



WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER DOUBLE HELIX...

# SchNEWS

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## SPUD-U-HATE

NEW GM POTATO CROP TRIALS FACE A ROASTING FROM ACTIVISTS

**Mutant foods are back!** After the likes of Aventis, SynGenta and Bayer were forced to quit the UK back in 2003 (see SchNEWS 448) - after the most successful ecological grassroots struggle in our history, BASF are trying again with farm-scale trials of GM spuds.

BASF - 'The Chemical Company' according to their PR men - are proposing to plant two crops of genetically modified potatoes in Britain, one in Cambridge and the other in Heddon, Yorkshire. Last year an attempt to grow the mutatoes in Ireland was abandoned after the Irish government insisted on stringent safety testing with independent scientists monitoring the crop. Not wanting to risk an unfavourable outcome BASF didn't bother - so they approached UK plc where a licence was rubberstamped with virtually no conditions. The bent spuds are due to be planted in the next couple of weeks, but there's still time to stop them. One Derbyshire farmer has already pulled out and even if they are planted it will be at least eight years before they can be grown commercially.

### WEEDING THEM OUT

So how was the first wave of GM foods resisted in the UK? For old times sake SchNEWS is gonna take you on a whirlwind tour of the successes of the anti-GM movement and the diversity of tactics employed - hitting every link of the chain, from the farmers and food producers to the supermarkets and companies behind the technology.

GM foods first reared their artificially ugly heads in the UK back in 1996. When they first hit shop shelves (hot on the heels of the Mad Cow Crisis) there was a wave of revulsion at this meddling with the food

chain that led to the new crops being labelled "Franken-foods". Despite huge PR efforts by the Bio-tech companies, they simply couldn't force them down the public throat. With this level of public support direct action became phenomenally effective. Within eight years the corporations admitted (temporary) defeat with Bayer making massive redundancies.

Initially, campaigners armed with leaflets, stickers, d-locks, and press releases descended on supermarkets and food producers and within a remarkably short space of time many of them had pulled out of using GM ingredients. Trolley jams were a favourite tactic - filling a trolley with goods and leaving them or taking them to

**"BASF state the trials are designed to test whether potatoes can be genetically modified to be resistant to blight. However, given the historical context, it seems more likely their function is to test if the UK public is still resistant to GM." - Mutatoes.org**

the checkout and demanding to know what foods were GM and what weren't (at least it makes Saturday afternoon in Sainsbury's a bit more interesting for the till monkeys.) Foods were plastered with stickers alerting shoppers to the presence of genetically altered ingredients. Corporate HQs were occupied. Supermarkets and food distribution points were blockaded. Keen to disassociate themselves from a PR disaster all the major supermarket chains soon fell into line and GM foods disappeared off the shelves.

All GM food for sale at that point was imported, but in the late nineties the Bio-tech companies developed strains suitable to grow in the UK - but their research and trial crops became the target for sustained direct action. 8th June 1997 saw the first crop-trashing, when Super Heroes Against Genetics (SHAG, geddit? Har, ha.) scored a six with a game of midnight cricket with a crop of GM potatoes.

### COME A CROPPER

As the above campaign intensified with banner demos and meetings to raise public awareness, more and more test sites were getting trashed. Some opted for the route of accountability donning white bio-hazard suits and getting nicked. Others crept around the hedgerows in the dead of night pouncing on unsuspecting plants. Some test sites were so small that they were 'de-contaminated' by a handful of anonymous people. At the other end of the (farm) scale was, the largest was in 1999 at Watlington, Oxfordshire where over



600 people held a rally then marched into a field of Monsanto oil-seed rape. Police were powerless to stop them.

Throughout 2000 and 2001 day and night actions continued, concentrating on the National Seed Listing trials. These are necessary to get approval for new crop varieties to be introduced and their locations were published by DEFRA. The disruption of them were severe and the GM companies suffered lost work equalling many sackfuls

of money. This led to many crops being protected with cameras and security - as at Wivenhoe and Arlesford in Essex where crops protected by infra red and mobile patrols were trashed 95% and 10% respectively. Syngenta then did lots of its research at Jealotts Hill,

a large fenced complex in Berkshire. Not perturbed by the fortifications activists still managed to destroy 75% of the trial.

In relation to the scale of the damage caused, very few people have ever been arrested for destroying a GM crop, let alone been successfully prosecuted. The police and prosecutors tried various legal shenanigans to secure convictions but sentencing was invariably light. The Bio-corporations involved were desperate to avoid creating 'martyrs' and often requested that charges be dropped.

Having disrupted the trials, the campaign moved on to stopping the crops being planted in the first place. "Crop squats" took place - taking a leaf out of anti-road protesting books, the land to be planted was occupied. In Munloch, Scotland, one squat amazingly managed to get planning permission from the local council for a temporary caravan next to the site which acted as a focus for the campaign. Many farmers enlisted by the corporations later bowed under public pressure and pulled out of planting. One 2001 campaign in Hailsham, Sussex, saw the farmer pull out after a combination of leafletting, a public meeting of his neighbours and a couple of home visits.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that the public don't want GM foods, the companies have ploughed on regardless, supported by the zeal of Tony Blair and Lord Sainsbury - his Science Minister and biggest financial backer - who just happened to have

*continued overleaf...*

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

#### For wheelee bad behaviour...

A seven year old boy in Baltimore, USA was arrested, carted off to the police station, handcuffed to a bench and had his fingerprints and mug shot taken. All for sitting on his dirt bike on the pavement.

The boy, Gerard Mungo Jr, was sitting on his bike with the engine off when an over zealous copper dragged him off by the collar in front of his mum.

After the cops confiscated the bike and arrested Gerard, they took him down to the local cop shop and interrogated him.

"They scared me." said Gerard to a local newspaper, before he burst into tears.

The arrest was criticised as part of a wider 'zero tolerance' policy instigated by the former mayor of Baltimore. Gerard's mother said, "This has changed his life. He'll never be the same again."

**INFORMATION FOR ACTION**

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Published in Brighton since 1994

## SPUD-U-HATE continued...

a financial interest in GM crops! When, in 2003, it looked as if commercial GM crops were to be grown in the UK, the campaigners shifted their focus and went after Bayer Crop Science, (see SchNEWS 423) the leading GM cropper in Britain at the time.

In an eight month period there were over 50 actions against them; Bayer suffered numerous office invasions, demonstrations and acts of sabotage. The campaign also targeted top scientists and directors of Bayer with home visits and targeting them at conferences; at the British Potato 2003 event they had their stand trashed, which led to Bayer saying "This demonstration shows that these campaigners had lost their argument against GM" - But a month later the results of a government survey, GM Nation, resulted in a massive public thumbs down for GM. The campaigners had won the argument, it was just that Bayer were not listening - the campaign continued despite an injunction under the Protection from Harassment Act (see SchNEWS 436).

While they finally got approval for one of their GM crops, a variety of Maize, Bayer eventually decided not to bother with growing in the UK. The other big players in the GM game, Syngenta and Monsanto, have also pulled out of developing GM crops here. So for the last three years Britain has been GM crop free - with BASF entering the fray it's time to hit them before they even get a toehold...

\* **There will be anti-GM potato rallies over the next two weekends in Cambridge and in Hull: Sat 14th.** Meet at Histon Baptist Church, Station Road, Histon, at 11am. From Cambridge take the Citi 7 bus from Drummer Street and train station. More info: [www.cambridgeaction.net/gmconcern](http://www.cambridgeaction.net/gmconcern) Also Pirate Cycle Ride, 10am Top of Mill Road Railway Bridge, then a leisurely music and potato-based cycle ride over to Histon. <http://groups.google.com/group/somos-todos-piratas>. **Sat 21st**, meet 1pm at the Preston Road Family Community Centre, Salt End, Hull. With a walk to the site at 2pm. [www.mutatoes.org/n002-hullrally.php](http://www.mutatoes.org/n002-hullrally.php)

\* **More info about GM potatoes** at [www.mutatoes.org](http://www.mutatoes.org) and [www.myspace.com/gmfreepotatoes](http://www.myspace.com/gmfreepotatoes)

## War Briefs

**FASLANE 365: 700th arrest after 6 months** (See SchNEWS 581) - This Tuesday (10th), the 700th person was arrested since the Faslane 365 protests began in October last year, when the 'CIA & Friends' blockaded the North gate at Faslane closing it for an hour. Ten were arrested, six from Switzerland, the others all from mainland Europe. The day before on Easter Monday there was also another protest - in full cow costume - at the North gate. For updates on the continuing protests see [www.faslane365.org](http://www.faslane365.org)

\* On April 2nd, eleven protesters from **Northamptonshire** held a peaceful protest at Faslane, with a performance of the play 'Anti-Nuclear Monologues' tracing the story of four anti-war protesters going back to the large Aldermaston marches in the 1950s and later Greenham Common women's peace camp (See SchNEWS 274)

\* **50 people from Nottingham and Derby** protested at the base on April 1st, blockading the entrance for 4 hours. A six-way lock-on had police needing to find specialist equipment to dismantle it, with the arrest-o-meter jumping up by seventeen. The day before the same group marched around the base.

\* Protesters from **Trident Ploughshares** and **Block The Builders** blockaded the gates at Aldermaston atomic weapons base in Berkshire this Tuesday, with five arrests. This base is currently being under a £5 billion refit in preparation for New Labour's plans to renew the UK's nuclear arsenal. For more see [www.blockthebuilders.org.uk](http://www.blockthebuilders.org.uk)

## PUT A SOCPA IN IT

**Maya Evans and Milan Rai, the first activists nicked under SOCPA laws for organising an unauthorised demo in Parliament Square last October, were in court again this week (10th).** This time they were up for participating in a demo contrary to SOCPA for the 'No More Fallujahs' demo in Oct 2006. Despite having explicitly confessed their guilt to police - and in public indicated they are ready to go to jail to highlight the draconian SOCPA laws that ban all spontaneous, un-pre-approved protesting within a kilometre of Parliament (See SchNEWS 567) - they weren't put on trial for organising, merely participation. It seems the cops are frightened to make martyrs of them whilst defending such a ridiculous piece of legislation.

The whole trial has been farcical as proceedings have ground to a halt following Milan and Maya's refusal to give their dates of birth. The case has now been adjourned for them to face a contempt hearing on April 20th. While participants in unauthorised demos face fines of up to £1000, contempt of court can lead to fines of £2500 and a month inside, but it remains to be seen whether the courts will grant the plucky duo's wish to go behind bars for their right to protest... For a full court report see [www.j-n-v.org](http://www.j-n-v.org) \* **April 21 - Anti-SOCPA demo: THE BIG ONE.** Mark Thomas is arranging another mass lone demo 10.30am-5.30pm at Parliament Square. This time there have been 1,184 applications for spurious demos on this date lodged at Charing Cross police - carefully following the legal requirements for protests under SOCPA Laws. For more see SchNEWS 560 and [www.markthomasinfo.com](http://www.markthomasinfo.com)

## PARTY & PROTEST

**APRIL 14 - Haringey Independent Cinema Festival** - with practical workshops and screenings including Hasting Free TV; The Battle for Broadway Market; Black Panther, Despite TV - excerpts from Battle of Trafalgar and more. 12 noon-8pm at West Green Learning Centre, West Green Road, London N15. £5/£3 email [info.hic@haringey.org.uk](mailto:info.hic@haringey.org.uk) web [www.haringey.org.uk/hic](http://www.haringey.org.uk/hic) \*\* **17 - Greenspeak: Fuelling a food crisis.** The impact of peak oil and rising fuel costs on our ability to feed ourselves. 7.15pm at Terraces Bar & Grill, Marine Parade, Brighton. Donation. tel 07891 571739, email [martin@greenspeak-brighton.org.uk](mailto:martin@greenspeak-brighton.org.uk) web [www.greenspeak-brighton.org.uk](http://www.greenspeak-brighton.org.uk) \*\* **17 - First Meeting to organise against the proposed Newhaven Incinerator,** which would emit 3.5million cubic metres of CO2 per day, spewing out carcinogenic dioxins (See SchNEWS 488). At Cowley Club, 12 London Rd, Brighton, 5-7pm. There will be regular meetings every third Tuesday. Tel 07722 172 393, email [booandsteve@msn.com](mailto:booandsteve@msn.com) \*\* **21 - Demo and day of action against the Gatwick asylum seekers' detention centre** being built. Meet at Jubilee Field in Three Bridges 12noon. Nearest train station Three Bridges - come out of the station and turn left into East Ave, after 2 minutes walk the park is on the right. Called by No Borders. For more info email [gatwick@riseup.net](mailto:gatwick@riseup.net) For transport from Brighton call 07880 523231, email [brightonnoborders@riseup.net](mailto:brightonnoborders@riseup.net) London call 07983 274 568 \*\* **21 - Scotland Against Criminalising Communities (SACC) Annual Conference: Rights and Resistance.** Including SACC AGM and launch meeting of Media Workers Against the War Scotland. 9.30am-6pm at STUC, 333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow. Web [www.sacc.org.uk/diary.php](http://www.sacc.org.uk/diary.php) \*\* **22-29 - World Week for Animals in Laboratories** - there will be a range of protests, street stalls, and media events to stop testing and research on animals. To see what's going on in your area see [www.veggies.org.uk/event.php?ref=65](http://www.veggies.org.uk/event.php?ref=65)

\* For full listings updated weekly see [www.schnews.org.uk/pap](http://www.schnews.org.uk/pap)

## Cutting The Mustard

Another week, another social centre under threat. After last month's violent eviction of the Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen (see SchNEWS 579) to benefit a right wing, racist bunch of Christian nut jobs, now is the turn of **Les Tanneries in Dijon, France.**

Built on the site of an old slaughterhouse and tannery, 'Espace autogéré des Tanneries' or 'The Tanneries autonomous space' has been around for 10 years, and was given a non-eviction agreement from the city council 2002 after years of fighting for a free, autonomous space in the city. Despite this agreement the "socialist" council have started negotiations - without public consultation - to sell off the land to Générale de Santé, Europe's largest private healthcare provider who last year made a cool £1.18 billion in profit, and are 10% owned by the transnational Vivendi.

Les Tanneries - a centre with cinema, library, housing collective, squatters help desk and more - is one of a number of squats and free spaces under threat in Dijon with an alternative theatre and housing collective also under fire from the council's neo-liberal "progress".

\* For updates see <http://squat.net/tanneries/>  
\* Two squats in  **Rennes, France** were forcibly evicted on Wednesday by taser and stun grenade wielding riot cops. The properties have been sold off by the council for the obligatory dodgy development, the deal for which, quelle surprise, was conducted behind the scenes. After the inhabitants were kicked out workmen moved in to remove all doors and windows to prevent the buildings being squatted again.

## SOAR LOSERS

As the climate continues heating up, so does people's determination to take direct action against the climate criminals. Nottingham's Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station was stormed by activists this week as part of the 'Spring into Action' week organised by Eastside Climate Action. Whilst some protested at the main gate, twelve demonstrators infiltrated the site and prevented operations by climbing onto machinery and dumper trucks and chaining themselves into place. By locking on to the conveyor belt taking coal into the furnace and the machines that riddle (ok, sieve basically) the coal, they managed to seriously hamper production, forcing a number of the generators offline. Unfortunately they were removed by police just one hour before shutting the whole plant down for 48 hours, but they certainly made their point and cost owners E.ON a fair amount of cash into the bargain. This may have been some consultation to the eleven people ultimately nicked for trespass.

This all reminds us of the 'Camp for Climate Change' last year when Drax power station near Leeds was targeted by protesters (See SchNEWS 557). This year another Camp is scheduled for August 14th- 21st. For more info visit [www.climatecamp.org.uk](http://www.climatecamp.org.uk)

\* The **Bath Climate Camp** will be running from Thursday 19th through to Sunday the 22nd in a field somewhere near where the Lower Bristol Road out of Bath meets the A4 towards Bristol. As well as workshops and DIY sessions, there'll be talks, a vegan kitchen, a kids zone, music and more (who knows, maybe even an action). e-mail: [bathclimatecamp@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bathclimatecamp@yahoo.co.uk) or see [www.myspace.com/bathclimatecamp](http://www.myspace.com/bathclimatecamp)

## ...and finally...

Our weekly scrape of the bottom of the barrel turned up nothing particularly amusing this week - so instead of churing out something really rosey, we're reclaiming some of our dignity and pride by having a wee cough.

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - mash up yer spuds, but not at the molecular level. Honest!

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