



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YET ANOTHER FOXING...

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FOX ME STOOPID!

"It's not the police we've got to watch, it's the antis with their video cameras." - Graham Bridgeman, Chairman, Eggesford Hunt.**

Finally seven years after Neo-Labour promised to ban hunting with dogs, the law's been passed. Foxes can relax and hunt sabs can hang up their balaclavas... Or can they? Things ain't what they seem in the countryside. Hunts are still riding out in red coats and killing foxes while the police turn a blind eye. In fact the hunting fraternity are promising to kill even more foxes as some sort of sick revenge for the ban. In a classic example on the day after the ban the Master of the Old Surrey and Burstow hunt, Graham Worsley, held up a shot fox in front of a crowd of three hundred hunt supporters and said "Tony Blair made me do this" as if the Prime Minister was a voice inside his head.

Despite a manifesto commitment and a clear majority of the public and MPs wanting a hunt ban, the ban has taken years to introduce - having to fight the power of the hunting elite and their friends in the media, Lords and police. It has been often sidelined in committees and continually dismissed by the House of Lords (funny that), Tony Blair has tried to reach every form of compromise possible - but has been dragged kicking and screaming to a hunt ban by his backbenchers.

Despite recent attempts to paint foxhunts like the Belvoir, Cottesmore and Duke of Beaufort as more working class than a colliery brass band, hunting remains the preserve and pastime of the rural elite, the aristocracy and royalty. Hunt sabs have long felt that they're not so much anti-capitalist as anti-feudalist. Otis Ferry and his cronies who broke into the House of Commons as a protest against the ban are all well connected and sure in the knowledge their money will keep them safe from the consequences of their actions. Just as those five can expect an easy ride with the law (they were only charged with threatening behaviour, imagine if they'd been animal rights activists!) so it seems can the whole hunting brigade. Like the 'riot' in Parliament Square, ironically surpassing anything pulled off by Mayday anarchists, involving fireworks being thrown at the police has resulted in a handful of prosecutions for minor public order offences. Now there is to be an inquiry into the police's "rough handling" of hunt protestors - but it's not exactly the first time the Met have split a few

heads is it? Funnily enough neither the Murdoch press nor the Mail ran their usual "0800 shop a rioter" pages.

BLOOD BROTHERS

The police have adopted a similar approach. An internal Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) document showed that police forces would give the ban a "low priority". Police are also now publicly worried that the ban may be unenforceable because so many of their own officers are so pro-hunt, something which has been impossible to get them to admit before.

Hunts have always had virtual impunity from the law anyway. Attacks on saboteurs, which have resulted in many serious injuries and two deaths have either not resulted in prosecutions or been punished in a desultory manner, e.g. a conditional discharge for one six foot man who punched a middle aged woman in the face braking her nose. Hunt violence has escalated massively in the run up to the ban, with little sign of police response.

Police complain they haven't got resources to police hunts, but seem to have amnesia as hunting has always had enormous police resources thrown at it - devoted to harassing, intimidating and arresting opponents of hunting. In fact Sussex Police used to gleefully waste bucket loads of cash careering around the downs in 4x4s, fielding up to seventy officers a week across the county during Operation Rook to protect hunts. Surrey police went one better; they used to have two coppers on horses riding with Surrey Union hunt - on one occasion they arrested six hunt sabs who were trying to stop the hunt illegally dig a fox out of a badger sett, one policeman said "They are allowed to do that and we will call up every available police officer in Surrey to stop you interfering." Eventually the sabs had their charges dropped when the prosecution finally admitted it was a badger sett. SchNEWS wonders if the hunt will be prosecuted for disturbing a badger sett and if the police will be prosecuted for aiding and abetting a crime. Don't hold your breath.

In a bizarre twist the police are asking the general public to turn vigilante and start to enforce the law, provoking visions of masked-up community support officers pursuing red-jacketed toffs shouting "I'm your worst nightmare - a sab with a badge".

Up until recently the Countryside Alliance (which functions as a sort of self help group for blood-junkies, toffs, cap doffers and forelock tuggers) was predicting mass

PICK A LAW, ANY LAW! JUST LIKE THAT!

Not enough laws to deal with protestors!? Yeah right, how about:

1986 Public Order Act
1992 Trade Union Act
1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act
1997 Protection from Harrassment Act
2000 Terrorism Act
2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act
2001 Criminal Justice and Police Act
2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act
2004 Civil Contingencies Act

Coming Soon: Serious and Organised Crime Act, and some more anti-terrorism powers.

public disorder if a ban was introduced. Peculiarly the bloodcurdling threats of mass defiance and civil war have given way to the more moderate promise of hunting within the law - which means not hunting at all. The CA's stance on the law now seems to be one of defying it by obeying it. This extraordinary climb down requires a little explanation - it seems the hunts are relaxing in the knowledge that the deal they've done with the state is that the police won't enforce the ban if the hunts pretend not to break it - so they are drag hunting (following a scent) which may "accidentally" pick up the scent of a fox, chase and kill it.

But what about the pesky anti, lurking in the hedge with her video camera? Simple! If the police are there, they might warn her to leave the land for disrupting the lawful activity of drag-hunting. If they're not various hunts including the Crawley and Horsham have begun to hire private security to supplement their volunteer thugs. Hunt violence has become big news in recent days, because the hunts are willing to be violent even in the face of national organisations. On Saturday hunt supporters assaulted a BBC cameraman in East Kent, while a van with an ITN crew in it was rammed off the road in Sussex. On both occasions the police made no arrests.

If the hunt ban is to be enforced then it is up to people who are opposed to hunting to get out in the field, record the activities of hunts and save the lives of foxes, hares, mink and deer.

* Hunt Saboteurs are still be going out to save animals lives and monitor hunts. www.huntsabs.org.uk 0845 4500727

* The League Against Cruel Sports has set up a Hunt Crime Watch Programme with a useful guide on how to spot an illegal hunt. www.huntcrimewatch.com

** **Hunt speak for anyone who doesn't think watching animals being torn apart is fun.**

SOC It to me!

London Animal Action (LAA), an organisation that campaigns peacefully on animal welfare issues, has had its bank accounts frozen by a High Court Order. It was named on an injunction taken out by Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) under the Protection from Harassment Act. LAA's harassment amounted to organizing transport to demos against HLS and arranging demos in London. Their bank account contained several thousand pounds that had been raised to buy a minibus. LAA is taking legal advice to fight the case, but this would itself cost thousands of pounds and if any person claimed to speak for LAA they themselves could be made bankrupt – even if that person had never been involved in the campaign. This is just like the case of Lynn Sawyer who was going to lose her house after being sued by HLS for over 2 hundred grand in order to shut her up (SchNEWS 471). Fortunately a judge has recently overturned this ruling and reduced Lynn's fine to £2500 costs. LAA has ceased to exist as a result, but an ex-member said "The likelihood is that this will stir up a hornets' nest of anger against HLS."

The Protection from Harassment Act is just another in the long list of laws to harass protesters. Often they are introduced under cover of being for some other purpose than squashing protest, like the Harassment Act, which was meant to protect women from stalkers, but has been used to protect big business from animal rights and anti-genetics activists. The Terrorism Act has been used extensively to stop and search peace protesters who get in the way of state terror.

Now we've got the Serious Organised Crime Bill. The government has insisted that: "we do not intend those who legitimately leaflet against an organisation ... to be caught under the new offence." But the Bill says that if you are trying to persuade two or more people not to do something, then you could be causing harassment if they are 'alarmed' or 'distressed'. Giving a leaflet to two customers of a shop asking them to boycott a certain product might be harassment – then you could be landed with an injunction.

'Unauthorised' protest around Parliament will be illegal (SchNEWS 483), including in Trafalgar Square and a 1km radius around parliament and Downing St.

And now you're not allowed to protest outside someone's home if you are asking them not to do something, penalty £2500 fine and up to a year in jail. Also in the bill is a new law of 'Economic Sabotage'. Worrying one this - it will become a serious offence to hurt someone's profit! Whoops!

Think we're paranoid – well last March a protester in Kent was arrested for sending polite emails to a drugs company, asking it not to work with HLS, the harassment was sending an email to the same person twice. Another protester was arrested at a demonstration in January last year for displaying a picture of a dead cat on a poster. In September 2003 the police directed demonstrators against a circus in London to leave on the grounds that the circus people lived nearby in their caravans, and were therefore being harassed in their homes.

The campaign against HLS continues 0845 458 0630 www.shac.net
Excellent legal advice for people www.freebeagles.org

Inside SchNEWS

British born Babar Ahmad was nicked under Anti-Terrorism Laws by riot cops who burst into his home at 5am, one morning in December 2003. Babar received a good kicking in the process and a botched investigation into police brutality followed, but after six days of intensive investigation he was released without charge. He was then re-arrested on an Extradition Warrant from the US in August last year.

The Warrant alleges that he was involved in funding terrorist activities in Afghanistan and Chechnya and that he was plotting an attack against the Empire State Building (coppers found a 1970's travel brochure of the building visited by his dad in 1973). Although he faces no charges in the UK, he could get up to 50 years in prison, in the land that brought us Abu Ghraib, Bagram and Guantanamo detention centres.

There'll be a demo outside Bow Street's Magistrates Court between 8am and midday, Covent Garden on the day of his hearing, Wednesday 2nd March. www.freebabarahmad.com

** Last Tuesday three protesters who occupied the roof of Brighton arms dealers, EDO/MBM, were acquitted of aggravated trespass. The judge heard from the prosecution how the activists attempted to prevent EDO going about their 'lawful business', by draping banners from the roof. But the paranoid fantasies of some EDO workers (like their belief that the evil roof raiders intended to bombard them with grubby banners) didn't stand up in court.

The court was shown a police video of the roof occupiers being asked to leave, even though the footage had no sound! Coppers also failed to provide any means for the protesters to get down, rendering any request for them to do so irrelevant. This verdict makes nonsense of the guilty verdict handed down to five other EDO rooftop protestors last month and things look good for their appeal. Join protesters at EDO on Monday 21st March for a National Day of Action Against the Arms Trade.

www.smashedo.bpec.org

** ...Meanwhile, in Ireland...the Pitstop Ploughshares are going on trial for trashing a US warplane at Shannon Airport. The airport was (and still is) a stop-off point for troops and bombers on their way to deliver democracy to the grateful people of Iraq. The five defendants are charged with two criminal damages - one for •100 (the fence) and one for •2.5 million (the plane). They face up to 10 years if convicted. Pitstop Ploughshares would like people to come and show their support and follow the trial, which is at Dublin's Four Courts, starting on March 7th and will last two weeks.

Check www.PloughsharesIreland.org for info, or call/txt 087 918 4552

** On March 14 there's a public meeting in support of Ray Gilbert who was wrongly jailed in 1981 for a murder he did not commit. He has spent 8 years beyond his sentence incarcerated and is now being apparently persecuted for standing up for other prisoners' rights. 5.30 pm. Friends Meeting House, Paradise Street, Liverpool www.j12.org/ps/gilbert.htm

PLANKS A LOT

A billion-dollar-a-year illegal logging trade is threatening one of the last tropical forests in South-East Asia and the Pacific. Each month around 300,000 cubic metres of lumber is being shipped out to China by smugglers using false Malaysian passports, quarantine clearances and £150,000 bribes. Local communities in Papua are lucky to get £6 for each cubic metre of merbau wood felled on their land. Meanwhile, Chinese manufacturers are turning the planks into luxury hardwood floors with one Chinese furniture chain, Oriental Home, flogging the stuff for £800 a cubic metre.

But it's not just the Chinese who are involved. According to the Worldwide Fund for Nature, at least 13% of wood products imported by G8 countries and China are illegally logged. In the UK up to 18% of this trade is used to fulfil government building projects. Join the call to stop this illegal trade and check out www.eia-international.org for more info.

SchNEWS in brief

To mark the 20th anniversary of the end of the miners strike (see SchNEWS 444), there will be a rally and meeting 'Where have we been, where are we now, where are we going?' at The Old Club, Market Place, Stainforth, Doncaster 6pm. Plus a buffet if you're lucky. www.minersadvice.co.uk
** There will be a **Rebel Alliance** gathering at the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd, Brighton this Mon (28th) at 7pm. Focus will be the G8 summit at Gleneagles, Perthshire, Scotland, Jul 6th-8th, how we can respond both up there in Scotland and down here in Brighton. There'll also be a film about casualised workers around the world. **
G8 Climate Counter Summit - Moving Beyond the Greenwash March 14th - an open invite to activists, local groups and anyone interested to find out more about action on climate change in the run up to the G8, 6-9:30pm Ashbee Hall, part of Toynbee Hall, 28 Commercial St London E1 6LS. Aldgate East tube. For more info www.risingtide.org.uk (CAPACITY, 100, Please send email g8climate@risingtide.org.uk or ring 07708 794665 to book a place) **
Ladyfest Brighton is a d.i.y. feminist arts festival open to all genders, planned for Oct 2005. They're looking for volunteers and performers etc to be part of the event itself. www.ladyfestbrighton.co.uk
There's a benefit for the festival this Friday (25) upstairs at the Freebutt ** If your in Worthing on Tues (March 1) there'll be a video showing about the **US black liberation movement** and an anti-racism discussion upstairs at the Downview pub opp West Worthing stn. Plus news and info on various local and global issues. 7.45pm.

...and finally...

Dissent! is a network and as such can not speak to the media. But after the last Dissent! gathering in Glasgow, annoyed by the media hysteria over the coming protests, a few individuals spoke with journalist Louise Grey from the Scotsman. (one of the papers whipping up the hype.) Louise had been hanging around for ages trying to speak to somebody from Dissent! and finally got her scoop. After a two-hour chat about the real issues behind the G8 protests, where all she tried to do was get people to express violent tendencies, the interview ended with the following exchange...

"So, when will the story be printed?"

"Well, it won't be, as none of you have said you're going to fight with the police-there's no story here."

No wonder a recent poll found journalists competing vigorously with politicians and estate agents for last place in the public trust!

To keep up with the media frenzy try getting a Google news alert, go to google, news and put in search words and they send a digest of all the media that day on your topic. A great way to keep up with what the buggers are saying without having to buy their crap!

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all hunts to stop horsing around - you're foxed up ... Honest!

Positive SchNEWS

Home to an impressive ten thousand books, pamphlets and periodicals on anarchism, The Kate Sharpley Library is all about "allowing the movement of today to learn from the past" because "any movement that ignores its own history deserves what it gets!!" Named in honor

of Kate Sharpley, a First World War anarchist and anti-war activist, Sharpley is one of the countless "unknown" anarchists whose life and work would be forgotten if it were not for the library. They publish a regular bulletin and are always on the look out for new material. www.katesharpleylibrary.net

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