



# IRAQ-ING UP THE PROFITS

**“Desperately needed jobs have gone to Americans, Europeans and South Asians; roads are crowded with trucks shipping in supplies produced in foreign plants, while Iraqi factories were not even supplied with emergency generators. As a result, the reconstruction is seen not as a recovery from war but as an extension of the occupation, a foreign invasion of a different sort.” - Naomi Klein, journalist**

Human Rights activist Ewa Jasiewicz and film maker Pennie Quinton, will be appearing in court soon, charged with ‘Aggravated Trespass’, following their protest against the Iraq Procurement Conference in London this April. Ewa, Pennie and others have been drawing attention to the fact that the corporate handover of Iraq to the multinationals is about more than just oil. The handover’s making millions for the members of a cartel of multinationals, dominated by the backers of George Bush. At the same time as millions of reconstruction dollars have gone missing, millions of Iraqi’s still live without electricity and water.

The old regime has left Iraq in serious debt. “The Paris Club” of creditor nations is owed \$160bn, largely money borrowed by Saddam for his war against Iran, while other debts are reparations payments owed to countries he attacked. These payments, enforced by the UN Compensation Commission, have already cost Iraq \$1.64bn since last April: more than its combined health and education budgets. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June, as the UN called for \$259m to meet a shortfall in humanitarian relief, the Compensation Commission also announced that it would take another \$600m in reparations this year.

But the US doesn’t seem that bothered by the Iraqi debt. John Snow, the US Treasury Secretary recently said, “The people of Iraq shouldn’t be saddled with those debts incurred through the regime of the dictator.” Is this a new angle on US foreign policy? Maybe John’s about to announce the cancellation of the Iraq’s debt - mostly owed to non-US companies - so Bush Inc can concentrate on the fat reconstruction contracts to boost its re-election coffers.

The Halliburton Corporation has been pretty coy about total value of its Iraq contracts, although the Pentagon has confirmed that an initial \$90m was agreed to be paid to the Corporation before the fall of Saddam Hussein. Former Halliburton boss, Vice President Dick Cheney, has denied any wrongdoing. He says that he severed contact with the corporation when he got into the White House in 2000, but a French Press Agency report claims that a leaked Pentagon e-mail

confirms Dick had a hand in huge Halliburton government contracts for Iraq, whilst in office and coordinating the war effort.

Up to the corporate-handover, White House Inc. had spent just 2% of the \$18.4bn it had obtained from Congress for the ‘urgent’ reconstruction of Iraq. While Bush might be saving for a big spend at election time, some cash has just plain disappeared. Last October, Christian Aid revealed that \$4bn of oil revenues were unaccounted for and even according to the coalition’s latest figures, \$1.3bn has gone walkabout.

Being investigated by Ronald Reagan’s Commission on Organized Crime for alleged links to gambling and prostitution, didn’t stop Richard Armitage becoming Deputy Secretary of State in 2000. Now he’s helping oversee the State Department as it nicks \$184m, earmarked for drinking water projects, to boost the budget for a lavish new US Embassy in Saddam’s former palace. Ever honest Armitage admitted he might have to “rob from Peter in my fiefdom to pay Paul.”

## HAND (OVER) RELIEF

And all that’s before the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been let loose in Iraq with a long-term IMF structural adjustment program in return for debt reduction. Rapid privatisation and an opening up of the Iraqi economy for foreign investors is the name of the game, leading to increased unemployment and Iraqi public assets falling into the hands of a “coalition” of foreign multinationals.

As soon as big business gets hold of the bargain-priced publicly owned companies up for grabs, they will shed jobs to make a quick profit. Already the Coalition Provisional Authority is making Iraq a great place to do business. Last September it signed Order 30 on Salaries and Employment Conditions, cancelling government subsidies for public sector workers which had helped them pay for housing and living costs. The Authority has set the minimum wage at 69,000 Dinar (\$40) per month, which is, according to Ewa Jasiewicz, less than half of the recommended salary of a sweatshop worker in one of neighbouring Iran’s Free Trade Zones.

Antonia Juhasz of the International Forum on Globalisation, says that the Bush administration is “using the military invasion and occupation of Iraq to advance a corporate globalization agenda that is illegal under international law, has not been chosen by the Iraqi people and may ultimately prove to be even more devastating than twelve years of economic sanctions,

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

**For nicking Seaweed!**  
Three men have been arrested in Eastbourne for ‘stealing’ seaweed from the beach - organic food for their hungry turtles. After being tailed for three miles by two police cars and a motorbike, they were finally apprehended while the police went off to search for other ‘criminals’. The three were locked up for seven hours and searched their premises to examine the ‘rare’ fauna. After extensive forensic analysis this ‘rare’ fauna proved to be... sea cabbage. Stick that in yer pipe and smoke it!

two U.S.-led wars and one occupation.”

One thing the new Authority sees eye-to-eye with the Saddam regime over is draconian Trade Union Laws. Under the new boss, workers in the state oil industry are forbidden from organising a union, and harassment of union organisers is commonplace. But people are still joining workers groups, and as journalist David Bacon, who travelled to Iraq with US Labor Against the War said, “the thing that was really heartening was that under the most difficult conditions that you can imagine, workers were not waiting one minute before they started organising themselves.” Unemployment is still very high (30%), and the reconstruction process isn’t exactly the job frenzy it was supposed to be - having created only 15,000 of the 250,000 jobs promised.

Saddam was always heading for trouble, running one of the only state owned oil companies in the world and refusing to let Western oil companies in on the game. Remember two years ago when the US sponsored a coup against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela (at the time the main supplier of oil to the US - see SchNEWS 345)? He had promised to use oil profits to pay for a minimum wage, rather than let all the money go abroad to the oil companies. But this is about more than just oil. They are flogging the whole country’s assets off, lock stock and barrel. The Middle East’s got a lot of state owned assets which western corporations are ready to buy up cheap. The pretext offered by terrorism to make a profit through invasion and economic colonisation isn’t worrying business friendly Saudi Arabia. But no doubt Iran and Syria with their state owned water companies, electricity plants and telecom systems are getting worried by cash-hungry Halliburton and friends.

**More info:** [www.jubileeiraq.org](http://www.jubileeiraq.org)  
[www.iraqitradeunions.org](http://www.iraqitradeunions.org)  
[www.occupationwatch.org](http://www.occupationwatch.org)  
[www.bellaciao.org](http://www.bellaciao.org)

## DEADLY SYNGENTA

Syngenta, the last big company developing genetically modified (GM) crops in Britain, are closing its GM research laboratories. This is yet another victory for campaigners, having seen off the other two big GM players – Monsanto, who have quit Britain, and Bayer, who suffered from sustained campaigning, reducing both their GM operations. Syngenta, who've been developing GM crops at Jealott's Hill, Berkshire, have clearly had enough of having work destroyed - as despite infra red cameras, barbed wire fences and security patrols, potato and wheat GM trials have been destroyed in the last few years.

Syngenta are now set to move their GM research efforts to the USA, a reflection that the public in Europe don't want GM food. As Pete Riley of the Five Year Freeze anti-GM pressure group, said: "If you produce things that people do not want to buy you cannot expect to stay in business long."

But GM crops from the USA and elsewhere continue to pour into Europe, mostly as animal

feed. Unlike humans, farm animals don't get much choice what they eat, so the GM industry has been offloading unwanted products on them. But resistance is growing. A couple of weeks ago, Greenpeace held up a ship carrying GM animal feed for two days, forcing it to drop anchor off the coast of Wales.

Many supermarkets, due to consumer pressure, will no longer sell meat or dairy products fed on GM produce, but Sainsbury's continue to sell milk from GM fed cow's. In response to this, national campaigns have started to act. Last week its five biggest distribution centers were blockaded, with a variety of tactics – setting up scaffold tripods, chaining people together through steel tubes or locking on with D-locks to gates. At the blockade in Birmingham according to one report "The police inspector praised the protesters for the speed at which they deployed the tripods and lock-on tubes." - It's rare that you get complements from the police for the quality of your actions!

The campaign has united farmers and anti-genetics campaigners who both realize that they are fighting the same battle against the monopoly of the supermarkets who shaft both farmers and consumers. The following day, tractors blockaded Sainsbury's Barnstaple store, while inside stickers were placed on dairy products informing the public about GM animal feed.

More info about the campaign against Sainsbury's: [www.geneticsaction.org.uk](http://www.geneticsaction.org.uk) or call 01803 840098.

Sainsbury's have a free phone "Customer care line" so you can tell them what you think of their GM policy: 0800 636262

\* The first ever trashing of a GM crop in Finland has occurred. All 400 genetically modified birch trees of Finland's only GM tree trial were torn up or chopped down causing about 1.5 million Euros worth of damage.

\* There's a new Corporate Watch publication 'A Rough Guide to the UK Farming Crisis'. For copies call 01865 791 391 or read it at [www.corporatewatch.org.uk/agriculture/agriculture.htm](http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/agriculture/agriculture.htm)

## WOZA MATTER

Anyone remember that Zimbabwe place with that dictator Mugabe who was chasing away all those white farmers? Used to be front page news in the corporate media until they moved on to Iraq. So has all the repression ended then? No, it's actually increased with Zimbabweans living in an unofficial state of emergency. So is it the revolutionary Robert Mugabe and his party fighting against greedy white farmers? Not exactly. Ruling party Zanu PF ministers and fat cats are grabbing all the best farms. And perhaps the corporate media forgot to tell you that for every white farmer killed about 20 black opposition supporters are murdered too.

So what does the resistance look like? Well, the resistance has taken all sorts of guises, but by far the most revolutionary and fun are the grassroots groups. One such group is WOZA (Women Of Zimbabwe Arise), a network of community women that is action-focused while maintaining a healthy distrust of hierarchies. The ghetto women who built the network had had enough of seeing people given positions of power and then abusing them, so they nurtured a network with a spontaneous spirit and a decentralised structure. No membership cards are necessary to be part of WOZA, all you need according to Jenni Williams, one of the fiery WOZA founders, are "two of these" – two breasts! They've organised an avalanche of direct action against the Mugabe regime, from demonstrations against repressive security laws to actions against inflation. Recently, members organised an action on World Refugee Day to protest against Zimbabweans forced into being refugees by a violent state. 33 were arrested in the southern city of Bulawayo with a dozen more women adamantly making their way to the police station, arguing that they should be arrested in solidarity with their comrades! Slowly but surely grassroots groups like WOZA are spinning webs of freedom with their irresistible ideas of participatory democracy, free speech and love.

\* There's a talk on 'Grassroots Resistance in Zimbabwe' by a visiting Zimbabwean troublemaker on the 12<sup>th</sup> at 7pm above the George pub, the Strand, opposite the Royal Courts of Justice, Ldn; and (with a film) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6.30pm at the Cowley Club, 12a London Road, Brighton.

\* For more radical Zimbabwe info check out: [www.wozazimbabwe.com](http://www.wozazimbabwe.com) [www.zvakwana.org](http://www.zvakwana.org) or [www.kubatana.net](http://www.kubatana.net)

\* Wanna donate any radical films or literature, organise a benefit gig, or visit the Zimbabwe struggle? Contact Samm: [detidhodhi@hotmail.com](mailto:detidhodhi@hotmail.com)

## SchNEWS in brief

The **Earth First summer gathering** is happening from **4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> August** in the East Midlands "to share skills and ideas on direct action for people and planet". Call 0845 3550111 [www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk](http://www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk) \*\* **Stanner Organics** are having an Open Day on **Sunday (11) 11am-4pm** 01273 565755 [www.stannerorganics.org.uk](http://www.stannerorganics.org.uk) \*\* Next **Monday (19), Iris, an Israeli conscientious objector**, will be talking about the environment and direct action and a Radical info shop in Tel Aviv **6.30 at the Cowley Club**, 12 London Road, Brighton, 01273 696104 [www.cowleyclub.org.uk](http://www.cowleyclub.org.uk) \*\* **RampART** is a **squatted social centre** at 15-17 Rampart Street, London, E1 2LA (off Commercial Road - Whitechapel tube or Shadwell DLR). Events include 'Visions of another world IV' European Creative Forum. 1pm-1am this Saturday (10) and free cinema every Wednesday. If you'd like to do an event contact them [www.rampart.co.nr](http://www.rampart.co.nr) \*\* Visit the ex grand banks **squatted social centre** is at **156-158 Fortess Road**, Tufnell Park, London, NW5. Events include **Wombles** meetings every Tuesday, 7:30pm with talks on active movements and ongoing projects, anti-copyright cinema every Friday, from 7:30pm. This Sunday (11) there's a free Radio skill sharing workshop and on Thursday (15) Casualisation & Dole Resistance: discussion on fighting the benefits regime/films/café. 7.30pm 07956 975490 [www.wombles.org.uk](http://www.wombles.org.uk) \*\* Sportswear company, **Sergio Tacchini**, is withdrawing from Burma thanks to a boycott campaign launched a few weeks ago after that activists received evidence that it manufactured clothes in military-run Burma. 0207 3244710 [www.burmacampaign.org.uk](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk) \*\* There are plans for **electronic tagging of asylum seekers** in Scotland from September. **Reliance Monitoring Services**, criticised for releasing prisoners in error, will take on the controversial contract.

## PAYNEFUL TIMES

Epping Forest in North London has been home to thousands of Romanies over the centuries. It once contained many camping places - now closed by bye-laws. Now, Harry Smith, one of the last Roma living the traditional life on the margins of the forest, is threatened with eviction from his own land by Epping Forest district council. "We own this land - and they want to push us off it", says Harry, who has lived for 14 years on the land he bought at Paynes Lane, Lower Nazeing.

The neo-fascist British National Party, which has just won 3 seats on Epping Forest district council, pledged to expel all Romanies from the area.

Planning permission has been refused by John Prescott and an injunction to leave will be enforced on 23 August, according to the council. On the 22 August there will be a rally at Paynes Lane for direct action opposition to the BNP. For details [ustiben.5@ntlworld.com](mailto:ustiben.5@ntlworld.com)

## WOOD FOR CHOP

This Saturday (10) there's a 'Save Titnore Woods' demo in Montague Street (near Woolworth's), Worthing, at 2pm. Developers want to widen Titnore Lane and build 850 houses in this area at the expense of 200 trees many of which are over 150 years old. Despite massive protests Worthing council is expected to approve the West Durrington development project by the end of July. As the Pork-Bolter Worthing's radical news-sheet says "The council is trying to pretend it is no big deal that a gang of greedy property developers are going to be allowed to tarmac over the last green lung in Worthing borough... They also claim that they are powerless to act, when what they really mean is they lack the guts to take up a fight against powerful vested interests on behalf of the people they claim to represent,"

[www.protectourwoodland.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.protectourwoodland.fsnet.co.uk)

## SMALL TIME CRIMINAL

Steve Kurtz, who featured in 'crap arrest of the week' (issue 456/457) has had the charges against him of bioterrorism dropped. He now faces charges of theft for using \$256 of bacteria belonging to Pittsburgh Uni for a Critical Art Ensemble biotechnology education program. The US District Attorney is attempting to cast the issue as one of public safety by repeatedly alluding to dangerous and biohazardous material even though scientists universally regard the two types of bacteria in question as safe. Kurtz himself has exhaustively alluded to their interesting shapes and colours. Many worry that the case could set a dangerous precedent by silencing a group of artists for work that stimulates vital public debate. Kurtz's home was raided by the Joint Terrorism Task Force after he called an ambulance for his wife who had suffered a heart attack. [www.rtmark.com/CAEdefense/](http://www.rtmark.com/CAEdefense/)

## ...and finally...

Readers may be aware it's our tenth birthday in November... As well as putting out SchNEWS we are busy getting our book - SchNEWS At Ten - ready for then AND trying to organise a big event in London. Unfortunately, cos of a lack of writers, and the fact that we want to make this book our best it's all hands on decks, so for the next month or so SchNEWS will be going fortnightly. We will still be updating the party and protest section on our website every week and beavering away in the office.

If you fancy yerself as a writer, want to help DTP, can help with printing on a Friday morning or help with the mailout get in touch! We also rely on you to keep us in biscuits so if you're feeling flush, a donation or better still a regular standing order really helps keep SchNEWS free.

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers... money doesn't grow on trees - it grows on Bushes. Honest!

## 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](mailto:schnews@brighton.co.uk) Download a PDF of this issue or subscribe at [www.schnews.org.uk](http://www.schnews.org.uk)