busy trying to feed the world (well it makes a change from bombing it). He told 5,000 delegates at the Biotechnology Industry Organisation conference in Washington that European opposition to GM food was impeding efforts to fight starvation in Africa – and nothing to do with the fact that the US has a huge surplus of GM crops it wants to offload.

However not everyone believes that GM foods will help reduce African poverty. Amadou Kanoute of Consumers International Office for Africa argued that it "will plunge Africa into greater food dependency." In fact the argument that GM will feed the world is the last throw of the dice for a desperate industry fed up with stubborn resistance to its technology and falling sales. In many research studies GM crop yields have been significantly lower than conventional ones. Worse, research has revealed an

alarming spread of GE corn genes in Mexico in fields many miles from where GM corn was planted. The drift of GE crop genes to fields planted with organic and conventional crops is something that is impossible to contain.

In 1998 a delegation representing every African country except South Africa put a joint statement to a UN conference on genetic research. The delegates had been 'inspired' by a Monsanto campaign that used images of starving African children to plug its technology. The statement read "We strongly object that the image of the poor and hungry from our countries is being used by giant multinational corporations to push a technology that is neither safe, environmentally friendly nor beneficial to us. We do not believe that such companies or gene technologies will help our farmers to produce the food that is needed in the 21st Century. On the contrary, we think it will destroy the diversity, the local knowledge, and the sustainable agricultural systems that our farmers have developed for millennia, and that it will undermine our capacity to feed ourselves."

A new report by Food First argues that there is already enough food in the world to feed the population one and a half times over and that it is poverty and inequality that is leading to starvation. In fact, almost 80 percent of the countries that face hunger are food-exporting nations. As one of the report's authors Silvia Ribeiro put it "They benefit the richest people in the world, not the hungriest...GE crops are designed to take control of production of food away from local communities, by creating greater dependence on huge agribusiness corporations for seed and pesticides."

In the US this has already happened with farmers under the control of a handful of multinational corporations such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer and DuPont. Legally binding agreements force them to buy expensive new seeds from the biotech corporations each season, as well as the corporations' herbicides –

Sustainable agriculture projects have led to millet yields rising up to 154 per cent in India, millet and sorghum yields rising by 275 per cent in Burkina Faso and maize yields increasing by 300 per cent in Honduras. Combined with land reforms, protection from subsidized food and moving food production away from export to growing for local communities, sustainable farming could feed the world. www.ukabc.org/wfs5+.htm

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For making a noise!

Two weeks ago John Tierney, campaigns director of the Irish Association of Hunt Saboteurs, was sent down for 2 months for using an air horn in his protest against fox hunting. The judge, showing where his views lie on the matter, said that the sound was hardly like the slow sweet sound of the hunting horn! John was released from custody a day later after appealing against his sentence. Although he has been released this does not hide the fact that he should never have been arrested in the first place. Next thing you know you'll be getting arrested for voicing your opinions by shouting!

and company inspectors check up on farmers land to see if any crops have re-seeded. They can then claim that farmers are growing unlicensed crops and infringing their 'intellectual property rights'! Already some farmers have been given huge fines and there are legal actions pending against 550 North American farmers.

With the European Union this week voting that all genetically modified foods must be traceable and clearly labelled – and America pressing the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to rule that this is an unfair barrier to trade – it's going to be fireworks at the WTO's next big meeting in Cancun, Mexico this September. This is set to be one of the WTO's most important rulings, and may start a huge trade war with the US. It is also a big test to see who the WTO will side with: elected officials and ordinary people, or US corporations? If the past is anything to go by it doesn't look good...

* Read 'Voices from the South: The Third World Debunks Corporate Myths on Genetically Engineered Crops' www.foodfirst.org

* Check out the excellent GeneWatch site to find out about some of the questions and issues that exist around GM crops and food www.genewatch.org. And get yourself a copy of this month's 'Ecologist' magazine 01795 414963 www.theecologist.org

* Find out about the protests planned at the WTO in Mexico <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agg/free/cancun/>

* Early last Sunday morning sixty protestors ripped up Syngenta's trial of genetically modified wheat at its Jealott's Hill Research Centre near Bracknell just before it was due to pollinate and spread to the surrounding countryside. This is the latest in a successful line of crop trashings this year.

EU STINKER

On the 19th of June, Thessaloniki, Greece's second city, was drowning in a sea of red and black as over five thousand anarchists and libertarians took to the streets in an immigrant solidarity demo. It was the day before the EU summit—a chance for Europe's power-drunk leaders to discuss how to exploit the Majority World without having to suffer the burden of all of those pesky immigrants. The power-drunk's agenda ranged from EU expansion to trade liberalisation to the thorny issues of immigration and terrorism (issues which EU governments always mangle into one and the same thing).

Since the EU didn't want to invite anyone else to their beachside resort, local anarchists squatted the Thessaloniki university and gave travelling protesters a taste of good ol' Greek hospitality. The campus was buzzing with aggression, hope, mobile kitchens, nihilist graffiti, sexism and anti-sexist manifestos.

On the first day of the summit, 20th June, anti-authoritarians, the Greek Social Forum, the Greek Communist Party and dozens of other groups hired over thirty buses to get to the EU's barricaded beachside a few hundred kilometers out of Thessaloniki. One group of protesters decided to try to break the red zone, but upon reaching it, they were tear gassed and broken up, leading to running, stone-throwing battles between cops and protesters as locals showered gassed protesters with hose pipes.

Meanwhile, EU leaders sat in air-conditioned buildings and decided to invest 250 million euros in speeding up deportations of 'illegal' immigrants through agreements with their countries of origin. A further 140 million euros will be spent on creating a European Visa Information System with more 'efficient' ways of weeding out illegal human beings—i.e. the use of computerised finger prints and iris recognition systems. This money will also go towards a 'harmonised' European border patrol to protect Fortress Europe and speedily kick-out the unwanted.

Brighton SchNEWS in brief

Next Thurs (10) there's a talk by recently released anarchist prisoner Mark Barnsley on the struggle inside and against prisons. It's at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road 7.30pm ** Next Wednesday the World Development Movement is showing the film 'Life and Debt' 8pm at Cinematheque, Middle St, Brighton. This is a new documentary film told from the point of view of tourists enjoying a 'dream holiday' in a tropical paradise – Jamaica – while the people of the islands economy collapses thanks to globalisation. Admission £4. ** There's a GM Debate in Brighton at the Pelham Theatre, City College next Wednesday (9) 6.30-9pm ** 'Worthing against war' has a meeting coming up next Tuesday (8) 7.45pm, at the Downview Pub Tarring Road. The discussion is called "North Korea – What's really going on?" 01903 206 588 www.eco-action.org/porkbolter/waw.html

... and in Surrey;

The first issue of the Surrey Agitator produced by the Surrey Anarchist Group, is out now from PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL www.surreyanarchy.org.uk **

Congrats to Paula and Chris and Astrid... Now how long have we given you for parental leave?

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Saturday 21st June, the final day of the summit, saw half a dozen large demonstrations in the centre of Thessaloniki. The stalinist Greek Communist Party held a sterile rally, the Greek Social Forum hosted a concert and the Black Bloc decided to, er, riot. The Black Bloc riot was a black 'n' red, gas-masked river of five thousand that flooded the centre of the city. It soon erupted into a ruck with the coppers as molotov cocktails flew one way while tear gas flew the other. Corporate symbols and franchise shops were burnt, as well as a few unfortunate small-scale shops. Most protesters made it into the centre of town while a few hundred were pushed back to the safe haven of the university where burning barricades were set up in front of lines of masked up riot police. The riot broke up after a few hours, with most protesters successfully returning to the barricaded university.

Dozens of protesters, however, were arrested and locked up. Many were threatened and beaten while in the cells. 27 protesters were locked up for days and blankety charged with 'rioting, defying authority and possession of explosives' regardless of the evidence. Mere participation in Saturday's marches has been made a felony punishable by 7-25 years of imprisonment. Most of those charged with felony have been released on 1500 euro bail and are to return to Greece for their trials. But 6 of those arrested—3 Greeks, 2 Spaniards and a Briton—are being held for 3 months or longer until their trials. Another two, a Syrian and an American, are fighting deportation. The charges are extremely serious, especially for those still being held. The Greek state is desperate to lock-up people for the damages, as police systematically went about planting everything from rocks to molotovs in arrestees' bags. One example is that of Simon, an English protestor amongst the 8 still being held, whose lawyers have a video from mainstream media showing a policeman placing molotovs in his bag while he sits bleeding on the ground. The judge refused to watch the video footage, saying that he'd "seen enough news already."

ROAD MAP

Two new anti-road protest camps have been set up recently - one in West Sussex and the other near the site where the anti-roads movement kicked off in the early nineties - Twyford Down. When the new bypass was completed the old A road was turned into a meadow as some sort of compensation for losing so much down land. It has now become home to more than 200 wild flower species, butterflies, moths, shrews, and hundreds of cowslips. But guess what? There's now a plan to turn a large part of it into a park and ride scheme and so more people are needed to turn up and help save the meadow. For directions phone or txt 07751 119 277 or 07739 342 738.

In West Sussex things are hotting up at Tortington Common, near Worthing, the site of a proposed bypass of the A27. It's part of the planned South Coast Superhighway which is being built by stealth in segments. Bypassing the existing bypass, this road would be an ecological disaster crossing the important River Arun wetlands by either concrete stilts or a huge embankment, and then ploughing through a mile of precious Sussex woodland. Thousands, probably tens of thousands, of trees would be lost including some fine 100 ft oak trees, yews and one particular 100ft beech tree, thought to be the oldest in the forest. So dust off your old climbing gear and start living in them trees again. For directions phone 07736 964653 or 07792 248192 www.eco-action.org/porkbolter/update.html

Inside SchNEWS

Legal costs are rocketing for all those arrested and fundraising gigs and donations are desperately needed. The Thessaloniki legal team has set up a bank account to pay for court expenses. Account # 5209 0164 58 443, Account holder's name: Ieropoulos Ioannis, Bank name: Piraeus Bank. In the UK send money to BM Automatic, London, WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to ABC

* Five people facing jail sentences of between 7 and 25 years are being held in the same prison but in different cells and different floors. They are Spyros Tsitsas, Simon Chapman, Carlos Martin Martinez, Fernando Perez Gorraiz and Souleiman 'Kastro' Dadouk. Send letters of support to any of these prisoners at: Dikastikes Fylakes Diavatou 54012 Thessaloniki Greece. They are allowed to receive letters, newspapers and magazines by post. Don't send anything else (money, phonecards, books, food, gifts), because they'll not receive them.

* It's Simon's 30th birthday on the 24th July - please send him a card.

* Thessaloniki Prisoner Benefit this Friday (4) with Serum & Audiophile @ Eton Mission Social Club, Eastway Hackney Wick, London 10pm till late. £3

PEACE DE RESISTANCE
SchNEWS Annual 2003
BOOK LAUNCH
COMEDY GIG
Wednesday 23 July 8.30pm
with Mark Thomas and Rob Newman
at The Old Market,
Upper Market Street, Hove.
Tickets £10 from box office
(01273 736 222)

Positive SchNEWS

Child Radiation Victims of War is a new fund which has been set up to deal with the toxic contamination in post war Iraq. Since the first Gulf war cancer rates in Iraq have increased 10 fold and in the latest war the country was showered with depleted uranium. The project aims to support doctors and health workers in Iraq as well as to provide the life saving spirulina to children. For more details or to make donations contact baraka379@yahoo.co.uk www.desertconcerns.org

...and finally...

Walt Disney is set to sell DVDs that self-destruct! Known as EZ-Ds these discs become unreadable after exposure to oxygen for 48 hours when they can be tossed in the bin. It's a form of rental for those potatoes too lazy to get off their couches and take a proper DVD back to the shop. Environmental experts estimate that an expected 350 million discarded EZ-Ds will create 5600 metric tons of solid waste annually. Clever spin docs at Disney anticipated this one and wrote about it in their initial press release claiming a company "Green Disk" was on-line to recycle EZ-Ds posted to them - 2 problems with that: 1 - "Green Disk" didn't seem to know much about it, are not at all sure they have the technology to do so and will only commit to a 'maybe'. 2 - Surely people who are too lazy to take a DVD back to their video store are not going to take a trip to the Post Office.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers we still need some more mutants to add to the office gene pool. Honest.