



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER PLUS CA CHANGE...

# SchNEWS

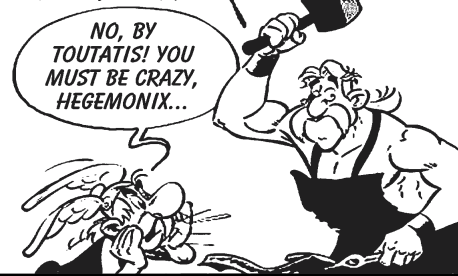
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WE MUST FORGE A NEW NEO-LIBERAL FRANCE, ASTERIX



## GAUL TO ARMS

**“The widespread perception in French society is that the gulf separating those ‘inside’ society, even if they are badly paid, from those ‘outside’, in particular living in the suburbs, has become more accentuated over the past 20 years.” - Sociologist François Dubet.**

France is revolting, again. Last Saturday over a million took to the streets across the country, coming just two days after 300,000 had done the same nationally. Rioting broke out across the country and was at its fiercest at the Place de la Nation in Paris. This week 70 campuses across France have been partially or totally shut down and some 800 high schools are also striking. In some places the youth of the suburbs whose rioting spread across the country in October (see SchNEWS 520) have joined forces with students.

The match which lit this fire was the CPE - (first employment contract) a new employment law which attacks and casualises the status of workers under 26 (see box). French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin unveiled this labour liberalisation package on the 16th of January saying that “urgent” action was needed to “bring the French labour market into the modern era” (and we all know what that means). In response, people quickly mobilised. The protests have gone into overdrive since March 7th, when half of France’s universities were occupied and up to a million students went on strike during a national day of protest. For the second time in six months France is in the grip of mass protests made up of movements of autonomous groups – not dominated by the manipulations and empty posturing of the organised left.

Demonstrations last Saturday included 300,000 in Paris which was followed by a six-hour street battle, with protesters battling police on the Left Bank as they tried to retake the Sorbonne - which protesters had occupied from March 7th until they were evicted by the riot police on the 11th – a location steeped in memories of May ’68.

The day before the eviction police fired tear gas at the Sorbonne, claiming that the large police presence outside the university was under attack from... students throwing books! In Marseilles, where 100,000 took to the streets on Saturday, police also attacked with tear gas, arresting two in front of the Municipality where a large group of anarchists and others had gathered. Spirits were lifted when someone climbed on to the balcony and hoisted Alternative Libertaire’s red and black flag in place of the French tricolour.

Also on Saturday, a postal worker, Cyril Ferez, was severely beaten in Paris by the notorious specialist riot police, the CRS, and is now in a coma. He was left for 50 minutes motionless on the tarmac at Place de la Nation with police initially claiming he was drunk and attacked by other protesters (yes, really). Back in the real world, witnesses claim that five or six CRS laid into him with truncheons and it was protesters who eventually managed to get him medical help.

### EIFFEL POWER

These protests against the CPE are just part of a broader movement against the US/UK-style liberalisation of the French economy, and follow other public rejections of these policies, including the referendum which gave a firm ‘non’ to the proposed European constitution and its raft of neo-liberalisations. Despite the mainstream media claiming that the French are being anything from anti-free enterprise to downright racist, a look at the real causes behind the revolt reveals the usual plan: corporate bosses are lining politicians’ pockets for a mutually beneficial carve up of the economy, and the dumping of any regulations – such as workers’ rights - which stand in the way of the fat-cat feeding frenzy.

While cynical pundits say that young people are de-politicised and assume that the French protests are the work of militant trade union activists, the fact is this is coming from autonomous groups coming out of communities, workplaces and campuses, organising in a decentralised manner. Actually the unions – just as they were in May ’68 - are a force against militant resistance, and would rather people just marched and trundled off home at 5pm.

New employment laws are part of a programme, followed by successive governments, of introducing repressive laws

### WHAT’S THE CPE?

The new employment contract (CPE – meaning ‘first employment contract’) which comes into effect in April, would allow bosses to sack workers aged 15-25 years without reason or compensation during the first two years of employment – creating a generation of disposable workers without job security. This follows the CNE, a similar law passed last year which applies to small businesses with less than twenty on the payroll, and other recent laws which are all about putting profit ahead of workers’ rights, safety and wages. It’s the usual neo-liberal squeeze giving corporations a boost by making it easier and cheaper to hire and fire workers.

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For bear faced cheek...

An animal rights activist was arrested in Singapore last week after dressing as a bear during a visit by the Queen. Jodi Ruckley was protesting the use of bear pelts for the ceremonial hats worn by the Queen’s Guards. The thought of the Queen’s visit being disrupted was obviously too grizzly for the Singapore cops and Jodi was arrested after only five minutes outside the presidential palace.

– as well as dragging out old laws - to put down the civil unrest they have caused, and using all legal tools at their disposal to push through changes, while either ignoring protests or sending in battalions of riot cops. The protests this month follow on from the heavily repressed student protests last spring, and the riots late last year (see SchNEWS 520), which were a response in poorer suburban communities across France to harassment by racist police and high unemployment. Youth unemployment - at 23-50% in some Paris suburbs - is among the worst in Europe, and the state’s response to the ‘yoof of today’ has been repression rather than community building.

The changes in the French economy are part of a much wider transition from ‘Old’ to ‘New’ Europe, as more and more countries are dragged into the brave neo (liberal) world. In many ways the French are now fighting the battles we lost during the Thatcher years. The ‘new’, cheaper, eastern European countries are pushing jobs eastward, and on top of that, with the rise of China and India as enormous cheap workforces, more jobs are disappearing from Europe. Meanwhile in France, the gap between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ widens towards UK levels.

### ’ALLO ’ALLO

Momentum is still building up across France with more waves of strikes, demonstrations and occupations of schools, campuses, workplaces, railway stations and town centres this week. Tuesday saw a day of action with 800 schools involved in strikes, while yesterday (Thursday) saw 450,000 demonstrators across France. The large mass demo in Paris ended with 100 arrested after violent clashes and tear gas attacks by police around les Invalides. Also yesterday 2-3,000 blockaded the railway line at Angers, and were later cleared with tear gas. In Lannion, 500 high school kids blocked entrances to a shopping centre, and it kicked off in several other centres including Rennes and Marseilles. Next Tuesday a general strike is planned.

...continued overleaf...

The CPE could bring down De Villepin's government, or they could dump it or make a compromise with big unions. Either way conditions won't really improve for those at the lower end of the job market. The problems highlighted by last year's riots - racism, unemployment and poverty - are all still there. SchNEWS wonders how long it will take for Britain's underclass to realise what two decades of neo-liberal reform have done for them and import some French tactics from over the channel as opposed to cheap beer'n'fags.

**FOR UPDATES SEE**

- \* [www.libcom.org/blog](http://www.libcom.org/blog)
- \* Indymedia coverage [www.indymedia.org.uk/en/actions/2006/france/](http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/actions/2006/france/)

\* **Next Tuesday (28th) in France there will be a general strike** with civil disobedience across the country bringing workers, students and the unemployed together.  
 \* **1.5 million public sector worker in Britain will also be on strike** that day (28th) fighting attacks on pension schemes, and plans to increase the retirement. There will be demos across the country. To find out more see [www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/03/336341.html](http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/03/336341.html)

## HEAVY ON THE MAYO

**Rosspport solidarity camp in North-West Mayo** has recently reopened in a new location along the planned route of Shell's dangerous experimental pipe-line in a beautiful windswept part of rural Mayo, Ireland. Last year, five local men were jailed indefinitely at the behest of Shell, who were trying to put an end to the blockading of the construction site (see SchNEWS 506).

After three months and no drop in the spirits of the continuing local protests, backed up by support from visiting activists, Shell stopped work for the winter. The men were then released and campaigners have now regrouped.

The camp is back and locals and activists are preparing for the upcoming fight. Construction may begin any day and bodies are needed to help out in the camp. The pipeline is proposed to run at an experimentally high pressure, on unstable bogland with a history of landslides and subsidence. The pipe also runs through the backyards of locals living as close as 50 metres to the pipe-line, despite the 'safe zone' for the pipe-line being at least 300 metres. As one of the campaigners told SchNEWS, "If Shell thought that small farmers in the arse-end of nowhere would be a pushover they thought wrong. When we say this thing will be built over our dead bodies, we mean it." The camp does however welcome visitors.

Contact: [rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com](mailto:rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com) and visit [www.struggle.ws/rsc](http://www.struggle.ws/rsc) and [www.corribsos.com](http://www.corribsos.com)

## SchNEWS in brief

There'll be an April fools day themed demo against the **no-protest Exclusion Zone around Parliament** this Saturday. Meet at the London Eye at 12 Noon. The demo will be followed by an afterparty fundraiser for People In Common who are campaigning against the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005. 7pm-2am at the Social Centre, 21 Russell Square \*\* **Lions and other animals** are bred in captivity to act as targets for holiday 'hunters' who pay large fees to shoot a "trophy" - a talk by Chris Mercer, who campaigns in South Africa to get canned hunting banned, on Friday, 31st March, 7.30pm Friends Meeting House, St Helens Street, Derby \*\* **Smash EDO** are heading up to the Big Smoke on March 30th for a demo outside Selfridge Hotel, Oxford St 5.30pm 30th March for Advanced Weapons System Intergration Conference.

## SIS-TEM FAILURE

**This Sunday is the 11th anniversary of Schengen Information System (SIS) going live in Europe.** Big deal I hear you say. And, er what the hell is it anyway? Basically, it's the Europe-wide big brother computer system set up to link national databases and allow different countries' police to share information about 'undesirables'. It developed from the Schengen Convention, established during the mid-eighties, which created a new zone of co-operative nation states and lifted border controls within large swathes of Europe - basically EU countries plus Norway, Iceland and Switzerland excluding the UK and Ireland.

Part of the agreement which established SIS (known as Article 96) was that it was to protect the member countries from threatening non-nationals from outside the region. We reported back in 2001 (See SchNEWS 312) how information was used to arrest a Russian (listed for having been caught once with a radical newspaper), and deny entry to a New Zealander (known as a Greenpeace activist). Bad enough, but at least it's only used against non-Europeans... Not so. Despite a June 2005 report from the Schengen Joint Supervisory Authority recommending that members "prevent Article 96 alerts on EU nationals", requests made under freedom of information acts reveal that in 2003, a total of 503 EU citizens were put into SIS.

What information about the EU subversives has been recorded is not known, but reasons can easily be found to fit the woolly criteria needed. These include 'Undesirable on the territory of a participating State', or 'Suspected of taking part in serious offences and having to be the subject of checks or control'. Not that we're suggesting there's been any over-political interpretations of who constitutes a danger-to-society of course, but top of the big-brother pops was Switzerland, with 389 people registered - which just happens to have been the location of the Davos round of World Economic Forums, and scene of many an anti-globalisation protest. Could these facts be related... surely not?!

So, instead of passport control, we get millions of secret 'intelligence' computer records based on suspicion and prejudice to be used as seen fit by the anti-'terror' anti-dissent, pro-corporate brigade. And now they're planning an updated, more powerful SIS II - we can't wait till they store photos, DNA profiling and your video rental details. Bring on ID cards!

## H2O DEAR

Although we aren't claiming victory in the big water rip-off just yet (See SchNEWS 536), some good news this week. More companies are quitting the privatisation game as increasing numbers of people revolt against having to pay more and more money for less and less water. As Thames Water leaves Shanghai for pastures new, people across the globe are wondering where their money has gone.

Despite investments of £14bn between 1990 and 1997, most of this cash has ended up in richer countries: thirsty Sub-Saharan Africa has received less than 1% of all the money invested in water supplies by private companies in the last 10 years. Last week Suez, one of the world's largest water Plc barons, said that it was now impossible for it to work in Latin America because the irresponsible and restless natives were trying to seize back control of their water supply (all together now...ahhh!). 6,000 children die every day as a result of poor water and sanitation.

Last Wednesday (22nd) **World Water Day** was marked with demos across the world against privatisation and wastage which is sure to keep up the pressure on the water companies. For more info on this week's World Water Forum in Mexico check out [www.wdm.org.uk/wwf/index.htm](http://www.wdm.org.uk/wwf/index.htm)

## COURT KNAPPING

**A high court judge surprised remaining defendants in the disintegrating EDO injunction case this week** by appearing to be awake to the Brighton bomb-maker's dodgy court tactics. He blamed EDO absolutely for delays in bringing the case to trial. EDO's solicitor and serial law abuser Tim Lawson-Crutenden copped a judicial slating, along with ex-managing director David Jones, who 'must have known' that the case was being dragged out 'wilfully', and with 'woeful neglect' of the issues, according to the judge. Lawson-Crutenden, EDO's original lawyer, claims to be the 'market leader in the bringing of harassment injunctions against protest groups' and works closely with Special Branch and the National Extremist Tactical Co-ordination Unit (NETCU), a national police unit set up to harass animal rights activists.

As a penalty, the judge lifted the injunction against the last remaining defendants in the case and awarded them costs. There is now no injunction against anybody who protests against the factory. A trial of the two protesters who refuse to settle the case will go ahead in the summer. They will use their trial to expose EDO's complicity in war crimes in Iraq and Palestine. Self-promoting bore and press spokesman for Smash EDO Andrew Beckett announced in a casually offhand manner, "With EDO losing every single battle these days, its hard to find something to feel persecuted about. It's almost enough to renew my faith in the British justice system."

Also on Tuesday, a Crown Court case against the first protester to be arrested for allegedly breaching the interim injunction was dropped. Legal observer Paul Robinson spent nearly a week in HMP Lewes on remand after his arrest last June for using a video camera in an exclusion zone to monitor violent activity by EDO's security guards. His case is the 23rd criminal case to be dropped against anti EDO protesters in the last 3 months.

\* See also [www.smashedo.org.uk](http://www.smashedo.org.uk)

## ...and finally...

**Got yer trust fund stashed away with an ethical bank?** Are your millions being put to work helping peasant co-operatives struggle amidst scenes of picturesque oppression? You're with the Co-Op right? Fair-trade, organic, vegan friendly. You must fucking think you're it, swanning about with Zac Goldsmith and George Monbiot. Think again, 'cos your money's as dirty as Rupert Murdoch's. Despite the constant trumpeting about ethical investment over the past fifteen years, it seems that the Co-op have been caught with their fingers in the till. Their latest 'tax-efficient' investment promises great returns - without harming the environment, animals or other people. According to the bank you can enjoy "strong growth and a clear conscience" by investing in companies like Vodafone and GlaxoSmithKline!

SchNEWS encourages readers to put aside Vodafone's investment in the arms trade and Glaxo's animal testing labs. After all, Vodafone's been benevolently investigating the impact of phones on the environment (apparently a phone that takes 10,000 years to biodegrade is OK). And despite Glaxo's recent resistance to cheap generic HIV drug production for Africa, the Co-op reckons that company bosses should be congratulated for their 'discount drugs policy for developing countries'. If you've got some spare cash to invest - rather than contacting the bank, why not bung the SchNEWS office a few quid because, as ever, we're skint and can promise that it'll go down the drain in a thoroughly ecological way.

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers... be realistic and demand the impossible. Honest!

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