



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER TYPICALLY CYNICAL...

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"Have I loaded the planes correctly Sergeant?"

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A DROP IN THE OCEAN

"If the money promised to the victims of the tsunami falls far short of the amounts required, it is partly because of other priorities, namely the war on Iraq." - author and journalist, George Monbiot.

As our sympathy goes out to the many thousands of victims of the tsunami disaster and people across the world dig deep into their pockets, disgust should be thrown in the face of governments whose 'generosity' is not only dwarfed by the response of the public, but is even more miserly when compared to their own arms spending. Consider, for instance, the cost of one B-2 bomber - a whopping \$2 billion. US aid currently equates to only a day and a half of the money spent occupying Iraq, which stands at \$148 billion. The UK itself has already spent £6 billion on massacring the Iraq people.

The groundswell of empathy from ordinary people in the face of such tragedy makes us wonder just how long the war in Iraq (or any other war) would last if we had more pictures from the ground of the destruction of Fallujah, the birth defects caused by depleted uranium and people killed and maimed by the aerial bombings.

Meanwhile, corporations have been busy marketing their own brand of global compassion. Take Starbucks, who in 2004 had a staggering market value of almost \$15 billion made off the backs of some of the worlds 25 million grossly underpaid coffee farmers - including those in Indonesia. Their donation - a microscopic dent in profits - is loaded less with generosity than with cynicism and exploitation.

As for Coca-Cola, the bottled water they are shipping to the victims in itself leaves a trail of devastation and destruction. In India, communities around Coca-Cola bottling plants are experiencing severe water shortages and the land has been polluted. The abundance of pesticides used by Coca-Cola, which includes DDT, has rendered the agricultural land infertile, crippling the locals' means of subsistence.

And UK companies? Vodafone's oh-so-generous £1m donation works out at less than a days' profit. The PR value, though, is priceless.

Damned Aid

The US has boasted that it is providing military as well as financial aid to the region. Does this sound a bit suspect to anyone else?

And, what's the political context of the disaster? Reports typically ignore the crucial stories in volatile areas like Aceh and Sri Lanka and how "aid" efforts will be exploited for

geo-political gain, a point surely proved by the Whitehouse choosing Jeb Bush to lead its "aid mission".

In the worst-hit province of Aceh, thousands have been killed in a region which has already suffered countless deaths and mass displacements thanks to the Indonesian military. Aceh is rich in resources - it supplies much of the natural gas for Japan and South Korea while Exxon Mobil take its oil - yet remains in poverty.

Five years ago a million Acehnese (that's a quarter of the population!) held a massive peaceful demonstration calling for a referendum for a chance to vote on independence from Indonesia. The military decided to crush the movement, carrying out assassinations, 'disappearing' leaders and raping female activists. Jafar Siddiq Hamsa, a leading international spokesman for the Acehnese, returned home in 2000. He was abducted, and his body returned wrapped in barbed wire, with multiple stab wounds and his face sliced off. Meanwhile Exxon has spent millions over the past three decades, hiring Indonesian security forces to protect company facilities in Aceh in full knowledge that troops were committing gross violations of human rights against civilians.

Allan Nairn, a journalist once jailed by the Indonesian army, spells out the future: "We should put this in perspective. Now the world is looking at Aceh for the first time ever and will probably never again look at Aceh with this intensity, but as dramatic as this act of nature is, it's still far less than the death toll over just a couple of years due to hunger and poor nutrition, diarrhoea;

DONATE!

Via Campesina is calling for solidarity with those affected by the tsunami disaster, channelling assistance to affected fishing communities and peasants, for their own relief and construction efforts, through grassroots organisations. They are asking for your donations for direct emergency support to provide basic needs. For anyone doing benefit gigs or with larger donations, check out their website, www.viacampesina.org

Also, TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign works with a number of grassroots humanitarian and human rights organisations in Aceh and is launching an appeal so that funds can be used by them to optimum effect where it is most needed by local people. 020 8771 2904 www.tapol.gn.apc.org

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For being a stubborn old woman...

Lillian Willoughby, a 90 year old wheel-chair-bound quaker was sentenced to a week in prison by a New Jersey judge. She was arrested for taking part in an anti war blockade of a courthouse and refused to pay the \$250 fine. "I've been arrested before but have never spent time in jail" Lillian said "...this is the start of a great adventure."

deaths mainly among children who live in poverty in Aceh. It's also dwarfed by the military massacres carried out by the Indonesian military in various places. They killed 200,000 in Timor. They killed anywhere from 400,000 to a million in Indonesia itself when they consolidated power in 1965 to 1967. So, the concern that the world has now for this disaster is appropriate, but we should have that concern all the time. When people are dying, not just from natural tsunamis, but from military or police bullets, often paid for by the United States, or dying from preventable hunger. There are also thousands of American individuals who could sit down right now and write a check for \$50 million. They could save tens of thousands of lives, but there's no social pressure on them to do that, because we live in a world where it's assumed that it's okay to let people starve while the dollar that can save them sits idly in your pocket."

Or as author Jonathan Schell put it "Why, we might ask, is there, alongside armed forces in almost every country, no established international rescue army - no well-funded international force fully equipped with emergency gear ready to give prompt aid in any large-scale catastrophe? Initial funding might be \$100 billion - a mere 10 percent of the trillion or so the world spends annually on arms. Why, when human need is the greatest, should the human response always be left to improvisation? There is no reason to think that nature had any lesson in mind, whether about the world's bloated, multiplying nuclear arsenals or anything else, when it shoved one tectonic plate beneath another, causing the earthquake that caused the tsunami. But we are free to draw a lesson: Leave mass destruction to nature. Our job should be to protect and preserve life."

* Read the interview with Allan Nairn www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=04/12/29/161219

*Read George Monbiot's article on the tsunami aid pledge and military spending at www.alternet.org/waroniraq/20885/

Greenhouse Guesses

Britain's top scientist Sir David King reckons that the tsunami disaster underlines the threat posed by climate change. King who last year said climate change was a greater threat than terrorism said "What is happening in the Indian Ocean underlines the importance of the Earth's system to our ability to live safely. One side of this is we need to prepare ourselves against these increased impacts, the other side, of course, is changing our energy industry – in other words, to move away from fossil fuels."

Last month thousands of delegates from almost 200 governments converged on Buenos Aires, Argentina, for the latest in the endless round of talks aimed at implementing the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the international treaty that aims to reduce emissions of the gases largely responsible for human-induced global warming.

The treaty, which has been stalled for seven years and which both America and Australia are refusing to sign, will finally come into effect on February 16.

The treaty's main significance lies in the fact that it recognizes that legally binding international action to tackle global warming is required, by reducing the release of "greenhouse gases" into the atmosphere. But these targets are so low as to be meaningless. Under the treaty, the industrialised countries which are the major emitters of CO₂, are required to cut their greenhouse gas emissions on average to just 5.2% below their 1990 levels. They have until 2012 to achieve this. Meanwhile the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reckon we need to cut emissions by 60-80%.

Worse, the treaty contains corporate-friendly, market-based mechanisms that give plenty of scope for rich governments to engage in climate change creative accounting. According to the New Scientist magazine, the treaty's range of loopholes and scams will mean that even if the industrialised countries achieve Kyoto's 5.2% reduction on paper, the real-world reduction will be more likely to be 1.5%. In fact since 1990 annual greenhouse gas emissions from the highly industrialised countries have increased by "more than 7%".

Despite all this, America still nearly managed to derail the talks in Argentina by having yet another oil-obsessed hissy fit. The US insisted that a proposal to compensate the world's poorest nations, who are being damaged now by climate change, be dropped. It even supported Saudi Arabia's demand that oil-producing countries should be compensated for any decline in sales caused by carbon cuts! In the end, thirty-six hours after talks should have ended, the barbed ghost of an agreement was made with the US permitting an informal meeting in May, during which "any negotiation leading to new commitments" is forbidden. According to the head of the US delegation, the time to decide what happens after 2012 is "in 2012" which as journalist George Monbiot pointed out is "like saying that the time to decide what to do about homeland security is when the plane is flying into the tower." If the world doesn't get its collective finger out, we could be seeing a hell of a lot more tsunami-like disasters, but this time they'll be man made.

* London Rising Tide are showing 'The Day after Tomorrow' and 'Cheeky Apocalypse' this Sunday (9th) 5.30pm, followed by discussion and food. LARC, 62 Fieldgate St, E1 1ES; (corner of Parfett St.) 020 7377 9088 www.londonrisingtide.org.uk

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Inside SchNEWS

Spanish eco-activist Inaki Garcia Koch has been released from prison, his sentence served. Inaki served just under five years for his alleged role in the sabotaging of the controversial Itoiz Dam construction site. (We say alleged because Inaki and his co-defendants were found guilty at a trial they did not attend and therefore were unable to defend themselves). His co-defendant, Ibai Ederra, is still inside and is still in need of support. Please send letters of support to: Ibai Ederra, Carcel de Pamplona, C/San Roque. Apdo. 250 31080 - Irunez - Pamplona Navarra, (Espana) Spain.

Another high-profile eco-prisoner, Craig "Crittter" Marshall has been released. He was found guilty of involvement in placing homemade bombs under SUVs at a Portland car dealership and at Tyree Oil in 2000, which got the media buzzing as the frenzy over the Earth Liberation Front was at its peak.

SchNEWS in brief

Fundraising jumble sale for **Brighton Dissent!** this Saturday (8th) 9am-1pm at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road ** Help the **Teaching & General Assistants campaign** against Brighton Council - their Support Group has its 1st meeting Wed 12 Jan 8pm St George's Community Centre, Kemptown Brighton ** The **Seeds for Change Collective** are organizing G8 direct action trainers workshops around the country, starting in Sheffield on Jan 21-23. www.seedsforchange.org.uk ** Want to know how to **organise actions without getting Totally Busted?** Then get along to a weekend in the Pennines on 14-16 January. Workshops include why we need to think about security, making communication more secure, mobile phones, how to deal with police and not lose your temper, blending in etc Booking essential 0113 262 9365 ** If you want to find out about radical, non political party, anti-hierarchical groups in **Leeds** get along to a **'Rebel Alliance'** on the 14th at the Maelstrom squatted social centre, Hyde Park corner 6pm leedsef@leedsef.org.uk ** **International Day of Action** this Sat. in support of seven people still facing charges during the protests at the EU Summit in **Thessaloniki**, Greece in June 2003 (see SchNEWS 413). London demo meet at the Greek Embassy at 1pm ** If yer in Glasgow on 15/16 Jan check out the **"Wimmin vs G8"** launch event www.g8feministaction.froekon.org

Positive SchNEWS

A Plymouth judge will be giving his verdict on the legal rights of the badger following a case against 3 animal activists last month. Charged with damaging DEFRA badger traps near Lerryn, Cornwall, the three are pleading not guilty on the grounds that badgers are a protected species under the 1992 Badger Act. This Act forbids the killing, harming or interfering of badgers and their setts, but this hasn't stopped DEFRA, the rural affairs ministry, doing just that for the last seven years, in a flawed attempt to eradicate TB in cattle.

The Judge is looking into the complexities of the case and will deliver his verdict on the 13th. There's a demo that day outside Plymouth Magistrates Court. The cull is due to start again in May. www.badger-killers.co.uk

Talking Rubbish

Berlin will soon have solar powered talking rubbish bins. They will each generate their own electricity and will be programmed to thank people for putting rubbish in them during the day and glow green at night. It is hoped that they will discourage people from littering.

The prototype bins are designed to be "fun" - each one can be programmed to say different things, even in other languages, said a spokesman from the city's cleaning service.

Their 'Armless M'lud...

Activists who occupied the roof of EDO's Brighton arms factory are on trial next Tuesday 11th at Brighton Magistrates Court accused of Aggravated Trespass. In the evening there's a public meeting at the Bridge Social Centre next to Falmer School, Moulescoomb, 6:30pm Films and speakers including journalist Ewa Jasiewicz. <http://smashedo.bpec.org>

Lynch the Landlord!

Imagine being arrested for a murder you didn't commit. Now imagine being convicted of that murder and serving 11 years and 43 days before someone finally agrees with you that you are innocent, that you were stitched up by the collusion of lying policemen and false confessions extracted under duress. You are awarded compensation for the lost decade of your life. Now imagine being told you have to pay rent for the time you spent in jail because you saved lots of money by being locked up. This is the story of Mike O'Brien.

Mike was one of the so-called Cardiff Newsagent Three convicted of the murder of Philip Saunders. He was to be awarded £650,000 after all three convictions were finally overturned in 1999 after the Criminal Cases Review Commission confirmed what Mike had been saying for years - that he had been set up with falsified evidence. They found that the confession of Darren Hall, which was a key part of the case against the three, was extracted under pressure - Hall was handcuffed to hot radiators and a tea urn, repeatedly threatened and questioned for hours. He was also emotionally unstable and vulnerable to the manipulation the police employed.

Detective Stuart Lewis, who claimed to have overheard two of the prisoners admit to the murder in a conversation in their cell is now under investigation over evidence he gave in this case and another.

Now the Home Office are beginning a two day court challenge to get £37,000 deducted as payment for his keep in jail. Last April Mr Justice Maurice Kay ruled that a Home Office decision to deduct "saved living expenses" from compensation payments had been mistakenly applied. Lawyers are now battling to overturn that decision at the appeal court.

Mike said: "They don't charge guilty people for bed and board, they only charge innocent people."

The Home Office won the right to charge the innocent rent for their false imprisonment on July 29th 2004 when they won an important case at the appeal court.

So now it seems the government will charge prisoners "bed and board" if their appeals succeed. That's the spirit. That'll teach them to be innocent while looking guilty and to sponge off the state.

...and finally...

The Thought Police are alive and well in the USA! It seems even an 11 year old can't criticise the military these days without the cops coming round to interrogate the parents about 'anti-American values'. The Allbaughs of Virginia were questioned about their views on Sept 11th, the military and whether they knew any 'foreigners who criticized US policy' after their son refused to take part in a Veterans Day exercise at school. And he supposedly said "I wish all Americans were dead and that American soldiers should die.", but kids'll say anything to get out of school!

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers not to expect a witty or topical disclaimer; the bloke who writes 'em is off sick...Honest!