



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER FULL 'O STOCKING FILLER...

# SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

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## INSIDE JOB

### PROFITEERING FROM CHEAP LABOUR IN UK PRISON

**"In order to obtain this information we are relying on prisoners, their friends, and families, to let us know what's happening in the British penal slave shops, to let us know which companies are contracting the work, what it's nature is, and how much (or rather how little) prisoners are being paid. The very fact that the secrecy surrounding prisoner exploitation can be broken, and prison slavery be put on the agenda, will in itself have an effect on the Home Office's ability to sell prisoners' labour" - Campaign Against Prison Slavery.**

Spare a thought during this years Consumer Christmas Hellish-day season for those who won't be pulling a cracker round the family table. Contrary to popular belief slavery has NOT been abolished in Britain. Behind high walls and locked doors it still flourishes. People are being forced to toil in poor conditions, beyond the reach of health and safety inspectors, denied even the most basic employment and trade-union rights, and severely punished if they refuse to work. In British prisons, there exists a readily exploitable labour force, a Third World colony in Britain's own backyard, cheap, non-unionised, available, and literally compelled to work. The prison population now stands at a record 78,000 and rising. Of those, 10,000 prisoners are put to work every day.

As Neo-Labour continues to push the prison system towards the kind of public-private partnership it loves so much, it's no surprise that some well known companies have got in on this highly profitable act. Despite all the corporate hogwash about 'Social Responsibility' and 'Ethical Trading Initiatives', Prison Enterprises, the part of the prison system which cooks the books and sets up the contracts is doing business directly, or indirectly, with ASDA, Sainsbury's and Tesco and Argos among many others in the usual suspects style line-up. The likes of Wakenhut and Group 4 are now running whole prisons, the productivity of whose 'work force' is a vital part of the profit margin.

Of course according to the government and the corporations, it's all about helping to rehabilitate prisoners and set them on the straight and narrow. Curiously though, these companies are reluctant to comment on the exact nature of their contracts. But according to an inside source from the Scottish Prison Service (who run

in an identical manner to their counterparts in England & Wales and have a turnover of £3 million a year) "This is low-skilled 'no braining' work and is of no benefit to the rehabilitation of the actual individual. I feel sorry for some of the prisoners as they are offered false hope and are worked like dogs." A survey conducted at Dovegate Prison (category B male prison owned by Premier Custodial Services - UK trading name of Wakenhut...) in August 2002 showed that the work undertaken consisted of: assembly of TV aerials, packing of balloons, assembly of lawn aerators, cleaning of aluminium moulded parts for machinery, packing of household textiles, and the production of pallets. And for this life-enhancing drudgery, wages were a maximum of a massive £26.00 a week.

### ROGUE TRADERS

According to the Campaign against Prison Slavery (CAPS), "In British prisons, there have been savage cuts in education budgets over the past half decade, any pretence at rehabilitating prisoners and empowering them with trade skills has been abandoned. If prisoners refuse to work, or are not considered to be working hard enough, they are punished - placed in solitary confinement, brutalised, denied visits, having days added to their sentences. Private companies are making enormous profits from prison labour, £52.9 Million in 1999, and that figure is growing rapidly. They use it because it is CHEAP - prisoners may be paid less than £5 for a week's work - and for prisoners there are no 'sickies', no holidays, no union meetings, no transport problems, and if there's no work they can simply be locked back in their cells. Prisoners are treated as the bosses would like to treat all of us."

Prison slavery is a useful way for companies to outsource all those labour-intensive, tedious tasks and undermine the rights and negotiating power of their own work force. **Armitage Petcare** is a supplier to ASDA, Sainsbury's and Tesco and uses Lowdham Grange prison in Nottingham for basic packaging. **Sainsbury's** used prison labour to package plastic spoons in HMP Lewes. SchNEWS' contact (literally) on the inside told us "it's probably best to wash the spoons before you use them". **The Ecologist** magazine was using (a few years ago admittedly) Holloway women's prison as a handy way of sticking leaflets in their mag - maybe it's no surprise that

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

#### For not being a policeman...

During an illegal squat eviction in Brighton this week, Sussex police arrested one squatter for possession of a Metropolitan police badge. Despite his heroically scruffy appearance, he was charged under section 90 of the Police Act 1996 "Impersonating a Police Officer" namely "Any person who, not being a member of a police force or special constable, has in his possession any article of police uniform shall, unless he proves that he obtained possession of that article lawfully and has possession of it for a lawful purpose will be guilty of an offence". Clearly fearing that Brighton's citizens might be confused over why the police were sporting mohicans these days - they nicked him and boarded up the squat.

editor Zac Goldsmith is now advising the Tories on greenwash.) **Airsprung Beds Ltd** - suppliers to Argos have been using the Scottish Prison Service to manufacture divan beds. The employees of **Dysons**, the vacuum-cleaner manufacturer, were sacked when Dysons decided to use cheap non-unionised labour in Malaysia, but how many Dysons' workers knew that for some time the company had been using cheap, non-unionised labour at Full Sutton prison?

This is of course just a tiny sample; unsurprisingly the latter-day slave-masters are keen to keep their involvement secret - from their own employees, and from the wider public, aware that the issue could be a PR partypooper. Hiding behind 'commercial confidentiality', most of the contracts are kept secret or farmed out to middle-men. Most of the major companies named above subscribe to some form of corporate responsibility bollocks - in fact Sainsbury's are founder members of the Ethical Trading Initiative, a 'voluntary' code of conduct which 'strives towards' ensuring the absence of forced labour. Given that the alternative to this sweatshop labour is 23 hours a day locked up SchNEWS reckons they're not striving all that hard.

In terms of pimping out prison labour to greedy companies the Home Office are relying on being able to assure not only its cheapness and reliability, but also ensure anonymity. Few of the companies exploiting forced prison labour would be comfortable with their employees and customers knowing about it. A primary aim of CAPS is to secure reliable and up to date information on these slave companies, and to expose them and target them. If you've got anything you reckon they ought to know then contact them (or us!) at [againstoprisonslavery@mail.com](mailto:againstoprisonslavery@mail.com) or PO Box 74 Brighton BN1 4ZQ or check out their website at [www.againstoprisonslavery.org](http://www.againstoprisonslavery.org)

## FAIR DINKUM RACISM

Just to show that Australia's right wing and its Bush-lacky PM John Howard aren't as dumb as they look, there's been some great mental gymnastics shown after the race riots in Sydney last week. The riot - which saw pissed-up hordes draped in Aussie flags smashing cars and kicking off, was allegedly sparked by some violence by Lebanese youths on Cronulla beach. The staggering leap of ideas these demonstrators were able to make with their blinding intellect was that the 'Lebanese trouble makers' are linked with Australia's so-called very own 9-11 - the 2002 Bali bombings, which killed 200 including many Aussies. The link in their minds has a name - xenophobia, racism, Islamophobia take your pick. With protesters calling for 'them to all f\*ck off home' (even ones who were born there?), SchNEWS was wondering if some of those white Australians might like to return to their mother and er father lands, and give the country back to Aborigines. But then we realised that meant they'd come here which would mean we'd have to start our own 'send 'em back' campaign.

Meanwhile the Liberal (conservative) government which rolled in on a racist anti-refugee ticket in the last election has claimed that Australia has a proud record of tolerance. Given the fact that the country officially had its own 'white Australia' policy until the late 60s we reckon it's not only the Aborigines who're living in the Dreamtime.

## CARAVANDALS

In a display of morbid callousness, Bedfordshire County Council waited until travellers were at a funeral in Ireland before removing their caravans. The 'window of opportunity' as Councillor for Caddington and Slip End Richard Stay put it arose as the whole family was mourning a relative abroad. The family had parked up at the Timberlands site, in Pepperstock three weeks ago, but Bedfordshire County Council claimed they were staying illegally. Heartless Dicky was apparently 'delighted' by the outcome of the ruse. The travellers will now have to pay hefty fines to get their vans out of the council compound. Justifying his actions Stay said "The county council has been able to take firm and robust action to remove the caravans - the family had no right to be there. I'm glad we were able to find a mechanism to remove them because it can be difficult to do so under current legislation." Let's hope that next time one of Mr Stay's dearly beloved shuffles off this mortal coil somebody parks a truck on his front lawn while he's paying his respects.

Anyone who fancies congratulating him on his cunning should drop a line to richard.stay@bedscc.gov.uk or 312 Manor Road, Caddington, Nr Luton, LU1 4DN.

## SPIN TO WIN

In a shock move unprecedented in SchNEWS history, we are encouraging our readers to VOTE... in this year's "Worst EU Lobbying Award" by a corporate body.

The election is organized by Spinwatch and FoE amongst others. The vote is designed to find the year's most offensive, hypocritical example of Corporate Greenwashing in the Brussel's corridors of power. Backed by almost a billion euros per year, over 10,000 corporate lobbyists roam Brussels. Ever more inventive ways of gaining influence are being used. Pretending to be concerned environmentalists, buying science, funding extremist capitalist think-tanks, these shadowy, powerful lobby groups manage to get their interests satisfied.

This is your opportunity to decide which case deserves to be remembered as the most ruthless influence peddler, the fastest spinner of spin, the grand master of disguise, in short who will become the 'Worst EU Lobbying' Award 2005 champion. See [www.corporateeurope.org](http://www.corporateeurope.org) or [www.lobbycontrol.de](http://www.lobbycontrol.de)

## FERRY 'NUFF

Irish Continental Group, who runs the Irish ferry cargo line, caused more waves than they expected when they hit on a time-old money saving device - (Wage) Slaves.

Ireland saw its biggest demonstrations for twenty years as the company attempted to replace its work force with cheap eastern European labour. The dispute was triggered by Irish Continental's proposal to replace 543 Irish employees with crews hired from Eastern Europe, to be paid 3.60 euros an hour. While Ireland's minimum wage is 7.65 euros an hour, the company can avoid those rules by registering its ships outside Ireland. Inflicting exactly what happened to their very own forefathers on Europe's new poor, bosses at the company over fired 500 (largely Irish) staff. The top brass meanwhile, struggle by on a mere £338 per hour, poor things. No replacement management from Poland then boys?

A strike has meant that none of the company's ships have moved since Nov 14th, leaving tonnes of cargo on the docks, with one crew barricading themselves inside the wheelhouse. The protests were not entirely successful as unions eventually agreed to deal whereby Irish Ferries will now be registered in Cyprus but will still pay the minimum wage of 7.65 an hour. Two IF ships were occupied by staff in Wales since the protests started.

\* See [www.indymedia.ie](http://www.indymedia.ie)

## NEWS SILENCED SHOCK

This is the last SchNEWS for 2005 - but don't worry we'll be back next year. And if you're thinking about a New Years resolution, why not set up a standing order for your permanently poor SchNEWS - even if it's just a quid a month. [www.schnews.org.uk/extras/help.htm](http://www.schnews.org.uk/extras/help.htm)

## LET'S GET FIZZICAL

Christmas is coming, so it must be time for us to wheel out a traditional favourite - a Coca-Cola rant. Well, they must be feeling a bit flat as the continued opposition to their operations in India keeps mounting. Residents in the states of Kerela and Uttar Pradesh are sick of the company's over-indulgence with the local water supply (See SchNEWS 474), and the past weeks have seen more mass demonstrations at the gates of bottling plants. It wasn't quite Coke and a smile of course - the protestors have been met with police violence and arrests. The pressure does work though and one bottling plant in the south has been closed since March because of pressure from farmers in the area.

Under a banner saying: "In the land of milk and honey Pepsi/Coke - we don't want any!" (Ok, it could be snappier - but they obviously haven't got a Coke-sized budget for copywriters), local groups are also demanding that the state initiate criminal culpability and liability cases against Coke for "destruction of lives, livelihood, health and environment of the people" (Now that's a slogan! We had "Can them, not water, sugar, caramel, caffeine, phosphoric & citric acid and a secret recipe of special chemicals..." Mmm, not that catchy either). Keep up to date at [www.IndiaResource.org](http://www.IndiaResource.org)

## New SchMOVIES DVD

In burst of unashamed capitalism (well slightly ashamed) we want you to buy our new DVD!! Featuring the best of this years short SchMOVIES, including EDO, DSEI, G8, and loads of extras. All in high definition, but not THX sound. Thrills, spills and coppers aplenty. Place your orders now, out 14th of January. Buy this for £6 inc p+p at [www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies](http://www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies) and keep SchNEWS free.

## SchNEWS in brief

**Keep Our NHS Public!** Demonstration this Saturday (17th) in Cambridge. Meet 12.30 at Guildhall, Market Square. And check out the new bulletin service from Keep Our NHS Public [www.keeppournhspublic.com](http://www.keeppournhspublic.com) \*\* The occupation of **Dalkeith Country Park** continues (see SchNEWS 522). They need help to protect precious mature trees and vital wildlife habitat. Why not do something beneficial with your Christmas and go and stand in front of a bulldozer or, failing that, support their campaign with a gift - they're asking for money, chocolate, nuts, love, mobile phones and credit, visits, tools, vehicle use, climbing equipment, water and your energy - take yer pick! Contact the tree defenders direct on 07783 904397 or the protest site on 07967 488703. Watch a short movie about it at <http://scotland.indymedia.org/media/all/display/3332/index.php> \*\* Sing-along-a-picket outside **Yarl's Wood Removal Centre**, December 17th, 12.00pm. Twinwoods Road, Clapham, Bedfordshire. Yarl's wood has been called the "Bleak House" for our times (see SchNEWS 524). Legal Action for Women: [law@crossroadswomen.net](mailto:law@crossroadswomen.net) 020 7482 2496, 07958 152171

## A GOOD BLOKE

**RIP Bloke** who tragically died in France a month back. Bloke played in the band Flannel, and was our very own anarchist Alf Garnett. He never shut up - couldn't be shut up. Loyal and true and fiercely protective about what he believed in - and crucially the people he cared about. This Sunday (18th) at the Concorde 2 in Brighton is a fund raising event for his long term partner and 2 children. 4pm till 2am £10, DJ'S and bands including Los Albertos and of course, Flannel.

## INSIDE SchNEWS

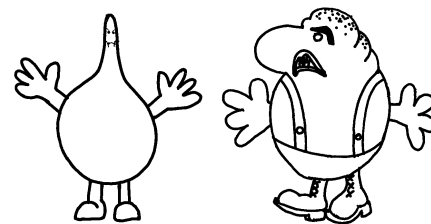
**WRITE TO A PRISONER THIS CHRISTMAS** Let those on the inside know we are there for them on the outside - send a political prisoner a card this Christmas. There are loads of people serving time for kicking back against the bastards and they love receiving letters of support from all concerned. See [www.vpsg.org](http://www.vpsg.org) (animal rights porridge-eaters) and [www.brightonabc.org.uk](http://www.brightonabc.org.uk)

## ...and finally...

SchNEWS's favourite **Nordic stormtroopers** the BNP came a cropper when an attempt to co-opt the Mr Men into the struggle for white nationalism backfired. Mr Jihad's appearance on the BNP's website 'humour page' (think Bernard Manning with a hangover), prompted a 'cease and desist' letter from the owners. Maybe everyone should send them a 'cease and desist' letter.

The BNP 'humour' page is preceded by a statement; "if anyone is offended - tough! The essence of comedy is to have fun at someone else's expense!" How's that from a bunch of no-neck drivellers with less chance of getting into power than the Natural Law Party.

## More BNP Mr. Men



Mr Narrow-minded Mr Bigoted

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers that the revolution won't come gift wrapped with batteries included. Honest!

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