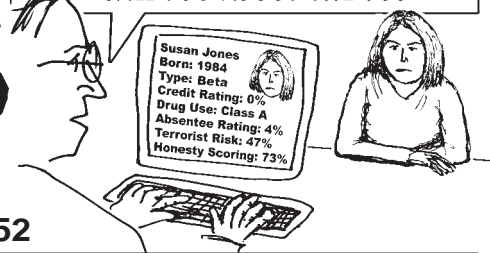


THANK YOU MISS JONES. WE'LL CALL YOU ABOUT THE JOB



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BORN TO BE FILED

“Ultimately, a computer cannot go round to a house and help a child who is distressed or in danger. Only a human being can do that. Rather than wasting money on computer systems that are likely to make matters worse, all our available resources should be going towards solving the staffing crisis in social work.” – Action on Rights for Children in Education.

A couple of months ago the government published the Children’s Bill, which is supposed to protect children from abuse. But rather than putting more money into social services so that social workers are not overstretched and understaffed it will create an Orwellian database of every child in the country (11 million people) which will do little to protect children at risk from harm. Now call us paranoid, but isn’t a vast database another step towards a total surveillance society where your every move is traced and if you don’t conform to a defined set of behaviours then you are labeled subversive or anti-social?

In typical Neo-Labour control freak style, it seems that they don’t trust parents to look after their own children and think that social workers are incapable of protecting children. They think that rather than giving people with problems the support they need and funding decent social services they can protect children with a massive unwieldy database.

Currently information on any child that is at risk of suffering abuse or neglect should be shared between agencies. This is designed to give social services a picture of children who suffer or could suffer harm. But the new database will go a whole lot further. *Every single child* will have their details recorded! These intrusive virtual ID cards allow any concern from a professional involved with children to be entered on the database without redress. Examples of concerns are things such as low birth weight, being miserable at school, poor exam results, or family problems such as addiction or poor living conditions. But rather than try to address these problems directly, the main thrust of the database is to collect information, if any child has two concerns flagged up on the database then they will be further investigated.

The problem with this approach is that it may in fact deter people from seeking help. If children and parents know that every time they ask for help, they risk attracting unwanted attention and having their privacy invaded, it is likely that they will keep their

problems to themselves until they simply cannot cope, rather than seeking advice at an early stage. Parents may need help with depression or stress related drinking, or a child may need help with a drug problem or pregnancy, but what they really need is access to decent facilities and support rather than being entered on a database as being labeled as a “problem”. The flagging up of a vast number of concerns on a database will increase workloads for caseworkers, trying to trawl through a whole load of issues that have nothing to do with child abuse but everything to do with living under poor social conditions. Indeed the RYOGENS (Risk of Youth Offending Generic Solution) database used to target potential young offenders, includes things such as “Frequently moving house”, “Missed medical appointment” and “Living in high crime area”. It also has the Orwellian catch-all of “Involvement in crime/antisocial behaviour” or “Denies involvement in crime/antisocial behaviour”!

FAMILIES TIED

No doubt this database will be outsourced to some wonderful private company who will make a lot of money, while making a complete mess up of the database. Like when C(r)apita were given the contract to run the Criminal Records Bureau which resulted in kids being turned away from school at the start of the 2002/2003 school year because they hadn’t got round to checking the records of the teachers (SchNEWS 371). They also got their greasy mitts on the Connexions scheme which re-mixes child support services into a “one-stop shop” service to set you on the career treadmill, sorry ladder.

Another unsavoury company involved in child “protection” is SERCO, who are into prisoner tagging, monitoring and building young offenders institutions, and who also make money out of managing places like the Aldermarston Atomic Weapons Establishment and the Fylingdales Spy Base. This company has also been involved in running all of Islington’s Schools and was fined £300,000 for failing to reach their own performance targets (SchNEWS 324).

The Government and their private partners have a pretty poor record of running new computer systems like the Child Support Agency, Passports and Tax Credits. An audit of the Met’s Police National Computer files in 2000 showed that 85% of files contained errors, four-fifths of which were considered serious.

And while you might be able to see what

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For drawing cartoons!

A 15 year old school boy from Seattle was recently nicked, and then questioned by the Secret Service, after his art teacher found him drawing cartoons depicting Bush as the devil firing missiles at all and sundry. Another picture showed, rather ironically, The Bill of Rights and the Constitution in flames – which is fair enough if you ask us. After the boy was released the Secret Service confiscated all the pictures to which the boy said “they’re blowing this way out of proportion”.

is written about you on all official databases and correct mistakes, with the new children’s database parents and children won’t have any access to their own files. But there are a huge number of “professionals” who can access the database: including local councils, police, health workers, prison services, teachers, and anyone else who the Secretary of State “arranges to provide, secure or participate in the provision of services”. Now with such a vast number of people accessing the database, except those affected by them, the possibility for people misusing the database to target children is worrying. Rowan, a seventeen year old commented “No security system for databases of this sort is infallible and once information is breached it can spread” And Action Rights for Children say “What would social services think of a parent who published their children’s names and addresses on the Internet? [The government] are putting all our children in danger and increasing the problems of those children who are already at risk of harm.”

Let’s face it, another massive database won’t be able to offer any protection to children. Just because a family lives in a high crime area, has a family member with an addiction or mental health problem or doesn’t somehow fit in to a “professional’s” perceived correct behaviour doesn’t mean that a child is any more likely to be abused than someone from a nice respectable nuclear family.

More information on the Children’s Bill from ARCH-ED: www.arch-ed.org/chldmbill.htm

* Protest Against the Children’s Bill, May 11th. 11.30am-2.00pm, Grosvenor Square, London. 020 8558 9317 archrights@aol.com

* There’s a virtual protest, which can be entered online at www.arch-ed.org/cbvdemo.htm

SchNEWS At Ten Tour

The SchNEWS Tour ended last Saturday in Ipswich after a storming three week lap around Britain stopping off at twenty one towns, cities and protest camps along the way. A big thank you to everyone along the way who organised the shows, put us up, fed us, and to everyone who came to the gigs.

The tour was a big learning curve for us as the format and content of the show evolved, (sorry for some early chaotic gigs,) and we had to get our heads around the sheer diversity of activity all around Britain. So while we visited a few well known social centres and housing co-ops, we also had pleasant surprises in places outside the usual activist networks. On one hand you had established centres like the Sumac Centre in Nottingham, Kebele in Bristol, and LARC in Lancaster; on the other it was exciting to check out lesser known ones like the Greenhouse in Bolton and the 11A in Gloucester. And what we saw was just the tip of an iceberg of activity in Britain.

SchNEWS in brief

This weekend's **Cannabis festival** in London has been postponed due to the grass being wet (geddit?). New date is 5th June - which is unfortunately also the date for **Cambridge's Strawberry Fair!** www.thecannabisfestival.co.uk ** Listen to the **Refugee's Story: How UK Foreign Investment Creates Refugees and Asylum Seekers**. Talk next Thursday (13) 6pm at the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd., Brighton ** Everything you ever wanted to ask about lethal **Tetra Masts** (telecoms masts that use microwaves) but couldn't find the right person to ask? Well get along to a public meeting at the City Gate centre (above Blockbusters), in London Road, Brighton on May 14 starting at 7.30pm. www.protectsussexfromtetra.org ** This Sunday (9) **Cambridge Indymedia** will be showing '**Genoa Red Zone**' in the back room of the Locomotive on Mill Road. www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/cambridge/ ** Next Saturday (15) there will be **demonstrations at Nestle** sites around the UK noon with the main one at their HQ in Croydon. **Baby Milk Action** is still finding leaflets and advertisements from Vietnam, Egypt and South Africa, which violate the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes 01223 464420 www.babymilkaction.org ** **Kyoto** march, to protest against climate change also happening next Saturday (15). Either join the march from ExxonMobil (Esso) HQ in Leatherhead, or at the US embassy 0208 8553327 www.campaigncc.org ** There's a one day Conference '**Fight Temporary Work**' happening on 22nd May in Bristol, for those engaged in fighting casualisation to discuss strategies and build alliances. If you're interested in going then email: bristolacc@hotmail.com. They are also organising a National Picket of Employment Agencies from 17-21st May. The multinational **Benetton** owns massive amounts of land in Patagonia, **Argentina**, and seems to want more. This Friday (7) Benetton will be in court against some indigenous inhabitants (the Mapuches) who object to being evicted from their own land www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1856.html ** **Tesco** is doing a trial of **bio diesel** called Global Diesel at selected filling stations. Their biodiesel costs next to nothing to produce, but costs more than ordinary diesel and even unleaded petrol! Perhaps the price has been hiked up so the idea falls flat on it's face and keep the oil companies happy. ** Disney is blocking the release of **Michael Moore's** new film, because it might jeopardise tax breaks that they get from Jeb Bush, in Florida. www.michaelmoore.com ** **Subversive Sussex walks** - rebellions, squatting, sabotage and smuggling. May 8th, 15th, 19th and 22nd, 1:30pm Old Ship Hotel, Brighton seafont.

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The format settled at one hour of SchLIVE newsreading and films, followed by a run-through of the history and production process of SchNEWS. Then, for the second half the floor was opened to any local group and a general discussion. These ranged from discussion on how to tackle specific issues to some pretty off the wall political meanderings. While the Dissent! network and the build-up to the G8 in Britain came up, we mostly focused on regional issues. Groups who spoke ranged from hunt sabs to road protest camps, social centres and newsletters to community allotments. There is just so much going on. One notable issue which came up in place after place was the rise of the far-right and the BNP.

* To all those we met on the way: keep in contact and we will feed more of your stuff into future issues of SchNEWS.

* See you at Strawberry Fair, Glastonbury, and other festivals

Terror Briefs

Ten people detained under the terrorism act for supposedly plotting to attack a **Manchester United** game were released without charge after no evidence against them was found. Tickets found in some homes were old and kept just for souvenirs! It seems likely that they were just fanatical fans ** Meanwhile in **Macedonia** the government has admitted that it gunned down seven innocent Pakistani immigrants, claiming they were terrorists, to show they were participating in the US-led war on terror. Six people have now been charged with murder ** Meeting this Saturday (8) **Chechnya and the War on Terror** 10.45 am at the French Institute, 17 Queensberry Place (South Kensington tube) 07984 178 1993 Monde-Diplo-Friends@mondediplo.com ** **Colombian oilworkers on strike** over pay and the threat of privatisation have been told they face the use of anti-terrorism laws. The strike which has been declared illegal by the Government (although selling off the countries oil industry to corporations that will plunder Colombia's natural resources is fine) has led to the arrest of 17 strike leaders and the threat of military force to bust the strike. www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk ** Last Thursday in **El Salvador**, 50 demonstrators wearing ski masks burst into the main cathedral to protest against the decision of their president not to withdraw troops from Iraq. The soldiers will have to wait till August to come back home. Police initially used tear gas and clubs to clear away dozens of protesters left outside the Church. Many protesters were injured and the police detained three people. ** The **Fairford Five** have been told by the judge in their case that they cannot challenge the legality of the war in Iraq as part of their defence. The five will now appeal against the judge's decision. Margaret Jones hopes "that a jury will recognise the spirit in which we undertook our action - that they will understand our arguments about "lawful excuse." An action normally considered a crime can be justified when you are trying to prevent a worse crime taking place." www.tridentploughshares.org/antiwar/mjones.php

Inside SchNEWS

"Slick" is an anti-fascist who took part in the October 1993 demonstration against the British National Party offices in Welling, London. The police aggressively defended the BNP, and fighting broke out between anti-fascists and cops. Slick was sentenced to 5 years for this, but disappeared until he was recently arrested and is now inside and would welcome letters of support. Write to him at C.Varkki JR9335, HMP Elmlea, Church Rd, Eastchurch, Shearness, Kent, ME 12 4 AY

More Inside SchNEWS

Kerry Whitburn has been sentenced to 4 months in prison in connection with actions against Newchurch Farm where guinea pigs are bred for vivisection. Send letters of support to Kerry Whitburn LC7479, HMP Nottingham, Perry Road Sherwood, Notts NG5 3AG www.liberation-now.org

...and finally...

The Irish Government held a big party for their 10 new friends and everyone was invited... except us.

This years mayday demonstrations in Dublin were marred by the presence of a hooligan element intent on rumour mongering and provoking violence. Corporate journalists and the police united in a staggering display of grandiose lying, wild exaggerations and brute force.

A regular diet of outrageous media claims about the "anarchists" in general and the Wombles in particular laid the ground for increasingly paranoid "police measures", culminating in the Republic's first use of Water Cannons and fully clad riot cops.

The Sun warned of an email they received from a group called an@rky who threatened to kill up to 10,000 people including Bertie Ahern (Irish PM) and the 24 EU Prime Ministers who were in town in a gas attack. They conveniently warned people to stay away from Farmleigh House where the EU summit was held. They also helpfully went to quite a lot of trouble describing exactly what kind of gas and techniques they would use.

What wasn't explained is how they planned to get 250 litres of battery acid into Farmleigh, and why they sent their warning to the Sun... Also not explained is the origin of the e-mail, which the police took so seriously but couldn't trace, and why would an anarchist group want everyone to stay away from the protest? The Sun went on to predict that the anarchists would turn "Dublin into Basra" on Saturday's demo at the EU conference centre. Dublin was declared a "no-go zone" for American tourists as the army patrolled the streets.

In the centre of this frenzied attention, a coalition of anti-EU activists raised a bit of noise in celebration of an alternative society. Dublin's biggest ever Critical Mass on Friday saw a 500 strong block of cyclists reclaim the streets for a few hours. Saturday was the big day, with about 4,000 people coming together to march on the EU delegates in Phoenix Park. Coming to a wall of police, the anarcho block linked arms in rows and huffed and puffed till the pigs fell down. Some people rushed through at this point, only to meet another wall of riot cops and, making it's debut, a big motherfuckin water cannon truck.

A slow, soaked but dignified withdrawal to the city centre began, thus ending one of the most dramatic days in recent protest history in Eire. An RTS passed off peacefully with 3 sound systems on Monday. 29 were arrested on Saturday, with 3 UK nationals getting nicked and remanded for a week. Meanwhile, the Irish Minister for Defence congratulated the police and army on their operation, saying "It augurs very well for the capacity of our security services to deal with whatever lies ahead in this area..."

Expecting trouble, then? More info on www.indymedia.ie

*There has been a bust fund set up to help pay fines etc. for people who got nicked. Cheques payable to "ABC" can be sent to BM Automatic, London WC1N 3XX

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers children should not be herded into a database, to be seen by their *bettors*... Honest!