



wake up! wAKE UP! It's yer out of order

SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 24th October 2003

Free/Donation

Issue 428



YOBSMACKED!

“When the revolution comes, we’ll get rid of the police cos there’ll be no more crime... yeah right. Anarchist utopias are all very well, but anti-social behaviour is carving up communities in the here and now, and ‘blueprints for the future’ don’t take knives off throats.” - Bristol resident

Last week, without the help of apathetic police, archaic laws, or an out-of-touch government, the people of Greater Leys estate in Oxford did something for themselves. They decided they’d had just about enough of teenagers terrorising their neighborhood and issued an ‘eviction notice’ to the gang in the local park where they hang out.

The gang had taken control of the park, which people have to cross to get to the only local shop, and their threats and intimidation were escalating - one youngster was smashed in the face with a sawn-off pool cue, another slashed with a knife. One mother who turned to the cops after both her sons were attacked was told there was nothing they could do. She is now living in fear of reprisals after one of the ringleaders threatened to burn her house down.

Another local resident, Jane Lacey, said “What we are trying to do is show them (the gang) that they’re not big or clever doing this stuff - they’re screwing the community and they will be despised for it. We also want the parents of the gang members to sit up and take notice before it’s too late and their kids become totally beyond control.”

Despite the picket and eviction being organised through word of mouth, the gang got wind of the plan and stayed away, but residents promised to step up their campaign if the attacks and muggings continue. Already the family of one of the gang members has approached the family of two of the victims with an assurance that he will be a good boy from now on.

In Manchester, anti-mugging patrols happen on an irregular basis in part of the Hulme estate. Mick from Hulme told SchNEWS, “There are a lot of community activists and anarchists on the estate. Residents keep in touch with an email list called “shout”. Whenever anyone gets mugged or attacked someone sends a “shout” out to the list. Often people then take it upon themselves to arrange a time to do an anti-mugging patrol.

It’s not aggressive. Residents sit out around a fire or listen to a radio at the end of one of the streets. We tell passers by what we are doing and get a favourable

response. We can’t be everywhere on the estate at once, but the fact that there are people out and about seems to be very good at preventing muggers, at least for the period of the patrols. It also builds the kind of community spirit that prevents this kind of crime in the first place.

The people that have been mugged really appreciate this informal scheme as it is obvious for them that they live in an area where people do care about their neighbours. It turns around the “victim mentality” by doing something active and positive. I think the general consensus on the estate is that we’d rather do things this way than get CCTV. But maybe that’s cos we’re all so dodgy!”

In the Easton area of Bristol - getting over-run with crack selling yardies - locals who are tired of waiting for police who never come have taken things into their own hands too. They ‘cut off’ pay phones regularly used for drug dealing and spray painted ‘heroin for sale’ at a place of blatant public smack dealing. One of the members of the community, Flaco, points out “This isn’t about vigilantism, but about taking control back from all bogus authority - whether that authority is backed by parliament, or by a pistol in the boot of a BMW.”

Oh Behave Yourself!

So what do we do about anti-social behaviour? Introduce more laws that ultimately get used on protestors? Stalking laws were introduced to protect women but have now been used on protestors, while an animal rights activist has already been issued with an interim Anti Social Behaviour Order. So while it’s quite obvious to some of us that more laws aren’t the answer, then what is? If people are getting the crap beaten out of them while just going to the shop, or the local playground is full of needles, it really doesn’t help anyone to say, “Don’t worry- wait for the revolution and then everything will be alright.”

The answer’s not easy - community action against “anti-social behaviour” does have to be well handled and can be a magnet for thugs, vigilantes and right-wing reactionaries or people who want the police to have even more powers and more CCTV. In Easton, Bristol, the members of the community groups who came together agreed about the need for do-it-yourself action but found themselves divided on issues like installing CCTV cameras. The beating to death of Josie Dwyer, a Dublin heroin addict, by a vigilante mob, is a

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK For throwing a teabag

Yep you read it right, not a rock, a bottle or even a bomb but a harmless old teabag. A seventeen year old girl was recently nicked, charged and then sentenced to nine months community service (!) for throwing said tea bag at an animal abusers car during a demonstration outside the National Institute of Medical Research, a government sponsored vivisection lab in north London. Another protestor was charged with endangering a driver because he took a picture using a flash! 12 officers came to the house of the teenager to arrest her. Now that’s what SchNEWS reckons is real anti social behaviour.

particularly grim example of what can go wrong.

It is a serious problem that has to be faced, as a member of the Independent Working Class Association who won their first ever councilor in Greater Leys said “Issues like this have proved a major weakness for much of the orthodox Left - ‘The issue is difficult, so let’s avoid it.’ But isn’t that what radical politics should be about - providing practical solutions to problems, despite difficulties and dangers? If you can’t do that, why should anyone have any faith in your ability to solve bigger political problems? I often get the feeling the Left is more comfortable talking about ‘revolution’ or ‘stopping the war’, precisely because those questions don’t demand an immediate test of their politics...”

Individually the people of Greater Leys were vulnerable to attack - but collectively, by coming together as a community, they could tell the gang “Your behaviour isn’t acceptable”. As communities get stronger and people get to know each other, they can tackle all sorts of issues - like why there aren’t decent bus services or shops in their area. And if people from ‘radical’ politics are involved, local communities might just start taking their ideas seriously.

As one person from Oxford commented “We look to the Piqueteras in Argentina, the Zapatistas in Chiapas, and praise them for their direct action and seizing power and running their own communities without the aid of corrupt politicians. And yet, when the community-minded citizens in Oxford do the same thing, they are slagged off. We should be learning by their example, giving support, and helping other communities to take control of their own space. If they don’t, no one else will do it for them.”

More on the Blackbird Leys campaign www.bliwca.fsnet.co.uk

www.schnews.org.uk/sotw/evrybody-neighbours.htm

Neo-Order

"From the governments point of view, the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill is more important for what it says than what it does- but, unfortunately, it will also manage to impose some extremely oppressive controls on vulnerable people"-Legal Action Group (LAG)

While communities have been organising themselves, MPs this week have been debating the legal nitty-gritty of their new Anti-Social Behaviour Bill. Keep your radar switched on as this Bill is part of the government's wider campaign that originated with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and, though relatively minor in itself, it's important cos it's worded to allow nasty new clauses to be attached to existing Criminal Justice laws.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Bill is supposedly being put in place to give cops greater powers to 'protect' communities and deal with troublemakers such as 'deviant' kids in 'dysfunctional' families; it also allows for the dispersal of groups of two or more young people to prevent the 'risk' of disorder. Clause 59 of the bill, introduced quietly at a later stage, amends the Public Order Act 1986 so that the police can impose conditions on 'public assemblies' also consisting of just two people! The original powers were designed to prevent serious public trouble, but:

"LAG fears that those who will be the target of the bill's powers are likely also to be the 'victims' that it claims to protect. People who depend on the state for housing, income, education and support services are always subject to the changing fashions of welfare provision ... The resulting insecurities that such people experience make them more vulnerable to this current moral crusade."

RIP Ben
Ben Thirley, 24, tragically drowned last week. Originally from Sheffield, he had lived recently years in Bristol, Brighton and finally Bath. He was best known in Brighton after being involved in squats most significantly the Harvest Forestry squat in opposition to the Sainsbury development (as well as helping out with other things including SchNEWS). Always lending a hand, and everybody's mate, our thoughts go out to his family and friends. His funeral takes place next Friday (31st) in Sheffield.

Remember the Public Order Act 1986? That made it difficult to have festies, with strict restrictions on numbers. Then came the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, tightening the law even further. Those laws have had massive effects on festivals, protests, public assembly and free community events not approved by the cops or the council. The rise of Neo-Labour and its crusade against 'terror' has meant further clampdowns.

If this new Act is passed cops will more easily be able to ban protestors and partygoers from gathering for demos or knees-ups of two or more people; they will be able to arrest people 'trespassing' either outside or in disused buildings and they will be able to slap restriction orders on protestors and ravers alike.

As Statewatch point out "Left unchecked, basic freedoms and democratic standards - freedom of movement, freedom of expression and the right to protest, freedom from surveillance in everyday life, accountability, scrutiny and data protection - will be whittled away one by one threatening the very democracy being defended by the 'war on terrorism.'"

Check out LAG editorial: www.lag.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=90471

Statewatch: www.statewatch.org/news/2003/oct/22s2sub.htm

Subscribe!

Keep SchNEWS FREE! Send 1st Class stamps (e.g. 10 for next 9 issues) or donations (payable to Justice?) Ask for "Originals" if you can make copies. Post free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o on-the-fiddle, P.O. Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 0EF.

Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email schnews@brighton.co.uk Download a PDF of this issue or subscribe at www.schnews.org.uk

Bush-me, Bull-you

Warmongers that prey together, stay together. Literally, in the case of Tony & George. Bush will be in the UK from 19-21st Nov. As well as a full state banquet (courtesy of the tax-payer) he will stay overnight at Blair's tiny Sedgefield constituency house. No doubt they'll be allowed to stay up late and play Battleships.

With so many people against the war in Iraq, it should mean anti-Bush action is just as widespread. A special website, www.resistbush.org, has been set-up to co-ordinate protests during the visit. At 2pm in Hyde Park there will be a march to Trafalgar Square, where a statue of Bush will be toppled. Depending on how cold it is on the day, it is hoped there will be a mass anti-Bush moon, perfectly expressing the sentiments of most of the UK. (www.bloggerheads.com/can_weblogs/bush_bum.asp). Anti-Bush bus passengers should note that with a slight adjustment, signs can easily be amended to 'Bush Stop.'

On Nov 5th, before Bush's visit, www.burningbush.org.uk is asking people to put George on their bonfire instead of Guy Fawkes. They even provide a DIY kit on their website including a Bush mask and press release for the local paper. As Blair has already visited his chum several times, to explain where Iraq is, etc. it's not even clear why Dubya is coming here. Number 10 explains it as "an important opportunity to deepen our close relationship with a close international partner". You wonder how close Tony and George can get without penetration.

With any luck the extent of the protests will make the earth move for George. Already plans for the Queen and George W Bush to make a triumphant procession along the Mall have been abandoned because of fears of anti-war protests. He will travel by helicopter to avoid protesters lining road routes, other proposed events have been curtailed or cancelled, and he will not address Parliament because of fears of a boycott by MPs. Join the discussions resistbush@yahoo.co.uk

Still at a loss for what to get involved in to show George your displeasure? Let last weeks' 'Sunday Mirror' be your well-informed guide: "ANARCHISTS PLOT TO STORM THE PALACE" ran the headline, in a seasonal nod to Guy Fawkes. "Anarchist groups are secretly planning to swamp tight security at the palace by sending thousands of protesters over the wall at the same time," foams the rag's man-in-the-know, fingering anti-war and anti-capitalist groups from Justice not Vengeance to rent-a-blame faves Reclaim the Streets. "They are using the internet and text messages to organize the attack on the Queen's residence... Secret meetings have been held across the country to plan the 'Resist Bush' protests, which include roadblocks and huge rallies. Hundreds of anti-capitalist hardliners are expected to travel from Paris to join the demonstrations. They have been involved in violence across Europe and will be at the European Social Forum prior to Mr Bush's visit."

So, don't say you weren't warned.

SchNEWS in brief

Benefit gig for the protest camp at **Sherwood Forest** this Sunday (26) at The Maze, 257 Mansfield Road, Nottm £5 / £3 . 8pm till 12 ** On Monday, tens of thousands marched to **La Paz**, celebrating the resignation of **President Lozada** (see last weeks SchNEWS). The marches came after new president, Carlos Mesa, a millionaire media mogul, named his new cabinet. Bolivians must wait and see if this unlikely revolutionary will bring about any real change. For more check out Bolivia Watch on www.zmag.org/ ** **Halloween anti-war demo in Brighton**, meeting near the Old Steine fountain, 5:30pm. Ghosts of anger theme! ** **Rail union RMT** have called for a return the daily inspection of tube tracks or they will consider themselves "in dispute" with **Jarvis-owned Metronet**, "responsible" for track maintenance. Profit-hungry Metronet insist on checking tracks only once every 3 days leading to two tube derailments over the past week. Good old Jarvis have had to hand back control of national rail maintenance because of their appalling safety record ** A campaign is being launched to oppose plans for the Oxford Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre to become a **Foundation Trust**. Get along to the meeting 6th November Quarry Village Hall Quarry Road Oxford 7.30pm www.oxfordsa.org.uk/campaigns ** Many video collectives sprang up in the wake of the **Argentinian crisis in 2001** to document the struggle to build a new society. A selection of some of the best ones will be shown next Thursday (30) at **The Other Cinema**, 11 Rupert Street, London W1. 9pm. £5/7 unwaged/waged. Tel: 020 7437 0757 www.indymedia.org.uk ** **The Free Mumia Abu-Jamal** campaign have produced a 32 track double CD including tracks from Primal Scream, Chumbawumba, Asian Dub Foundation, Zion Train and Smith & Mighty . 150 minutes in total plus booklet £15. Mumia is the ex Black Panther fitted up by the Philadelphia police who has been on death row for 22 years www.cultureshop.org/

Inside SchNEWS

75 year old Environmental activist Betty Krawczyk, was last week sentenced to six months in jail after she was found guilty of criminal contempt of court for continuing to participate in physical blockades of logging roads in British Columbia. Betty is no stranger to prison, with the judge saying "her confinement to be comparable to a self-inflicted wound."

Write to Betty, 03793924, Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women, 7900 Fraser Park dr., Burnaby, British Columbia, V5J 5H1

...and finally...

Here cum da judge

"Witnesses saw the judge simply raise his gown, open his trousers and perform unmistakable movements," said French newspaper Charente Libre, whose reporter was in court when an unnamed judge began masturbating openly while an attorney was pleading his case. "The justice minister has asked a judicial council to review the case. Punishment is likely to involve a temporary suspension from duty," said an official spokesman. We thought no one gave a toss about justice.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers if you can't vandal the same old yob story - that's your problem.