



WAKE UP!! IT'S WHAT'S UNDER YER KILT...

MAKEBULLSHITHISTORY

SchNEWS

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WE KNEW THOSE WHITE BANDS WOULD COME IN HANDY FOR SOMETHING

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GOBBILISATION

The G7 Finance Ministers meet this week, (4-5th Feb) in a swanky London hotel to chat about how they're gonna run the global economy. The G8 is the UK, US, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and er... Russia. Russia aren't really included in the finance talks because they owe too much money, therefore it's the G7.

The G8 are like the executive committee of the system that sees economic growth as the answer to everything. They control over half the votes in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and basically exist to make life easier for transnational corporations. It's unaccountable, un-transparent and unelected.

So how does what goes on in these meetings affect our lives? Many of the stories you read about in SchNEWS or the corporate media can be traced back to the dodgy influence of the G8. From Iraq to PFI hospitals to the water revolts in Bolivia, the G8's pervasive stink wafts through many bad news stories in recent years.

The G8/G7 don't actually make policies, they issue declarations. At a meeting last October they discussed "the sustainability of health-care spending in the major countries and ideas and policies for reform of such spending." In the UK that will mean goodbye NHS and hello privatisation.

Neo-Labour strongly opposed PFI when they were in opposition, but their principles caved in when they got into power. Now everything from schools to hospitals to roads are put under the PFI hammer. This rampant privatisation is what the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) agreement is foisting upon governments across the world. GATS came from the G8-dominated WTO talks in 2001. If these international summits seem distant and abstract, the results are neither, they are concrete and visible in hospitals and schools in every part of the UK.

A study by a consultancy company which works for the Department of Health shows that for every £200 million spent on PFI hospitals the result will be a loss of a thousand doctors and nurses. The first PFI hospitals also contain some 28% fewer beds than the hospitals they replaced while many are heavily in debt and closing wards and

cutting back services.

But there is a deeper level of corporate infestation. The G8 make noble sounding task forces and ask their mates to run them - effectively asking the corporations to cure the diseases they created. The Global Health Fund set up to combat HIV/AIDS was just flogging big brand drugs and Mark Moody Stuart, former Chairman of Shell, runs their G8 Renewable Taskforce. It's like having the Children's Welfare Department jointly headed by Dr G Glitter and Prof M Jackson.

Money Talks...

Blair is trying to use his presidency of the G8 to repair his damaged reputation after Iraq and separate himself from Bush in the eyes of the UK public, by talking about Africa and climate change. This year they have invited China, India and Brazil to a breakfast meeting in recognition of their growing influence but they will have to wolf down their croissants sharpish and leave by the tradesman's entrance before the business of business gets underway. After his speech in Trafalgar Square to *Make Poverty History* campaigners on Thursday, Nelson Mandela will stop in to try and persuade G8 leaders to adopt Gordon Brown's Marshall Plan for Africa.

What won't be in the headlines are the big financial issues like the potential collapse of the dollar which has lost 30% relative to other major currencies since 2002, due partly to the monkey in the white house but mostly the instability of global capital markets. And if the dollar goes then the bubble might really burst.

The dollar is used as the world's reserve

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For telling a joke

Did you hear the one about the pair arrested for telling a lawyer joke? Two people waiting outside a US courthouse quipped: "How do you tell when a lawyer is lying?"... "His lips are moving." Unfortunately, a sour-faced lawyer wasn't laughing, and now they face new charges for abusive and disorderly conduct.

currency, which gives a huge subsidy to the US economy. The Euro threatens this situation, but the fact that OPEC sells oil only in US\$ means that the dollar's status is maintained. In 2000, in a deliberate attempt by Saddam to strike back at the US, Iraq started selling its oil for Euros. Could this explain the rush to get Western oil companies into Iraq? The only other countries considering making the same move are Iran and Venezuela, both of which the US have recently rattled their sabres at. And they're not joking. The Pentagon have recently been drafting a contingency plan for an invasion of Iran by land from Iraq.

Say Cheese!

The G8 try and present themselves as a tight-knit bunch of mates, but behind the scenes there is constant squabbling, deal-making and deal-breaking. International summits are their family album, Kodak moments where they hold hands and smile for the cameras of the world's media. By presenting a show of unity they can enforce their will over the rest of the world. To some of us it will be a relief to know that behind closed doors there are long, tedious arguments going on and seemingly endless wrangles over how to achieve their goals. To create a kick-ass mobilisation against the G8 this summer will be a major challenge and will demand that we work together over the few months we have left. Diverse groups will need to find ways to work together and resistance to the summit itself will be a reflection of this diversity.

Many will want to stop the so-called world leaders and their henchmen from meeting. For others, it is critical to de-legitimise this bankrupt system by shattering the fake global unity the G8 promotes - especially in a rich state like the UK. Then there are others who don't care about the G8 itself, only what we, as a global movement, can do about expanding our own possibilities, living together, if only temporarily, with 'no limits'.

All this will take people, time, money and more. It's time to get involved!

SO WHAT CAN I DO?

* **Get in touch and involved with your local Dissent! Network group** - www.dissent.org.uk

* Donate and raise desperately needed money for leaflets, posters and - importantly - convergence spaces. Send money to: Dissent. Cooperative Bank, Sort Code 08-92-99, Account Number 6515 5518.

* Watch out for **Corporate Watch** briefing on the G8 in Scotland, available on line at the end of March and as a map sometime in April www.corporatewatch.org.uk

* **TRAPESE** have been touring about the UK since September doing workshops and pub quizzes clueing people up about issues behind the G8, and mobilising people to get to Scotland in July as well boosting grassroots resistance in their own area. Only 21 weeks til the summit, the clock is ticking. Time to get involved?

TRAPESE and **Have I Got SchNEWS For You** crew are planning a spring tour. If you want to host an event contact roadshow@riseup.net call 07904 452297 or the SchNEWS office. See www.trapeze.org for dates and more info.

ARE YOU SERIOUS?

If any SchNEWS readers out there are thinking about stock market investments, what about an animal lab? Worried about animal rights protesters denting your profits? Don't be, there's £16 billion of investment in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries and Lord Sainsbury, the science minister, announced this week that "investment terrorism" will become a serious criminal offence.

The **Serious Organised Crime Bill** is passing through parliament and is being touted as a way to tackle 'economic terrorism'. Terrorist tackling ministers are in quite a rush: of the 113 companies recently pulling out of doing business with animal labs, over one third did so in the last three months. Animal rights actions are proving successful with the construction of a primate research centre in Oxford being stopped and 100 contractors and suppliers severing links with Huntingdon Life Sciences.

Sarah Dixon of the Save the Newchurch Guinea Pig Campaign makes the point that there isn't a need for a new law: "The offences this legislation is trying to stop are already against the law. I have no idea how far the legislation is going to go. At what point does peaceful protest become economic sabotage?"

With the Public Order, Malicious Communications, Criminal Justice and Terrorism Acts already in place, coppers are certainly going to need some extra training to help them choose from such a wide ranging menu of protest-stopping laws. Under an amendment to the Bill it would be a criminal offence for more than two people to 'harass' someone with the intention of making a company break off commercial links with an animal research company. So what will happen to groups calling for boycotts of companies, or people doing pickets outside McDonalds?

And if the law is found to be successful at stopping animal rights campaigns, you can be sure it will be used against other campaigns.

The Bill's even got a clause on "Behaviour in the vicinity of Parliament" which is designed to prohibit anyone "spoiling the visual aspect" of the Palace of Westminster. But this is no opportunity to move on ugly politicians, it's mainly aimed at one single demonstrator – Brian Haw. Brian's been camped outside Westminster for 3 years protesting against US/UK policies on Iraq. Now the powers-that-be are fed up with the embarrassment and want him removed, as according to former Home Secretary, David Blunkett, he is giving tourists a view of "dysfunctional democracy" – Blunkett obviously reckons that protesting is dysfunctional – but this is the attitude we've come to expect of this authoritarian Neo-Labour government. Blunkett admitted the law was a "sledgehammer to crack a nut", the nut being Brian, who has apparently caused total havoc with his one man protest.

We will let you decide what total havoc is and who the nuts are, but the implications of the amendment are wider than one man. The proposed rules will outlaw peaceful protest within a 1km radius of Parliament and Downing St, including Trafalgar Square, without a permit. Demonstrators could be banned from the area, fined up to £2500 or face 3 months in prison for the organisation of illegal protests.

* **Support Brian Demo:** next Monday (7th) 2-8pm in Parliament Square (see www.parliament-square.org.uk)... or get a megaphone and pitch a tent down next to Brian's.

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IN SHACKLES

While the government in this country is setting up a specific law of economic sabotage against animal rights protesters, in the USA they've already got the law - the controversial **Federal Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act**.

Seven Activists face three years in jail each for participation in an international campaign to close the notorious product testing lab Huntingdon Life Sciences.

Specifically, these activists are alleged to have operated a website that reported on and expressed ideological support for protest activity against Huntingdon and its business affiliates. For this they are charged with "terrorism". Even though they themselves have not committed any actions against HLS – the US authorities are attacking these seven people to try and silence a growing movement against animal abuse.

If the authorities are successful in prosecuting these activists it is likely they will go after other protesters, as the SHAC7 website says: "This case is intended to pave the way for further silencing of activists involved in all issues. It is imperative that the broader social justice movement stand behind these activists in our communal defense of free speech, press, and association." www.shac7.com

* The campaign against HLS continues: www.shac.net 08454 580630

SchNEWS in brief

* Learn more about dodgy health effects of **Tetra phone masts**, used by the police, this Saturday (5th) 10:30am, Institut Francais, 17 Queensbury Place, London. £3/£2

* **Open day on waste** including what to do with it, the **Newhaven Incinerator Campaign**, compost and wormies. This Saturday (5th). Brighton Peace and Environment Centre, 39-41 Surrey St, opp. Brighton Station 12 noon

* Catch **SchNEWS at Ten - the movie** and a new film by those Worthing troublemakers The Porkbolter at the first ever **South Coast Indymedia video night** next Tuesday (8th) upstairs at The Downview pub in Tarring Road, Worthing, directly opposite West Worthing station. 7.45pm

* The president of the **General Union of Oil Employees in Basra**, Iraq will be talking next Tuesday (8th) at Room 3E, ULU, Malet Street, London. 7.30pm www.iraqoccupationfocus.org.uk

* **Brighton Defy ID** meeting at the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd next Thursday (10th) 7pm

* **Colombian Hip Hop band Zona Marginal** are playing next Sat (12th) 7pm-12 midnight Parker Place Bar, 51 Parker St, Holborn, WC2 Entry £5.

* Demonstrate against migrant and refugee detention centres which hold people without trial, indefinitely. Meet outside **Harmondsworth Detention Centre**, Feb 19th, 11.30am. Bring: Pots and pans, musical instruments, balloons, kites, banners 020 8510 0465 www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk

* **Nottingham Student Peace Conference** - What's oil got to do with it?; Living in the shadow of the "War on Terror"; What are we going to do about it? 2-7.30pm, next Sunday (13th), Portland Building, University of Nottingham www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/~nspm

* Hats off to the **squatters of Arbour Square police station** in Stepney East London, who have turned the old cop shop into a haven for hard-up musicians and artists from Europe and South America. They've won the first round of their eviction order thanks to the police screwing up the serving of eviction notices.

CHIPS WITH THAT?

Whatever will they think of next? Well, microchips the size of sand grains with miniature antenna – which are embedded into products allowing them (and therefore their user) to be tracked. If this particular bit of big-brotherly love and attention doesn't appeal to you then join CASPIAN (Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering) in their boycott of Tesco, the supermarket giant who are kindly offering these chips free with their products.

This technology is called RFID - radio frequency identification (see SchNEWS 415) - and if you have been shopping recently at Tesco in Leicester or Sandhurst you may already have these spychips in your house. CASPIAN say these two branches are part of a trial which is about to be increased to ten Tesco stores across Britain. The ethically challenged supermarket chain assure us they don't intend on tracking products after purchase - but you have to admit that people walking around with unknown amounts of traceable devices on them could come in handy for a police state. www.boycottTesco.com

* Colchester library is the first UK library to use RFID chips – with another 30 to follow.

Positive SchNEWS

Hot rocks found 1000 metres below an old cement works in Weardale, County Durham could be used to provide hot water for an eco-village, and surrounding houses. Scientists from the University of Newcastle and PB Power have spent half a million pounds drilling a big hole into the ground to investigate. They found the water was 46°C - hot enough for heating up to 4000 homes! There are also plans to have wind and solar power supplying the homes, which, as the chairman of the hot rocks task force said "could make Weardale the first truly sustainable community in the British Isles".

...and finally...

Sex, lies and...technology?

Start practising now - don't let your voice wobble when you're talking to the folks down at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) coz they may in future be using a lie detector on the phone that can suggest you're fibbing about your claim. In yet another Big Brother-esque addition to our lives, the DWP, which is trying to crack down on benefit fraud but still expects people to live on £55 a week, has admitted to looking into using 'voice-analysis technology'. It indicates changes in your voice due to rising stress levels and can suggest that you are lying so they can look into your case. Dealing with the dole people - rising stress levels? We don't see any connection there...

While the government is finding new and intrusive ways to get people back to work in some fantasy job market in Britain, in Germany a women faces cuts to her unemployment benefits because she doesn't want to work in a brothel 'providing sexual services'. Yep, under Germany's recent welfare reforms, any woman under 55 who has been out of work for more than a year can be forced to take any available job – including in the legal sex industry – or lose her unemployment benefit. When the unemployed IT professional looked into suing the jobcentre, she found out that it had not broken the law. Job centres that refuse to penalise people who turn down a job by cutting their benefits face legal action from the potential employer. When Blair bangs on about getting people back to work to improve their quality of life, SchNEWS wonders whether being forced to work in a job that sucks for little more dosh than benefits isn't just another form of forced prostitution?

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers going to the G8 in Scotland...to have brave hearts. Honest!