



WAKE UP! IT'S YER GET OUT OF JAIL FREE...

# SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

TESCO *Every little helps*

**WAGE CHECK** Helping Workers & Suppliers Earn less Every day!

We bully and exploit so that you don't have to...

Friday 15th April 2005

Free/Donation

Issue 493

# TESCOPOLY

**“Where does the money come from to pay Tesco Boss, Terry Leahy? From producers and consumers; the cheaper he can buy from producers and the more he can get from consumers the more money he has for his shareholders and of course for himself.” John Turner, Lincolnshire Farmer**

This week's announcement that Tesco made £65 profit every second last year, was accompanied by bosses proudly telling reporters that they were making customers shopping trips easy and less expensive. £1 out of every £8 spent in the UK high street finds its way into Tesco coffers, but what's wrong with success and low prices? The company's going to create 25,000 jobs next year. Declan Curry of the London Stock Exchange was surprised at how low key the Tesco announcement was, “we should not be ashamed of profit,” he murmured, “without successful companies, we're all much poorer. It would be a pity if Tesco thought it had to hide its success.” But it's what lies behind this ‘success’ that Tesco is trying to hide: monopoly, monotony and greed; destroying communities, the environment and working conditions in the process. Oh and the food's crap too.

Tesco Boss Terry Leahy managed to flog £30bn of stuff in the UK last year, but he's still not content. Lamenting over a mere 1/5 increase in profit, he told investors that “Tesco's share of the total retail market is just 12% and there is a lot left to go for”. But that 12% is an average. According to a study by that bastion of corporate support, the Sunday Times, Tesco has total control of the food market in one in 14 post code areas. Luckily for Tesco, competition laws classify convenience stores as a separate sector to supermarkets. Monopolies used to be recognised and prevented when a company controlled 25% of the market, but with their Metro stores, Tesco controls over one third of the country's grocery business. It might be election time, but don't bother speaking to your prospective MP about curbing Tesco's power. You'll find Tossco boss, Sir Terry, sitting on 4 government task forces and sponsoring stands at party conferences. Despite Tesco's monopoly ministers have just allowed it to buy 10 Safeway stores.

On Tuesday, Tesco reported pre-tax profits of more than £2bn. Even though each employee generates an average of £95,000 worth of sales each year, no spare cash is left to pay workers during their tea breaks. Whilst the eight men who run Tesco earned £26m between them last year, Tesco have fought tooth and nail against the minimum

wage. A 16 year old worker on such a rate would have to work for over 90 years to earn Sir Terry's £3m annual salary.

## Sweatshop Neo-Labour

Tesco is a lot more subtle than union busting Wal-Mart. The Usdaw Trade Union have signed a ‘partnership agreement’ and sided with Tesco bosses who recently slashed sick pay for employees. Udsaw reckons if you worked for any other retailer you would “jump at the chance to have the type of partnership agreement Udsaw has with Tesco”. Andre Van Der Merwe probably disagrees. He got the boot for ‘skivin’ off’, even though it was his boss who sent him home because he had a swollen eye. Andre told an employment tribunal that he was so stressed and exhausted from his night-shift job in the store that he lost three stone in weight and had to spend weekends sleeping. The tribunal found against Tesco, the company that docks workers 15 minutes wages for being three minutes late for work.

Obviously a shop that sells jeans for less than a fiver uses sweatshop labour, but workers picking fruit are getting a raw deal too. This week, a report by ActionAid states that pear picking Tesco workers in South Africa complained of wages so low that they could not afford school uniforms for their kids. Researchers discovered that pesticides were being sprayed whilst women worked in the orchards without protective clothing and “workers picked pears while trees were still ‘wet’ from pesticides.” Policy researcher Dominic Eagleton commented that “the growth of supermarkets in developing countries is really undermining the fight against poverty.”

In its push to maximise profit, Tesco is busy destroying local communities here in the UK too. In their ‘Ghost Town Britain’ report, the New Economics Foundation revealed that between 1995 and 2000 we lost about a fifth of our local shops and services including post-offices, banks, butchers and grocers. Between 1997 and 2002, around 50 specialist stores closed every week. In October 2002, Tesco bought 870 One Stop, Day & Night or Dillons shops across the UK, almost 1/2 of which contained a sub post office. Tossco is now busily converting these shops into Tesco Express, closing 100 post offices, often in the smallest communities, in the process. The company's environmental policy admits that the store does “not claim to have all the solutions”, but some solutions are pretty obvious. Like not promoting car travel to out of town superstores and not lobbying Ken Livingstone to reduce the congestion charge.

The food might be cheap, but think twice before tuckin' in. Tesco special offers on

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

**For being Islamic...**

A 16 year old Guinean girl in NYC was plucked from school and is being held in a detention centre in Pennsylvania, apparently as a high risk terrorist threat. It seems that no-one who actually knows her has any idea why. “I just can't fathom this,” said her teacher, Kimberly Lane, “she's just a regular teenager. Two weeks ago her biggest worry was whether she'd done her homework or studied for a science test.”

This story follows the recent incarceration of another 16 year old from New York, a Bangladeshi girl now held at the same detention centre. According to the FBI, the teenagers are “an imminent threat to the security of the United States based on evidence that they plan to be suicide bombers.” No evidence was cited, and federal officials will not comment on the case. We'll let Ms Lane have the final word: “I remember telling her the government doesn't go after 16-year-old girls. And in the last few days, I'm wrestling with the fact that, yes, it does.”

food usually apply to processed, over-packed fat laden grub, high in all the unhealthy crap. This is where the most profit is, but the food still costs less if you use raw ingredients. If the spoonful of organo-phosphates, the glass of GM milk or chicken that's doubled in fat content in 50 years doesn't put you off, then what about the food monoculture being encouraged by the store? Thirty years ago the 75 strong Thames Valley Vegetable Growers Association supplied every kind of produce. Now only 5 supply what the supermarkets believe looks good on the shelves. One Covent Garden trader told Joanna Blythman, author of “Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets”, that if he tried to sell supermarket-style produce to chefs he would be laughed out of their kitchens.

Tesco sell food and electrical goods, rent DVDs, will give you a credit card, insure your home, provide an internet service and will even write your will. Tesco is also the world's largest online grocer and has 2,350 stores and 100 hypermarkets. Company bosses are planning to open up to 20 new Tesco Extras a year.

Want to stop the corporate control of our food? Boycotting Tesco supports local shops and communities. Why not spread the word and drop a few SchNEWS round to your local branch? You can always call Tesco on 0845 7225533 if you'd like to tell 'em where to stick their £2bn mega-profits.

\* www.supermarket-sweep-up.com

\* To find out whats wrong with supermarkets and more dirt on Tesco www.corporatewatch.org.uk

\*Recommended reading Joanna Blythman “Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets” (Perennial books)

## UPTON NO GOOD

As part of the ongoing project to turn the whole country into identikit retail parks, malls and yuppie apartments, and make sure that never again is Britain referred to as "a nation of shopkeepers", the latest local area still retaining some character under threat is the century-old Queens Market, Upton Park - one of the few surviving East End markets in London. The local mayor in collusion with property developers St Modwens wishes to see it destroyed and replaced by an Asda superstore and a block of luxury flats.

Whilst we are sure a few individuals (and shareholders) will do very nicely out of the deal, as Corporate Watch remind us, "When we look more closely at the hidden costs of supermarkets, the choice, convenience and value they supposedly offer becomes questionable. By putting small independent retailers out of business, they are hardly providing choice. By forcing consumers to use their cars for their weekly shop, they are hardly convenient, and when we calculate the cost to the taxpayer, small farmers, our health and the environment of 'cheap food', it doesn't seem such good value." That's Asda price.

To support the campaign to save the market email [friendsofqueensmarket@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:friendsofqueensmarket@yahoo.co.uk)

## HAW-HOUSE

One of the last acts of Neo Labour before announcing the General Election has been to clampdown even more on protests. Hidden in the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill is clauses relating to 'behaviour in the vicinity of Parliament' primarily aimed at removing Brian Haw, the Parliament Square peace protester, who has spent nearly 4 years in a continuous anti-war protest vigil opposite the Houses of Parliament. Other measures have also been included that will no doubt have wide-ranging implications on protest elsewhere.

Brian won a landmark High Court case to carry on his protest in October 2002. So Neo Labour decided they needed a new law to deal with him: placing severe restrictions on protest in a very wide area around Parliament, which will seriously curtail the rights of everyone to protest in Central London, whatever the issue.

Demonstrators will now have to give 6 days notice (or 24 hours if not 'reasonably practical' to give 6 days) to the Metropolitan Commissioner, who will say whether a protest may go ahead and, if so, under what restrictions. These restrictions include how many people may turn up and how many placards they may carry. Restrictions may be placed if the protest is seen as likely to cause a 'disruption to the community'. As most protest causes some disruption by its very nature, this law will have wide-ranging implications. A single police officer may be able to change any of the restrictions at the time of the protest. The restrictions will apply to any protest within 1km of Parliament Square, covering all government buildings and much else besides. The penalties for breaching the restrictions are severe - up to a year in prison and substantial fines.

The Human Rights organisation Liberty say that they cannot see how these measures "can be compatible with Article 11 of the Human Rights Act (the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association)." As Baroness Shirley Williams said it was "bizarre and ironic" that such rights to protest are "praised in the Lebanon, in the Ukraine, in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere" but "we are now beginning to make (them) almost impossible in our own country."

\* People are needed to join a rota to defend any threatened eviction of Brian Haw - to volunteer call 07916 151054 or see [www.parliament-square.org.uk](http://www.parliament-square.org.uk)

## Subscribe!

Keep SchNEWS FREE! Send 1st Class stamps (e.g. 10 for next 9 issues) or donations (payable to Justice?) Ask for "Originals" if you can make copies. Post free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o on-the-fiddle, P.O. Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 0EF. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email [schnews@brighton.co.uk](mailto:schnews@brighton.co.uk) Download a PDF of this issue or subscribe by email at [www.schnews.org.uk](http://www.schnews.org.uk)

## A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Plans to build a six lane motorway across the Thames were disrupted last week as the pre-inquiry meeting ended in uproar when the inspectors walked out. Objectors had asked for the inquiry into the Thames Gateway Bridge to be postponed as they had not been given enough time to make the case against the fume producing, racket making motorway that will go through residential areas in south east London.

When the inspector, Robert Barker, an (oh-so-impartial) ex-engineer for one of the engineering firms who are bidding for the road contract, announced that the public inquiry would not be postponed, there were cries of protest from angry local residents and pressure groups. One protestor grabbed the microphone and shouted "This whole thing is a scandal. This bridge is being railroaded through. You are not listening to people" and was then chased around the table. The inspectors walked out of the meeting, leaving it in chaos. The Head Inspector has now resigned.

The Thames Gateway bridge is part of New Labour's massive and controversial road building scheme, set rolling by last year's "Future of Transport" White Paper (the 10 year plan for transport). It is being sold as a 'local bridge', but will in fact be a massive polluting motorway whose tolls will keep local people, in a mainly deprived area, from crossing whilst pumping clouds of smog into their environment and blasting the mainly residential area with noise. Ken Livingstone originally said that you could "bury me in a block of concrete" before he let this road be built, but now his Transport for London supports it. As for the noise, TfL say people will "get used to it" - i.e. stop complaining and shut up. The new road will generate approx 20 million vehicles a year that could end up rat-running through the local area, and cause more traffic accidents. The surrounding area of Bexley already has the highest childhood asthma rates of any London borough. The Thames Gateway Bridge is the same motorway as the Oxleas Wood scheme which was famously defeated in 1993 - hot on the heels of the Twyford Down direct action campaign and the massive anti roads protest movement of the nineties.

Action Group Against the Bridge  
[www.pvr.co.uk/tgb](http://www.pvr.co.uk/tgb)  
Road Block 01803 847649  
[www.roadblock.org.uk](http://www.roadblock.org.uk)

## INSCREWTABLE

Two elderly women, killed during a protest against factory pollution, sparked a riot by thousands of villagers in eastern China at the weekend. The two were run over by police in Huankantou village, Zhejiang province who were trying to disperse 200 elderly women who had kept up a two-week 24 hour vigil and roadblock outside a chemical factory that is blamed for ruined crops and deformities in new-born babies.

Angry villagers then smashed their way into a school where police and officials were holed up. "They were attacked with rocks, cudgels and choppers by thousands of people and more than 30 were hurt and taken to hospital, five in serious condition," a city statement said. 3,000 riot police officers then turned up and 50 of their buses were attacked before the police attacked them with teargas, clubs and shields.

As this is China there was a news blackout and journalists trying to enter the area were detained by the police - but violent demonstrations are becoming increasingly frequent as economic growth has caused resentment at corruption, environmental destruction and the growing gap between rich and poor. China will no doubt soon be knocking on the door of the G8.

## SchNEWS in brief

**Animal Experiments - Science or Fiction?** 'Is animal experimentation essential for medical progress or a serious hazard to human health?' Debate next Thursday (21) Oxford Town Hall 7pm [www.curedisease.net](http://www.curedisease.net) \*\* There's a **G8 Climate Counter Summit** follow up meeting on Monday (18) for anyone interested in networking, campaigning and planning for the action on climate change around the G8. It's at Rampart Social Centre, 15 Rampart Street, London E1 7pm [www.dissent.org.uk/g8climateaction](http://www.dissent.org.uk/g8climateaction) \*\* The **Trapeze roadshow** will also be at Rampart on the 23rd chatting about climate change, oil-war, the G8 and civil disobedience plus interactive workshops, a pub quiz and short films, followed by a social. 6pm onwards Rampart Centre [www.trapeze.org](http://www.trapeze.org) \*\* London Indymedia have organised a five-day **film festival on the Middle East** with films from Iraq, Palestine/Israel, Afghanistan, Lebanon and more. 26-30th at Rampart [www.indymedia.org.uk/en/static/cinema.html](http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/static/cinema.html) \*\* Next Thursday (21) **Cherrybomb meets Raise the Roof** benefit happening at the Toucan Club, St Mary's St, Cardiff. 7pm-3am £3 07875651564 \*\* Want to learn some **medical skills for protest situations?** Then get along to action medic training taking place across the country in May and June (and get in touch if you can organise something in the South West) [www.actionmedics.org.uk](http://www.actionmedics.org.uk) \*\* It's the London **Critical Mass monthly bike ride 11th birthday** party happening on the 29th April. Meet on the southbank at Waterloo 6pm [www.cmlondon.enrager.net](http://www.cmlondon.enrager.net) \*\* The court case to get an injunction against **SmashEDO** (SchNEWS 492) has been adjourned for 1 week with no restrictions on protest. There is a noise demo outside the factory on Weds (20) at 4pm at EDO, Home Farm Rd, off Lewes Rd, Brighton.

## Inside SchNEWS

Twenty-two year old Animal/Earth Liberation prisoner Chris McIntosh is currently awaiting trial in Seattle, accused of an arson which caused \$5,000 damage to a McDonald's. He's been charged with Animal Enterprise Terrorism and facing up to 30 years in prison.

Chris is in desperate need of support! Send letters to Christopher McIntosh 30512-013, FDC SeaTac, Federal Detention Center, PO BOX 13900, Seattle, WA 98198 (all mail must include a full return address on the front of the envelope) [www.supportchris.org](http://www.supportchris.org)

## ...and finally...

For years the government have been screwing up the implementation of computer systems and have been fleeced by IT companies who realise that once they "win" (short for "wine, dine and donate enough to get given") the contract, it is practically impossible for the government to bail out, regardless of minor things like poor performance, security flaws and huge escalation of costs. Why bother with the complex task of holding these companies accountable when it's far easier for the good old taxpayers to pick up the bill? There seems to be no incentive to actually deliver a decent value for money product that works - firms like EDS and Capita have repeatedly been awarded new contracts despite failing on their previous ones. Ah, the joy of business!

Despite the recent messes at, for example, the Child Support Agency, the Passport Agency, the Department for Work and Pensions, Air Traffic Control and with the National Insurance computers, it's not all bad news; a parliamentary committee has found that the project to link up all the UK intelligence agencies into one glorious big brother style system is not going well. The system, called Scope (..for abuse? SchNEWS wonders) is running three years late, doesn't work properly and is 50% over budget, although just how many millions of our pounds this is has been kept secret for, er, security reasons. So it looks as though we've got until at least 2007 before the newest weapons against democratic protests and political subversion, oh no sorry, I mean "terrorism", are in place - make the most of it!

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers off their trolley it's time to checkout. Honest!