



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER LOST THE PLOT...

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GROW YOUR OWN NOXIOUS WEED

VARIETY:
WORLD DOMINATION

JUST ADD...

- * MONEY
- * TERROR
- * RELIGION
- * OIL



COMES WITH FREE CREEPER

Growing Dissent!

“The US has been imposing patents on life around the world through trade deals. In this case [Iraq], they invaded the country first, then imposed their patents. This is both immoral and unacceptable.”

Shalini Bhutani, GRAIN.

“Seeds are the software - and we have the seeds.” - Anonymous corporate seed company executive.

With agriculture providing the main source of income for two and a half billion people the effects of biotechnology are immense. Farmers across the world are being locked into a cycle of dependency on biotechnology companies, who of course just want to help them to feed the world.

Take the specialized GM seeds which only prosper if you spray em with the right agrochemicals. Who makes those chemicals? Well, the dodgy firm that sells the seeds of course. Just like Microsoft and Windows – remember now, “Seeds are the software...”

One of the bio-tech giants, Novartis, applied for twelve patents on altered genes that would create ‘addict’ seeds with ‘junkie’ genes that will not perform well without chemical supplements’. As campaigner Vandana Shiva points out, this allows “the seed industry to realise one of its longest held and most cherished goals: to force all farmers into dependence on the companies every year”.

The rise and rise of the biotech industry has come hand in hand with the rise of intellectual property rights or ‘patents’ in the seed industry. The Trade-Related Intellectual Property laws are the weapon the World Trade Organisation uses to force governments to enforce patent rules. Patents give a right of monopoly over an invention or discovery, for example in the field of manipulating the genes of seeds. These monopoly rights make patents a powerful tool for those in search of power, profit and control, as they allow companies to buy ‘ownership’ of staple food crops. The US based chemical giant DuPont has filed over 150 applications for patents on genetic resources in their attempt to dominate agricultural production. The effects of these patents on seeds is that farmers can lose the rights to their own original stocks and the cumulative knowledge they have built up over centuries to a few giants whose reach knows no limits.

We can see this colonisation in full effect in Iraq. After the so-called ‘transfer of sovereignty’ last June, Paul Bremer, chief of the occupation authority, left behind 100 orders which had to be incorporated into Iraqi legislation, having the status and force of binding laws. Among them is Order 81

which amends Iraq’s original patent law to favour the vultures of the West, with disastrous consequences for the farmers of Iraq.

For generations Iraqis have been freely exchanging farm-saved seed. An estimated 97% either use saved seed from a previous year’s harvest or purchase them from local markets. This has now been made illegal under the new law. The law is presented as being necessary to ensure the supply of good quality seeds in Iraq and to facilitate Iraq’s accession to the World Trade Organisation. What it will actually do is allow the penetration of Iraqi agriculture by the likes of Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer and Dow Chemical, the corporate giants that control seed trade across the globe. Eliminating competition from farmers is a prerequisite for these companies to open up operations in Iraq, and the new law has achieved that. The Iraqi peoples’ right to food sovereignty, the right to define their own food and agriculture policies, is fast vanishing.

However, actions against these corporate giants have seen impressive successes. After a campaign of direct action, bio tech giant Bayer have more or less given up hope of growing their genetically modified greens in the UK. Only a few months ago, Monsanto’s patent on the wheat variety Nap Hal was revoked after Greenpeace took them to the courts. Monsanto had claimed to have invented the special properties of the wheat used for chapatis, which was in fact developed by generations of farmers in India! The practice of seed swapping is also being kept alive at seed fairs, which are lifelines for farmers, and guarantee they always have seeds for the next season. They also safeguard the rich diversity of crops that feed all of us. In Peru, for example, local farming communities keep more than 250 varieties of potatoes. In Kenya farmers swap more than 150 different varieties of local farm seeds at annual seed fairs. In Brighton the fourth Seedy Sunday community seed swap will be happening at the Old Market on Sunday 6th February at the Old Market, Upper Market St., Hove 10am-5pm. Check out the full programme for the event at www.seedysunday.org or pick up copies in Infinity Foods.

RICES? WHAT RICES?

Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?

“It’s a commercial secret, I have patented the growing process. Now ORF MY LAAAND!”

Syngenta is already the world’s largest agrochemical company and the third biggest seed company. That’s not enough for

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For breakdancing!

A breakdancer was busy head-spinning outside the American Embassy when he was rushed into a police van by armed cops. They thought he must be a terrorist as this was the only explanation for his behaviour. After being searched it became apparent that he was nothing other than a, er, baffled breakdancer and he was told to go on his way.

them, though, now they are looking to extend their control beyond patenting seeds and species and tighten their grip on the global food chain. They want to patent the flowering process and ‘plant architecture’ of rice in 115 countries. The scope is massive and their patent could extend beyond rice to all flowering plants including those we still haven’t found or classified. Syngenta would then be able to claim “ownership” of the flowering processes of most of the world’s major food crops. This terrifying situation would be a threat to world food security and could limit agricultural research. Kathy Jo Welter of the ETC group says “Effectively, the completed rice map provides a template for most of the world’s major food crops. Syngenta is arguing that since it can identify certain gene sequences in rice, it can monopolize the same sequences when they turn up in other species.”

So can we trust them with the keys to the world’s food supply? Syngenta already has a dodgy history with genetically modified rice. It developed the GM “Golden Rice” which they touted as a technological fix for the vitamin A deficiency much of the world’s population suffers from. Syngenta sent out lots of shiny PR releases about how they were trying to feed the world, ignoring the fact that most food shortages are caused by economic factors, and problems of supply rather than there just not being enough food in the world, or rice being not good enough. Syngenta reckon it has no commercial interest in Golden Rice, which is now being developed by the Golden Rice Humanitarian Board. Nice name, but like all good front groups it has lots of dodgy business groups funding it. Syngenta still holds the patent, so if Golden Rice is ever commercialised they will get a golden shower of royalties!

* Action group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration, www.etcgroup.org

* Monsanto has been recently been fined \$1.5million by the US Department of Justice for trying to bribe the Indonesian authorities to bypass controls on the screening of new genetically modified crops. Between 1997 and 2002 it bunged officials \$750,000.

Guilty as Charged...

As the World Social Forum tries to create new worlds in Porto Alegre, Brasil, with tens of thousands of international activists, SchNEWS takes a look at some of the continental processes that led to it...

"We do not want to be oppressed/ No more killings/ Let's crush the blood sucker for justice and freedom to blossom!" Opening hymn to the Labour party conference? Not quite. This was the anthem that thundered at the opening of the third African Social Forum (ASF) as thousands of activists thronged the Mulungushi Conference Centre in Zambia. Held in early December it created a space where activists from all over the continent could meet to attack injustices from majority world debt to HIV/AIDS to the International Monetary Fund.

The Forum was held under the shadow of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad). Nepad is a dodgy African homegrown neoliberalism developed by South African President Mbeki. "Soon enough the programme was referred to as a 'kneepad' required by African leaders for comfort while bending down to beg," jokes Masimba Manyanya, a Zimbabwean activist. It's western neoliberalism in traditional African garb: more privatisation and more unfair trade terms. And the IMF and World Bank just love it! The Nepad issue saw differences emerging at the ASF with radicals criticising the ASF secretariat for not turning anti-Nepad positions into action. With echoes of radicals invading the stage at the ESF, the Social Movements Indaba pushed for an emergency meeting where activists talked of the need to create an open decision-making structure for the ASF and to agree on common plans of action.

Positively, the ASF saw the launch of the Stop EPAs campaign with activists agreeing to launch global days of action in 2005 against these Free Trade Areas between the EU and Africa. There was a rowdy Africa Youth Camp happening at the same time as the Africa Women's Court where dozens of women spoke of their oppression under patriarchy and globalisation, their resistance to it. The tribunal found globalisation GUILTY! There was an overflow of discussions happening at the ASF, from 'The Zimbabwe Crisis' to 'Economic Alternatives', from 'Nepad' to 'Fighting the Debt'. This was the most powerful thing to be born out of the ASF - networks of anticapitalists across the continent, the strengthening of a movement.

The ASF was supposed to end with a big demonstration but repressive laws meant there was no 'permission' to demonstrate. However, radicals from across the continent weren't gonna sit around for six days talking and networking without doing a bit of the old direct action with the coppers running behind. So, permission or no permission, a hundred up-for-it grassroots activists marched and chanted to a nearby shopping mall - a disgusting example of South African imperialism with nearly all shops owned by SA's corporations. So a Spar supermarket was invaded while Zimbabweans and South Africans showed other activists how to do toyi-toyi war dances outside a big SA bank screaming 'IMF is the devil!' Didn't the cops have a tough time threatening to arrest this mini-army of colourful African militants!

Anarchist CNTs

In these days of rampant globalisation, Anarchism is often talked about but little understood so The Projectile Collective in Newcastle are hosting a weekend of films, talks, speakers, book-stalls and even a cabaret covering anarchist history, action and art. They'll show some of the best films out there, including 'Aurora De Esperanza', one of only a handful of films made by the anarchist CNT in Spain at the time of the 1936 revolution. There'll also be the world pre-

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SchNEWS in brief

Peace News Relaunch Party - Poetry, acoustic acts, bands, DJ's, a peace quiz and vegan food and drink to celebrate the launch of the new-look Peace News. 5th Feb, 4pm, RampARTS occupied social centre, London. 020 7278 3344 www.peacenews.info ** There's gonna be regular **politika nights in Chester** last Sunday of every month - sometimes music, poetry, guest speakers, leaflets, petitions. Starts this Sunday (29) at Alexanders wine bar, Rufus Court 8pm till 12.30 £2 ** Issue 11 if the **Nottingham Alternative News** is out now www.veggies.org.uk/AlternativeNews ** Notorious mercenary Tom Spicer's talk was **cancelled** - thanks of course to last weeks article in SchNEWS! (SchNEWS 481) ** Get off yer backside this **Valentines Day**, tape two XXs to it and march from Whitechapel to the Imperial War museum to demonstrate against psychiatric assault such as forced drugging and Compulsory Electric Shock Treatment. 01332 366447 www.kissit.org ** London Rising Tide are showing **'Reach For the Sky'** and **'The Weather Underground'** 6th Feb 5.30 pm LARC 62 Fieldgate St E1 02073779088 www.londonrisingtide.org.uk ** Join in the demo against the **anti terror laws** next Monday (31) 9am, outside the Special Immigration Appeal Commission (SIAC) Field House, Breams Buildings, London, EC4A. Nearest tube Chancery Lane. 0207 586 5892 www.cacc.org.uk ** The animal rights movement is on the verge of being **champs** against Oxford University's plans to build yet another animal research facility. National demo this Saturday (29) 12.30pm, Broad St, outside Balliol College, Oxford, OX1 3BJ 0845 330 7985 www.speakcampaigns.org.uk ** Join **Amy Goodman**, producer of radical American radio show 'Democracy Now!' for a chat about independent media in the US this Sunday (30) @ Clement House, London School of Economics 2pm 07734079757 www.radicalactivist.net

FUN-RAISER

After 3 and a half years of monthly club night mash-ups, raising awareness about and funds for loads of groups and campaigns (including us) Funraiser is going weekly! They've raised money for everyone from the Zapatistas to PDSA, from an East London community playground to the 9 Ladies protest camp. Up till July half of the money donated is going to the Anti-G8 Dissent! Network with the other half going to other worthy causes - in February its Injustice (see www.injusticefilm.co.uk).

There'll be different music every week from techno and drum and bass to psychedelic trance to live bands. And to get things started they're showing the new SchNEWS Film - A film ten years in the making. From the Courthouse and the CJA demos to Seattle to the anti-war protests to our recent massive party and direct action conference in London - and everything in between! Film starts 9pm followed by techno, electro, raggadubndisco with Shindig and So Squalid Crew till 3. Wednesday 2nd Feb, The Volks Tavern, Madeira Parade. Donations. Check www.funraiser.org.uk for more info.

...On Both Counts!

In Russia protesters have defied the weather and taken to the streets in city centres all over the country. Militant Russian pensioners have been leading crowds of war invalids, Chernobyl victims, disabled people, police officers, old-time communists, trade unionists and anarchists. It began with protests against benefit 'reforms'. Under the old regime they had been entitled to free public transport, medicine and telephone use. Of course, much of the social state is bankrupt, so these benefits were often just a nice idea. After the 2003 elections, which left Putin and his KGB cronies in control of the Duma, the state started a massive program of neoliberal reforms - the kind that the World Bank and IMF have been pushing on governments around the world.

Benefits are to be 'monetarized', which means that free services will be taken away and claimants will get (an inadequate amount of) cash instead. The money is often not enough for a pensioner to afford a couple of trips a month to the out-of-town allotment where they grow their food. Many people in Russia survive on this kind of subsistence farming, and losing their free transport will drive many of them towards hunger and malnutrition.

In the town of Perm the Governor came to talk with a crowd of 7,000 who were demanding to speak to him. They took him hostage and refused to let him go until an anarchist prisoner was released. In Moscow, the road to St Petersburg was blocked by a group of pensioners who were spontaneously joined by hundreds of passers-by. Many local governments have rapidly backtracked after widespread actions like these, and made services free again.

Little surprise then that in some cities anarchists and their friends organizing and participating in these protests have been targeted with fierce repression and there are reports of savage beatings of suspected organizers. Police are not crushing demonstrations, though, because there is a culture of respect for old people in Russia (although that respect obviously doesn't mean an adequate pension anymore).

Local activists in Perm are now expecting a wave of repression after they humiliated the governor and the police and there have already been some arrests. They have put out a call asking for solidarity, asking people to call the city administration and ask them to refrain from opening criminal cases against people and to demand liberation of prisoners. Call +7-3412-12-64-57 +7-3412-12-64-57 To stay updated www.russia.indymedia.org and www.avtonom.org

...and finally...

It might be reassuring for some to know that the reason for North Korea's development of nuclear weapons is not to wage a war on us mere mortals but to wipe out the serious threat that is dreadlocks. So Brightonians, if you have chosen to develop these weapons of mass infestation it is time to reconsider your hairstyle. Apparently men's hairstyles reflect their 'ideological spirit' and North Korea has launched a media assault alerting the population of this fact. Tidy attire is a spring board for "repelling the enemies" and combating "corrupt capitalist ideas and lifestyle and establishing the socialist lifestyle" booms the radio. Nits, you scare nobody!

A TV Common Sense programme in N. Korea states all kinds of logical explanations as to why the "flat-top crew cut" is necessary including the "negative effects" of long hair on "human intelligence development". Oi Students! The reason you may be a bit baffled in your lectures isn't because of disturbing amounts of alcohol you consume but cos yer locks are robbing your brain energy! If you want to be a communist and pass your exams, get the chop!

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers not to take any crop from anyone... Honest!