



Research on apes will tell us a lot about ourselves

PRIMATE CHANGE

"It was the threat, often put into action, of constant protest at the entire University, and the negative impact we were having on their donors worldwide. We hit them where they were most vulnerable - their finances - and left them with no choice." - SPEAC Campaign.

This week, Cambridge University abandoned plans for a primate vivisection lab in Cambridge, with the University saying that it could not "take financial risks of this magnitude". The costs of the building had risen from £24m to £32m, and the costs of security, not to mention disruption, from protests by animal rights campaigners must also have played a part in the decision. (Not that Cambridge University would admit that, however).

But the centre, which was supposedly set to study diseases of the brain, should never have been given the go-ahead in the first place. The plans were originally rejected twice by the local Council; the plan then went to public enquiry. At the public enquiry, there were objections from Cambridge Council because it was being built on green belt land and from the police 'cos there were concerns about the costs of policing and disruption from the inevitable protests. Animal rights campaigners also objected, arguing that there was no need for the centre and that the experiments to be carried out were not only cruel, but bad science. The inspector agreed and stated that the centre should not go ahead. But so what - Deputy-PM John Prescott overruled the inspector and gave the go ahead on the advice of Lord Sainsbury, the Science Minister and Neo Labour's biggest financial backer (SchNEWS 432), because it was in "the national interest".

Gorilla Warfare

While the scientific establishment tries to paint anyone opposing vivisection as anti-science, there are many scientists who also oppose medical research using animals. Dr. Ray Greek, Medical Director of Europeans for Medical Advancement, gave evidence against the centre. He said that scientists are so scared to speak out against their employers that one researcher resorted to having his face blacked out and voice disguised for a television debate about the use of animals in research. This is because research is often carried out to attract funds rather than for actually-valuable research.

The fundamental problem about animal research is that humans are different to other animals, not just the fact that we walk on two legs and wage barbaric wars, but at the molecular level, as Professor Claude Reiss,

who gave evidence at the inquiry said. "No species can function as a reliable biological model for another species," said Reiss. "Even the chimpanzee, our closest relative in evolutionary terms, is no model for research on the human brain." The University was even unable to provide examples of findings from monkeys that translated into progress in medical care for people - because there are no hard examples to be found. The use of animals to develop drugs for humans is deeply flawed-even the scientific director of Huntingdon Life Sciences, a large drug and product testing lab (also in Cambridge), says the accuracy of using animals to predict effects in humans is 5-25%! Hardly exact science.

There are a whole host of other methods to study disease. These include: cell, tissue, and organ culture where human tissues are grown and experimented on; sophisticated computer modelling to study metabolism, screen drugs, and for use in education; and clinical research where diseases are studied in patients to identify the characteristics, symptoms, and possible causes.

Later this year, the Neurosciences Research Institute at Aston University will open. They won't be damaging monkey brains to study Alzheimer's, but will instead study human brains, both living and post-mortem. It will include research groups working on behavioural and cognitive sciences, and vision and eye diseases. The results from their studies will be directly relevant to humans.

Monkey Business

Still, Cambridge University won't accept alternatives, and still insist on the need for the lab. Professor Tony Minson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the University said, "The animal rights groups will of course claim this as a victory, but in our view they have won no arguments whatsoever. We still believe this work to be of significant national importance." Er, Prof. Whatever happened to objective scientific opinion? At the public enquiry, the inspector concluded: "I could not conclude that need in the national interest is demonstrated insofar as this pertains to the scientific/medical research and procedures undertaken by the University." In

SchNEWS Tour Warm Up Date

There will be a talk about SchNEWS and about setting up a local newsletter, some short films, and a speaker about the G8 coming to Britain and about genetics. 8pm, 10th Feb, Freedom Café, Southampton.

If you are interested in hosting the SchNEWS tour, email: tour@schnews.org.uk

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For playing half a song...

Last week, cash-strapped Lambeth Council spent £30,000 on prosecuting Shane Collins, licensee of last May's Cannabis Free Festival. The crime? Allowing a sound system to play for EIGHTY FIVE SECONDS after the licensee permit had ended! The case was dismissed with the Judge asking why the prosecution was brought to court in the first place and commending Shane for the way the festival was organized!

* Squall, BASS and RDK are having a benefit night on February 7th for this year's Cannabis march and festival @ The Hobgoblin, Effra Road, Brixton, 9pm-2.30am.

other words, an independent person who looked at all the evidence said there wasn't any need for the centre! SchNEWS reckons that's Animal Abusers 0 Animal Rights 4.

To read about the campaign that stopped the centre and why experiments on monkeys are cruel and just make for bad science see www.primateprison.org

* There's another vivisection lab in Cambridge, the notorious Huntingdon Life Sciences, where they don't just develop drugs, but test household products, on animals - "Oven dirty madam? Pour this down your dog's throat, that'll clean him out." For more about this ongoing campaign, contact Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty 0845 458 0630 www.shac.net

LORD CHEQUE-OUT

Since 1994, David Sainsbury has bankrolled the Neo-Labour Party to the tune of over £11m. In 1997, six months after binging Labour £1m to clear their overdraft, Sainsbury was made a Lord. By 1998, and a few million quid later, he was made a science minister. As science minister, Lord Sainsbury has been busy promoting GM crops, biotechnology and vivisection. Sainsbury not only has a massive share in the supermarket chain, but also wholly owns Diatech, a biotech company, and owns the world-wide patent rights over the "translator enhancer" gene currently used in the genetic modification process.

Sainsbury also partly funds the Sainsbury Laboratory, which, since he became Science Minister, has seen funding increase by 400% from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC). Sainsbury appoints everyone to the board of the BBSRC and it has now spent more than £18m on research into GM-related crops.

SchNEWS would like to point out, however, that all of this of course has no influence whatsoever on the Government's decision to grant the go-ahead for the primate lab or to be in favour of GM technology.

TRAVEL SICKNESS

People being kicked off land which they own and then having their dwellings burned out?! We must be talking about Palestine, here... Er, no - Essex.

On Monday, a travellers' site at Meadowlands near Chelmsford was evicted, with four arrests, forcing 30 people off land they own and had been on since 2001. To do the dirty work, Chelmsford Council brought in self-proclaimed 'gypsy and squatter eviction specialists' Constant And Co, who had to get past earth banks, barricades and ditches, plus the travellers and supporters in order to clear the site. Constant were determined not to lose two in a row after travellers in Bulkington near Coventry successfully defended their self-owned site several weeks before, giving the 150 residents a much-needed reprieve.

When the bailiffs took the site in Meadowlands on Monday, it was agreed after negotiations that the ten caravans still there were to be taken by Constant to another site at Epsom. This never happened, however. Instead, by the end of the following day, several caravans had been burned out on the nearby road-side where Constant had left them after briefly towing them away from the original site. A witness with a camera who visited on Tuesday to see the smoldering ruins of peoples' homes was intimidated by Constant staff, who claimed that the caravans were torched - **by the travellers themselves!** - at 3am on Monday night. A supporter who stayed in one of the caravans on Monday night contradicted this ridiculous claim. Now travellers are trying to get a straight answer from the Chelmsford Council as to why Constant never delivered the caravans to the Epsom site. It makes us at SchNEWS wonder... we know Constant And Co are the 'gypsy and squatter eviction specialists', now we'd like to know who the covert arson specialists are!

To compensate the travellers for the inconvenience of being made homeless, Chelmsford Council set up a "homeless office" in nearby Great Waltham at the parish hall, but omitted to tell the travellers the facility was available, and anyway there was a roadblock stopping them

getting there. A few travellers were then sent to the Silverwood motel in Essex, but after only two nights, and during mid winter snowfall, they were being forced to provide ID, proof of income, and proof of links to Meadowlands, for the privilege of continuing their stay. There is also a chance that the council will exercise their legal right to repossess the land to pay for the eviction, which cost £100,000. The site is conveniently worth £90,000.

Now, we know that it's the middle of winter and all that, but Meadowlands could have been saved if there'd been more support at the eviction. This was not a one-off event - counties up and down the country have long-held campaigns to rid their area of travellers, whether they be Romany, or so-called 'new age'. For instance two self-owned sites near Epping - Hamlet Hill and Paynes Lane - are under threat of eviction and urgently need help. Trouble also looms for the traveller-owned Dale Farm near Basildon - home to over 1,000! - which is a virtual village with established gardens and dwellings (albeit without planning permission). The local Tory MP is soon to meet Tory Tony himself to seek extra powers to enforce an eviction. Travellers in Totnes wrote to us recently about being forced onto an 'authorised' council site next to a busy road.

Travellers are struggling for the right to live on land - even when they own it - yet countless developments and roads get rubber stamped all the time on public land. Contact the following groups to find out how you can help travellers resisting eviction in your area:

* National Travellers Action Group 01767689736

* Romani Congress 2004 www.lafn.org/~romanikongreso

* For recent history of travellers in Britain see <http://tash.gn.apc.org/>

* For more info on Meadowlands 01206 523528 or ustiben.5@ntlworld.com

* **Please don't pester Constant And Co**, who are doing a great job of ethnically cleansing Britain! 66 Harpur Street, Bedford, 01234 340091 www.constantand.co.uk constant@kbnet.co.uk

DIS-ASDA

The Dis-Asda campaign on the Old Kent Road in South London, which has a colourful history of resistance to the authorities and Wal-Mart, is resisting final eviction. Over the last month, the building on Ossory Road (scheduled to be demolished and a brand spanking new Asda built in its place) has been boarded up, evicted, damaged by bailiffs and re-squatted. Plans by Wal-Mart/Asda for final eviction and demolition were foiled by campaigners on the 19th when bailiffs arrived to find barricades and a group of protestors who refused them entry. As of today (29th), however, out-numbered protestors have lost possession of the building, but continue to occupy the site with caravans.

The Old Kent Road already has a Tesco, Aldi, Lidl, McDonalds, and a Toys R Us, but what the 100,000 people who live nearby don't have are decent community facilities. Traffic, pollution and respiratory disease are at an all time high in the area, which also ironically has the lowest car ownership in London.

Wal-Mart's military-style economic empire has been achieved by undermining workers wages and rights. Employees are forbidden from joining unions and wages are pushed to a barely legal minimum. The low prices in their supermarkets are achieved by outsourcing work to low-wage, no-rights factories in poor countries.

Meanwhile, the Dis-Asda campaign awaits its inevitable demise, to make room for yet another superstore, low prices gained through exploitation, and those damn annoying yellow smiley faces. www.walmartwatch.com www.ossoryroad.org.uk

...and finally...

What do you think the City of Brighton and Hove is really crying out for? Less homelessness? Rent reductions all-round? Less trendy shops and more services? Well, no, actually, coz according to the Council and consultants from Strategic Management Partners, all we REALLY need is a new "brand image".

The Council told SchNEWS that it was high time to take a "fresh look at the image of Brighton and Hove" and so will be hiring consultants "to draw together the best aspects" of the City into a new brand image. Of course they couldn't tell us how much all of this branding business will cost, but we reckon that what it all boils down to in the end is the city blowing its own trumpet while blowing our cash!!!! Will it be similar to the sort of branding dreamt up by the idiots at EB4U - who spent a quarter of a million on putting a positive spin on some of Brighton's poorest estates when the money would have been much better spent on the estates themselves? Or the thousands of pounds spent on the unsuccessful bid to become the next European City of Culture?

Still not wishing to be overly cynical, we at SchNEWS Towers have come up with a few ideas for branding that Strategic Management Partners might find useful. How about - A latte and a needle? The West Pier falling into the sea? Traffic jams? Pictures of homeless workers living in cardboard boxes because they can't afford to rent or buy houses here?

As one Brighton resident on the SCIP listserv has said, "This is a complete waste of time and money. But then again, the council finds delivering services and housing poor people too much like hard work... Now if we can just get rid of the few stalls left in the open market that actually sell food and stuff that people want." If you'd like to contact Strategic Management Partners with your own brand spanking ideas: 01273-675924 www.consult-smp.com

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers...Gorilla warfare is no monkey business. Honest!

SchNEWS in brief

To discuss the fact that **anti-terrorism laws** are routinely used to arbitrarily search muslims and at large peaceful demos there will be a meeting at Church Hall, Warwick Road West, Luton, (Saturday 31st, 7pm). What would you do if you were stopped and searched or arrested under anti-terrorism laws? What are your Rights? What are police powers? More info: 07903 053362 www.ihr.org.uk ** Delegates at the '**Risks & Opportunities in Caspian and Central Asian Oil & Gas**' got a bit of a surprise on Tuesday when people from London Rising Tide bike-locked themselves to furniture during the meeting and let everyone know about the environmental and climatic effects of running pipelines through the Caspian oil fields www.risingtide.org.uk ** Last week **Paul Rylott, top GM scientist at Bayer Cropscience**, delivered a stirring speech on how to manage consumer response to biotechnology at a conference in London. As he took his place in the queue for his buffet dinner, a polite call of "Mr Rylott?" brought him face to face with a chocolate fudge cake (skipped and stale and covered with rotting whipped cream) and the shout "That's for GM!" Before the biotech baking brigade left, leaflets were given out to the surprised crowd and all those protesting even managed to leave before the cops arrived. ** Benefit gig for **Brighton Peace and Environment Centre**. Saturday 31st, 6:30pm, Komedia, Gardner Street, £8.50/£5.

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unCOSTAINable

Hundreds of trees are being felled for a £30 million, 2 mile stretch of bypass in Blackwood, near Newport, South Wales. The contractors Costain (who people might remember from Newbury) are building a compound as we type and people have started taking direct action. More people are urgently needed on site. To find out more text message 07708420446

* As of Thursday (29th) **the Nine Ladies protest camp is still there**, with sixty people on site ready to resist the eviction (the order was served last Friday). People are still needed on site, as well as food, cement, ropes, and a gourmet chef! Contact 07005942212 for details.

Inside SchNEWS

Sue Brackenbury would welcome letters and CDs as she awaits trial in HMP Eastwood Park, Falfield, Wotton-under-edge, Glos, GL12 8DB. She is one of three people accused of attempting to disarm a Trident Sub at Devonport Docks last year. Their trial is set for the 25th of Feb in Plymouth.

* Two activists were acquitted at Helensburgh District Court last Thursday on breach of the peace charges relating to blockades of Faslane trident nuclear submarine base in Scotland. Usually there are automatic guilty verdicts for Faslane-related offences, but this time the judge said there was a lack of evidence that any one was alarmed by their actions! More on both these stories 08454588365 www.tridentploughshares.com