



SLICK TALKING

"It is easier and less costly to change the way people think about reality than it is to change reality" - Morris Wolfe, PR consultant.

"To put the environmental lobby out of business...the petroleum industry must render the environmental lobby superfluous, an anachronism." - Bob Williams, 'US Petroleum Strategies in the Decade of the Environment.'

With the Kyoto climate change treaty coming into effect the same week that the McLibel Two scored yet another victory against McDonalds, in what has been dubbed the world's worst public relations disaster, 'greenwash' is back on the agenda.

Ever since the environmental movement appeared some of the world's biggest polluters have been at it, conjuring up one green illusion after another. This deceptive marketing has become known as greenwash. The Oxford English Dictionary recently gave the word a place in its pages, defining greenwash as "disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image."

Take Shell for example. A week before they announced record European profits of a staggering £9.8 billion, their UK chairman Lord Oxburgh was giving a speech at the annual Greenpeace Business Lecture about the future of oil companies in the light of climate change. Hmm, an oil baron telling us about the perils of climate change? Sounds interesting - how does he explain away the fact that, despite its core business being oil and their number one priority is to maximise profits for their shareholders, they really do care? Most attendees came from the world of oil companies, renewables companies, big NGOs, media and politics (this is called 'partnership'). Outside the venue Greenwash Guerrillas declared that this event was in fact a Toxic Greenwash Hazard. The Guerrillas reminded people that despite Shell's fine words, the company "has promised to close the growing gap with rivals such as BP and ExxonMobil by finding new reserves." As the Guerrillas pointed out "In terms of climate chaos, the solution is simple: leave petroleum in the ground."

This sort of corporate greenwash, together with "corporate social responsibility" and partnerships with people who really should know better is becoming rampant.

In October everyone's favourite oil and mining multinational companies - including BP, Shell, Rio Tinto and De Beers - got together (at a price tag of £400 a head) to talk with some big UK charities like Oxfam, Am-

nesty and International Alert to find common ground on "Business Action on Human Rights" we kid you not. Organised for the magazine Ethical Corporation, the whole conference was geared towards how these companies, who deal in extracting profit from resources under the land of displaced or affected communities, can deal with the resulting issues. Stuff like the armed insurrection by the people of Bougainville against the Rio Tinto over their polluting copper mine. Sessions included "Extractive industries: Managing plant security issues" (that's 'how you keep your mercenaries in ammunition') and "What are the limits of business responsibility for human rights?" (Er, bugger all if you can get away with it). Forget 'greenwash' this was 'red-wash' - how to get rid of the unwanted blood on your lily white hands. Next Week Ethical Corporation will be holding another one of these 'Partnership' conferences where organisations like Greenpeace, Christian Aid and the World Wildlife Fund will rub shoulders with the likes of Tesco, Exxon Mobil, Coca Cola and Vodaphone. But is it good to talk? **(Continued overleaf)**

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For Being a Kurd.

Remzi Kartal was arrested in Germany for the crime of speaking out for the Kurdish people. Its not the first time - Remzi was arrested in Turkey in 1991 for the awful crime of speaking Kurdish. He was an MP in the Turkish parliament at the time. He and 12 others were arrested and when Belgium offered him asylum he jumped at the chance.

In 2002 he was awarded 50,000 Euros by the European Court of Human Rights who ruled that the right to free and fair elections had been breached because all the Kurdish MPs were in jail (doh!).

Now Turkey wants another shot at him. They put out an International Warrant for his (crap) arrest, claiming he is a terrorist and should be extradited back to Turkey for trial and more time in Turkish prison. The Dutch Court of Appeal refused to deport another Kurdish activist because they suspected he could be tortured.

The German government should free Remzi immediately.

* Mark Thomas will be speaking at a public meeting hosted by Lord Rea: "Free Remzi Kartal - stop criminalising the Kurds" on Wednesday 23 Feb, 7pm at the Committee Room 3A, House of Lords, Westminster (St Stephens Entrance). For more information call Estella on tel 020 7586 5892

BURGER CHAINED!!

20 years since the first ever 'Day of Action against McDonald's', things are looking up for would be leaflet distributors. This weeks European court's ruling that the 'McLibel' defendants (combined income: £3,500 per year) did not get a fair trial because of McDonald's vastly superior financial resources (£2,000 a day for one barrister), has led to a flurry of discussion about whether skint activists will be able to get legal aid from the government if they're sued by big business. The fact that McDonalds were so desperate to stop a bunch of anarchists distributing the infamous "What's wrong with McDonalds?" leaflet is, more importantly, a real testament to the power of grassroots activism and how much of a threat it poses to the multinationals that are so intent on trashing the planet. In fact, leaflets given out in thousands when McDonalds started to sue, are now distributed in millions all over the world - direct action won the free speech battle.

During the original trial, the burger chain was so desperate to silence its critics it used spies to infiltrate activist groups. These spooks followed people home, nicked their post and even ended up handing out anti-McDonald's leaflets! The multinational has a long history of using the courts to silence its critics. And not just other activists, but biology professors, Channel 4 TV, Trade Unions, the Guardian and even a bunch of tofu munching hippies making "McVegan" t-shirts.

McDonald's worst nightmares, Dave Morris and Helen Steel, have long been involved in com-

munity activism, working on grassroots campaigns since the 1980s, including nuclear disarmament, corporate non-accountability, anti poll tax and animal rights. SchNEWS can also exclusively reveal that Dave Morris has been involved in local residents groups. Controversial, eh? Dave says that his activism is about helping to build up local community mutual aid and solidarity networks, encouraging people to stand up for themselves and to take control of all decision-making and resources themselves. We reckon he should be bloody locked up.

This latest court battle is sure to drive another nail into the McCoffin - something which seemed impossible a few years back. The burger giant is shrinking: it announced the closure of almost 200 stores in 2002 after taking an 11% dive in profits. A year later it lost £20m selling off its café chain, "Aroma". Their latest promotions for 'healthy' salads, apples, yogurts and Quorn burgers are no match for the likes of movies like 'Supersize Me.' Nor is this the first victory against the company. At the original trial the court ruled that McDonald's "exploited children", were "culpably responsible for animal cruelty"; deceptively promoted their food as nutritious and helped to depress wages in the catering trade. SchNEWS wonders when the "What's wrong with Tesco's?" leaflet will be hitting the streets.

For more info on the court case and campaigns against the scary clown...

www.mcspotlight.org

(‘Slick Talking’ continued...)

What Climate Change?

The PR company Burson-Marsteller, an expert in ‘reputation management’, reckons that “corporate reputation has a direct impact on a company’s ability to achieve policy-related goals.” Which in English means for oil companies, giving the impression that they can solve the climate threat themselves helps to avoid silly government regulation and red tape, and, any public debate about whether or not corporate-led globalisation is a good thing. So Shell and BP-Amoco have been busy seeking to completely transform their image from oil companies with dodgy environmental and social records, to ‘energy companies’ committed to taking action to combat climate change, without having to dramatically change their behaviour.

BP and Shell spend less than 1 percent of their budget on renewable energy, while they continue to invest billions in the damaging search for oil all over the planet. While BP reckons they are ‘the largest producer of solar energy in the world’ they forget to mention, that they got there by spending \$45 million to buy the Solarex Corporation. This is peanuts when you compare it to the \$5 billion it will spend over the next five years on oil exploration in Alaska. Read ‘In The Pipeline’ in this issue to find out the latest trick Shell and other oil giants are up to.

It’s not all doom and gloom though, a new report from the Chartered Institute of Marketing reveals that advertisers command the trust of just 3% of consumers. The report also complains about corporations ethical posturing which is unsupported by their real-life conduct. It’s a pity some of our bigger NGO’s didn’t read the report, and instead of jumping into bed (sorry ‘creating partnerships’) with the very people that are causing misery and mayhem in the first place avoided these greenwash events. The corporations that have so much money to gain from destroying the planet aren’t about to stop doing it voluntarily, but if they fool us into believing they really do care then their future profits will go up and everyone else’s quality of life will go down.

Corporate Europe Observatory have launched a campaign to curb excessive corporate lobbying in Europe “Over 15,000 full-time lobbyists now operate in Brussels, most representing business interests, who succeed all too frequently in postponing, weakening or blocking progress in EU social, environmental and consumer protections.” www.corporateeurope.org

“Perception Managers” like Burson-Marsteller should note : it wasn’t only the Nazi military that were tried at Nuremberg after WW2. Editors of mainstream newspapers who championed the Nazi cause in their pages were convicted of preparing the nations minds for the lynch that followed. PR pinocchio’s beware...

Positive SchNEWS

Are you bored of mainstream radio blather and chart dross on rotation yet? Yup, so are we.

And we ain’t the only ones. Up in rainy Manchester Under the Pavement are putting out a groundbreaking radical alternative radio show. The show is a mix of radical news and activist information with interviews and eclectic music covering covering punk, folk, experimental, electronica, indie and world.

Under the Pavement broadcast on South Manchester’s ALL FM 96.9 community radio station fortnightly every other Monday from 9pm until 11pm. You can pick it up across most of Greater Manchester – so that’s a potential audience of 6,000,000! Tune in, Turn Up, don’t Veg Out!

Website with info, pics and highlights from past shows available at: www.underthepavement.org

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SchNEWS in brief

A group of indigenous Mexican activists representing the interests of peasant farmers, fighting everything from illegal land seizures by US companies to the introduction of GM Maize are on a speaking tour of the UK. They will be in Nottingham next Monday (21st) Sumac Centre 7.30pm / 22nd - East Oxford Community Centre 7pm / 23rd - Cambridge Old Library 8pm / 24th - Brighton Cowley Club 6pm / and 25th - Rampart Social Centre E1 7pm ** Justice for Colombia is organising an opportunity to find out more about the situation in the country and to hear a firsthand account from one of the victims of the Colombian military and the British “aid” programme, Congressman Wilson Borja. Wed 2nd, 6:30 pm. Lecture Theatre, Medical School Building, University of Sussex. www.justiceforcolombia.org ** London Indymedia have organised a five-day festival of radical and independently produced films from South America. Discussion with solidarity groups, activists and film-makers, including visiting CIPO activists, food, drink, and music. RampArt Creative Centre, RampArt St, London E1 22- 26th www.rampart.co.nr ** Lawyers RPC have pulled their contract with death-merchants EDO. Having been informed about EDO’s products (computers, release clips and targeting devices for US warheads) and of the ongoing campaign against them, RPC decided to sever ties with the company. Nice one! For campaign info look at smashedo.bpec.org ** There’s also a Smash EDO fundraising film showing of ‘The Corporation’ next Wednesday (23rd) at the Madhatter, Western Rd, Brighton 7.30pm £5/3 ** The Linslade Bypass treehouse was taken by security on Tuesday. As it was empty at the time it didn’t take long! Most of the trees on route have been felled. Protests continue however. www.linsladeprotest.org.uk

STRIKING BACK

Workers at the CODEVI Free Trade Zone in Ouanaminthe, Haiti are celebrating victory this week, after winning a bitter battle over trade union recognition. Five union organisers and over 150 other dismissed workers are due to be rehired, and will be supported by a solidarity fund while they wait to return to work.

This is a real set back for company bosses who had been used to using army violence to get their way, despite the fact that the factory was set up with World Bank money on the condition that trade union rights would be respected! Repression of workers rights is par for the course in the Haitian sweatshop industries. Check out www.haitisupport.gn.apc.org * On 8th March the Sixth Global Women’s Strike takes place, demanding an end to poverty, war and crap wages. For more information check out www.globalwomenstrike.net

* Wal-Mart, the world’s largest retailer, has just closed one of its stores in Quebec - because workers won trade union rights. The company - who own ASDA - said it was shutting the store in response to unreasonable demands from union negotiators that would make it impossible for the store “to operate efficiently and profitably.” Like having to pay wages people could live on.

See also www.walmartucks.org

RICE-CRACKING

Syngenta has dropped a claim for patent rights that would have given them frightening power (SchNEWS 482). The patent if approved would have given Syngenta the rights over the flowering process of rice and many other plants, including ones not yet discovered! Syngenta had claimed they had ‘discovered’ the DNA sequence of the flowering of rice – as if it never existed before! And therefore would have exclusive ‘rights’ to this process. Fortunately after a month long campaign by the ETC Group supported by farmers’ organizations, trade unions and other civil society organizations Syngenta have decided to let the patent lapse. www.etcgroup.org

IN THE PIPELINE

It’s not easy being one of the world’s big “energy” firms – ExxonMobil could only manage a £13.4bn profit in 2004 whilst poor old Shell struggled to scrape a measly £8.7bn. With that in mind, it’s completely understandable they should need to screw over anybody getting in the way of business development... how could they make ends meet otherwise?!

Let’s look at some of their handywork: Since 1994, Shell, along with ExxonMobil, Mitsubishi and Mitsui, have been involved in oil and gas extraction on Sakhalin Island, in the far east of Russia. The construction of the 500-mile pipeline threatens the island’s pristine salmon habitat and new offshore platforms are slap bang in the middle of the breeding grounds for the last remaining 100 Western Grey Whales. The pipeline also crosses a sacred indigenous burial site, will threaten the livelihood of tens of thousand of fishermen.

The Nivkh, Uilta, and Evenki peoples of Sakhalin have long asked that the oil companies take action to mitigate the adverse impact of their work and establish an independently managed indigenous peoples’ compensation fund. Sensibly, the companies have completely refused to do any such thing - just imagine if they had to pay compensation every time they destroyed a local environment or devastated a local economy... why, it might knock a billion or so off profits... get real!

Those affected by Shell and Exxon have started taking direct action against the companies - over 200 indigenous people blockaded ExxonMobil’s shoreline production complex for four days last month. Not content with shafting the environment and locals, Exxon and Shell are shafting their own contractors - drivers of vehicles delivering construction materials to the site have gone on strike – they haven’t been paid since October last year! Latest info on the protests: www.pacificenvironment.org/russia/sakhalin_protest

...and finally...

The capitalist Scottish tourist industry is cashing in on the anti-capitalist G8 protests planned for July. The Edinburgh and Lothian Tourist Board is hoping to entice protesters with short-break packages. In between building barricades and fighting running battles with the police, the anti-G8 protesters will be offered amongst other things a walking tour of Edinburgh (taking in, or bricking in, all McDonalds and banks perhaps?) and perhaps rather unwisely, a visit to a distillery – with free alcohol and plenty of bottles as available ammunition. It could well turn into your typical British riot, with pissed up punks chucking bottles from the back of the crowd at the end of a hot summer day, or maybe just another grey rainy day - it is Scotland after all.

But it isn’t the tabloid stereotype “anarchist” that the Tourist Board is trying to appeal to – spokesman Graham Birse said “...many of the people coming are much like you and I and your readers: they have mortgages and jobs and stuff.”

Other tourists in Scotland will include summit-hopping police from around the country, drafted in to cope with the estimated numbers of protestors. Halls of Residence at Stirling and Edinburgh Universities have been earmarked to cope with the influx of police (total security budget £150 million) – all paid for by the Foreign Office (in other words people with “mortgages, jobs and stuff”).

SchNEWS wonders if in future there will be coach tours of the area, we look forward to our retirement where we can reminisce on the bad old days – “...that’s where we danced with the Samba band behind the barricade of upturned delegates vehicles.” “...this is the spot from where I chucked the first brick.” Sorry, we’re not like that really – most of us have got mortgages and jobs and lots of stuff. (The right stuff, that is !)

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers not to greenwash and bear it, but bare the naked truth... Honest!