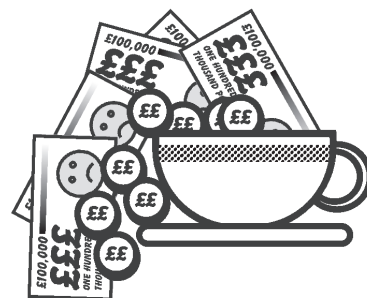




WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!!! IT'S YER TAP DANCING

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"Their cup runneth over"

THIRST FOR PROFIT

"How do you feel about your public services? Would you like them to stay public? Or would you prefer it if they were forcibly prised open to foreign corporate competition by way of a new international law? All in the name of trade, of course." - Paul Kingsnorth, The Ecologist.

Modalities. Appellate bodies. Singapore issues. Single undertakings. Come again? Welcome to the dictionary of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) who've been busy inventing their own language to bore us all into submission and pull the wool over our eyes so we just don't see their plans for the corporate carve up of the planet. Last weekend nearly 200,000 people in France saw through this fog of language and took part in a weekend rally against the WTO, whose fifth ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico is less than a month away.

For the past few years, the WTO have been trying to expand its snappily titled General Agreement on Trades in Services (or GATS - see SchNEWS 286), whose "privatise everything!" small print is a wet dream for corporations. The EU is using GATS to target everything from public healthcare, welfare, water, energy and transport networks in the developing world as its new golden goose. Its 109 'requests' for developing countries was a strictly classified document that got leaked onto the web. But why do they want to keep it a secret?

One of those requests from the EU is that 72 developing countries make commitments to open up their water supplies to competition.

The effects of this would be disastrous for the world's poor. Take Brazil for example. In Porto Alegre, the local water company DMAE is publicly owned, and financially independent from state control thanks to water bills paid by the 1.4 million city inhabitants. All profits are re-invested in the water supply, and through public meetings, everyone can have their say in what they think should be priority. This participatory model has been a massive success. 99.5% of the city's population now have access to clean water - the highest rate in Brazil. Overall consumption has gone down while the water rates are some of the lowest in the country. But under GATS if the Brazilian government imposed legal requirements for all water companies to act like DMAE it would be a 'barrier to trade' and illegal.

In the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka, a proposed privatisation was strongly opposed by the water workers' union, so the

Dhaka Water Authority contracted out one zone to the union, while another zone was given to a private water company for a year's trial. The union co-operative's results were so much better that they won the contract. Many more people now have access to running water and there has been a sizable reduction in water losses. But should the Government of Bangladesh give in to the EU's request then if any of their policies tried to expand the cooperative model they would likely to be in violation of GATS rules.

The city of Santa Cruz in Bolivia boasts one of the best-run water companies in Latin America and the only not-for-profit co-op in the world responsible for water supply and sanitation in a major urban centre. The EU is requesting that Bolivia put its water supplies under GATS rules. Should they agree then the promotion and implementation of these alternative models elsewhere in Bolivia would be illegal.

In Panama strikes and demonstrations in 1998 forced the then president to back down on plans to privatise the national water company and in Trinidad the UK water company Severn Trent, were kicked out of the country after 5 years after they'd put prices up while providing a worsening service.

The Bolivian mountain city of Cochabamba was also the setting for an epic struggle for control of the water supply in early 2000. Thousands protested at the sell-off of the city's water system to the US multinational Bechtel, who raised water bills by up to 300 per cent and required people to get a permit to collect rainwater in rooftop tanks. Eventually massive protests drove the corporation out and led to the water system being taken back into public ownership - an unprecedented reversal of a major privatisation.

So what would happen now if the Bolivian government decides to open up all its water services to corporate competition? Well the WTO has learnt that whenever governments try to sell off essential services they have faced mass protests. So they've come up with the GATS trump card - that once a

Why is the European Union so keen to get its hands on other countries water supplies? Well 70% of the world's private water supplies are owned by just two French companies Vivendi and Suez. The third largest is Thames Water, now part of German utilities conglomerate RWE.

CRAP EJECTION OF THE WEEK

For wearing a badge. A passenger was ejected from a British Airways flight from America to London for wearing a button saying "Suspected Terrorist". His partner was chucked off too because she was 'associated' with him. John Gilmore was asked to remove his button but refused, saying it was a political statement. The captain told him this was a federal crime and the two were chucked off. They were met by a BA official who said that passengers and crew are nervous about terrorism and that mentioning it bothers them. Asked whether he would be allowed to fly if he wore other buttons, perhaps one saying "Hooray for Tony Blair", the official reckoned that that would be okay. www.statewatch.org/news

service has been 'liberalised' (that's WTO talk for privatisation) there's no going back. As the WTO website once put it, GATS helps to "overcome domestic resistance to change." Which means even if there is massive protests or a government wants to take back control from a failing private company, it won't be able to unless it is ready to face the trade sanction consequences.

Clare Joy from the World Development Movement says "The record of water liberalisation and privatisation around the world has been a disaster. Many developing countries and impoverished communities have rejected the idea of providing water for profit yet the European members of the G8 are pushing them into a trade agreement, lobbied for by business and negotiated in secret, that will lock in liberalisation regardless of the cost to the poor and vulnerable."

Or as Paul Kingsnorth puts it "This is the story of Cancun - the story of a continuing power grab by private corporations operating under the fig leaf of the World Trade Organisation; a global colonisation of pretty much everything by profit-seeking private interests. And this is the key thing to grasp: this is not about 'trade' at all; it's about power and who gets it. Governments or corporations? Ordinary people or profiteers? The answers to those questions will affect all of our lives."

Time we started reminding them of the language of the street protest.

* Join the protests to derail the talk's www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/cancun

* Decode the gobbledegook - the World Development Movement has loads of excellent resources on GATS 020 72747630 www.wdm.org.uk

OIL THAI'D UP

For 3 years a beach at Lan Hoi Saip in Southern Thailand has been occupied by local residents in opposition to the Thai-Malaysian gasline project. The pipeline which runs 366km from the Gulf of Thailand to Kedah State in Malaysia is due to pass near to the beach and a gas separation plant is also due to be built nearby. Local opposition has already forced the Thai Prime Minister to announce a rerouting of the pipeline. But the protesters are vowing to fight on as one protester said "It's not really the gas pipeline or the plant that the government plans to build here that we are talking about, but the issue of local autonomy. This is part of a development plan that the state plans to implement in the south of Thailand and it contradicts the will of most people here. The state has failed the people already in eastern Thailand. Development there came with the construction of massive industrial estates. The result was people can't even live there. Schools had to move because of chemical fumes and no one can eat the fish anymore"

The occupation of the beach has already caused serious delay to the pipeline, so much so that the Malaysian government are now threatening to build it on their own and use all the gas themselves. With the pressure mounting on the Thai Government the protesters have been subjected to increased levels of repression. In December last year police attacked a demonstration in the nearby town of Hat Yai, 30 protesters and 15 police officers were injured. Since then several protesters have been arrested on trumped up charges. Now over 400 police have been drafted in to make sure that construction work on the project can begin. A police encampment has now been set up a few hundred yards from the Lan Hoi Saip encampment.

Thai activists are calling for international support. Contact the Thai Prime minister and ask him to stop the repression and give people the right to protest. Email him at govspkman@mozart.inet.co.th

More info www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/EF24Ae02.html or www.earthrights.org/takeaction/thaipipeline.shtml

Positive SchNEWS

The Talamh Life Centre in South Lanarkshire aims to build solutions to the social and environmental problems our society faces, by raising awareness that they are fundamentally linked. Set in a 50-acre site, the Centre was opened in 2000 with the intention of creating an educational resource, running courses in permaculture, managing wildlife and developing organic gardens and renewable energy. It also provides employment and a housing co-operative.

TLC provides a venue for events and workshops, and works co-operatively on a number of exciting projects each year with the local community, volunteers and various voluntary organisations. People of all backgrounds are welcome to come and learn, gain valuable work experience, and exchange and discover new skills in a relaxed environment. Or simply sit back and enjoy the natural environment. No previous experience is necessary, and all contributions are welcomed.

They have an open day on the 30 August, from 11am-4pm at Linfieldbank Hall (next to Talamh Life Centre), with guided walks, info, composting and gardening demo, herb walk and talk, creative writing and story telling. 01555 820880 or have a look at their web site www.talamhlifecentre.org.uk

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SchNEWS in brief

This Saturday (16) it's **Coca Karma**, an anti Coca Cola Benefit with a live Algerian band, Egyptian belly dancing with a Japanese twist, DJ's, Cafe/Bar. 10pm-7am, Eton Mission Social Club, 91 Eastway, Hackney Wick, London. £3. "Coca Cola is responsible for the killings of union leaders in their bottling plants in Colombia where workers have called for a boycott of the drink and other associated products. Coca Cola's misuse of water and HFCs (global warming compounds) is causing environmental havoc across the globe." (see SchNEWS 416) www.killercoke.org or www.cokewatch.org 020-89867966 ** About 300 people at the **noborder camp** in Cologne were arrested by German police on Saturday 9th. About 30 people were injured when batons were drawn and teargas was fired at protesters preparing for an anti-racist demonstration against a neo-nazi march. As it was a pro-freedom of movement camp, refugees and immigrants without papers were among those arrested. Solidarity actions have erupted all over Germany and a day of action has been called in Cologne for the 16th. See: www.noborder.org ** Info night on **Roma and Nomadic People** looking at the plight of the 700 Medjitlija Roma on the Greek border and the struggles of travellers in England and across fortress Europe. 7-11pm, 28th August, 2-4 Sutton Street, Whitechapel, London. 07956601849 yokerist@yahoo.co.uk ** Benefit party for **Rising Tide**, the climate change campaigners, with Sierra Leonean, Jewish and Gypsy music and DJ's mixing global beats plus 'Green Gold', a new film about a South African woman with a hazardous dumpsite in her doorstep. It's at The Spitz, 109 Commercial street (Liverpool St tube) 21st August, 7pm-12pm £10/£7. 01865 727911 www.risingtide.nl ** The Idaho Supreme Court has upheld a ruling that **Shearer Lumber Products**, one of the main employers in a small community, was within its rights to fire 22-year Michael Edmonson. Michael's crime was to go to meetings opposing a logging project being proposed by Shearer. He did not speak up at the meeting or express opinions to his fellow employees, but was fired anyway. Now what was that about the right to free speech? ** "**Why Don't You?**", the new direct action campaigning group for Tyneside, are holding a friendly competition for the best actions to get a message across. Contact whydonyou@post.com ** Since the end of the Iraqi war over 1000 Iraqi children have been killed or injured by unexploded cluster bombs. This Sunday (17) **Children Against the War** are staging an anti-cluster bomb protest in Whitehall. Meet noon in Parliament Square to march on Downing Street. Oldies are welcome too. Info 0845 4582564 ** Yesterday four people staged a rooftop protest at Smiths Aerospace in the West Midlands, the protest is a part of the build-up to the **Disarm DSEi** protests against Europe's biggest arms fair (6th-12th September). They were all later arrested under Section 241 of the Trades Union and Labour Relations Act which was introduced to stop people intimidating strike breakers! There are many more protests and gatherings planned in the run-up to DSEi. See www.dsei.org www.destroydsei.org **

SchNEWS needs someone to sort out our town distribution every Friday for a couple of hours. Please get in touch with the office.

Inside SchNEWS

Richard Campbell is serving a sentence for hostage taking. He told SchNEWS "whilst defending my squat from the governments attempts to make me homeless and destitute I effectively held on to a policeman barring his escape from the building. I have no family and no one to write to so any support whilst I am in here would be appreciated."

Write to Richard Campbell DE8059, HMP Wolds, Everthorpe, Brough, HU15 2JZ

HALL OF INFAMY

On June 21st Kevin White, a campaigner for Save the Newchurch Guinea Pigs, was arrested within one minute of leaving his car for attempting to join a demonstration at Branston Golf Club in Staffordshire. He was arrested on three charges, including causing intentional harassment and distress to the police officer that was pinning him to the ground, and failure to leave (spot the contradiction). As a result, Kevin is probably the first animal rights protester in the UK to be served with an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO'S - see SchNEWS 209).

ASBOs can be served on anyone over the age of 10 and were introduced in 1999 primarily to deal with 'neighbours from hell' and nuisance youths on housing estates. But the guidelines for its use include such distressing activities as graffiti and under-age smoking and drinking. Not only can an ASBO be served without the recipient being present to defend their case, but also hearsay evidence is permitted and is often the only evidence presented in proceedings. In Kevin White's case, written harassment warnings for attending protests outside farm workers houses have been used against him. When he took a small claim to the county court objecting against restrictions on his lawful right to protest, the case was thrown out, he was told he would be liable for court costs, and the fact that he had the bare-faced cheek to make the claim in the first place was included in the decision to serve an ASBO on him! Kevin says that in the likely event that he is found guilty of any of the three charges made on June 21st, his ASBO will come into force, restricting his activities for a period of 2-5 years and potentially banning him from the whole of Staffordshire.

The demonstration at Branston was intended to pressurise the club to dissolve the membership of John Hall of Newchurch Guinea Pig Farm. Newchurch Farm in Staffordshire breeds guinea pigs and sells them on to vivisection laboratories across the country. The multi-millionaire Hall family have run the farm for over 30 years and keep around 10,000 guinea pigs in filthy, overcrowded conditions where death from disease is common. The mothers often become so distressed that they eat their young, and when breeding stock animals become inefficient they have their necks broken by animal-loving staff. If the guinea pigs are unlucky enough to stay alive at the farm, they are sent off to labs for poisoning, mutilation and torture and the final humiliation of keeping the Hall family in luxury. Meanwhile, bail conditions prevent Kevin from coming within 4 miles of the farm, so protests have been set up at that point on the road leading to the farm.

Save The Newchurch Guinea Pigs (SNGP) have been campaigning since 1999 for the closure of the farm, raising public awareness in the area with regular demonstrations, rallies and marches.

SNGP 01902 564734 www.communi.gate.co.uk/worcs/rar/page5.phtml

* John Hall has since resigned his membership at Branston Golf Club following an Animal Liberation Front action in which 9 greens were damaged and spray-painted.

...and finally...

Traffic wardens are a zealous bunch and they even hound you after you're dead! In Australia a sharp-eyed warden slapped a parking ticket on a car parked illegally with what he believed was a very drunk man asleep in his car. The warden has now been sent for an eye test by his employer because he failed to notice that the man in the car was in fact dead, and had been for some time. The council has been forced to apologise to the man's family but failed to say whether they need to pay the fine.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers that we still need to tap your pockets before we dry up in a whirlpool of debts... Honest!