

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER CAUGHT IN THE ACT...

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DOUBLE JEOPARDY

NEWLY PROPOSED LAWS THREATEN EVEN MORE POLICE POWER

Stung by criticism over the farcical restrictions on protest outside parliament, Gordon Brown pledged a review of the controversial sections 132 to 138 of the Serious Organised Act (SOCPA). Initially this law seemed tailored specifically for one Brian Haw, permanent resident of Parliament Square, but it subsequently caught more than a few others in its dragnet (see SchNEWS 574).

The persecution of Brian caught the public imagination (he's not the messiah..!) and he ended up winning Channel 4's 'Political Man of the Year Award' as well as appearing regularly in documentaries. Brian's sheer inoffensiveness did much to highlight a government hellbent on controlling any dissent no matter how innocuous.

Anxious to try and draw a line between himself and the previous incumbent of No 10, Gordon was quick to bounce up and declare he was really a lovely right-on, friend-to-all kinda guy, passionate about real democracy - and almost certain to relax some of the more totalitarian parts of (Serious Organised and Crime Police Act) SOCPA soon. Er, force a warm matey grimace for the cameras and hope no one notices the tsunami of other anti-civil liberty laws going through (SchNEWS 598).

GREEN PAPER TIGERS

In a classic Neo-Labour attempt to turn concern for democracy on its head, Gordon's fembot at the Home Office, Jaqui Smith, has published a 'public consultation' document as part of the series of green papers titled, 'Governance of Britain' (...don't all rush at once!). At first this poses as a simple review of the laws surrounding protest in Parliament, but really has a far wider remit. In fact it proposes a major redraft of existing Public Order Law. Apparently this is all in the interests of 're-invigorating our democracy' - a piece of doublespeak that would have Orwell spinning so fast in his grave that he'd prove a valuable source of renewable energy.

At the moment, the Public Order Act 1986 is the basic framework used to hassle people on street demos. Since it came in it has been modified by successive acts and supplemented by a tide of legislation aimed at giving the police powers to decide for themselves just what constitutes legitimate protest activity (see SchNews 1-611).

Under the Public Order Act, police have the powers to impose conditions on assemblies and marches of two or more people if they fear serious violence, serious criminal

damage or serious disruption to the life of the community. Sussex Police, for example, have imposed conditions on gatherings of as few as three people before now. In effect the law allows for cops on the day to decide exactly how much dissent they are prepared to tolerate and arrest those who do not comply.

But this doesn't mean they're happy. They've pressed for more and more power. There is still the annoying fact, for example, that there is one important difference between the laws on marches and assemblies. In order to organise a march you have to give six days notice in writing for the police. Marches can be banned but assemblies cannot. So of course police want these laws to be 'harmonised' - as long as that means giving them power to proscribe spontaneous assemblies at will. But of course we are assured all this will 'not restrict the right to assembly'.

Also explicitly mentioned is the idea of redrafting the law so that police can confiscate banners with slogans they fear might cause 'public disorder'. This is a major step in the direction of 'thoughtcrime'. Just as it is an offence to participate in a banned march it will be an offence to attend a banned assembly.

Police have been caught out more than once using these powers as if they amounted to a blanket 'Do as you're told' Order. Several forces have had to pay out thousands to protesters who convinced courts that the police did not have any justification to impose conditions on demos. No wonder top plod want the law 'harmonised'. These green papers may be a case of aim for the moon and you might get the stars, but even watered down the measures proposed are not very mouthwatering.

To read for yourself see www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2007-managing-protest (- 'cons 2007' is a pretty fair description...)

AN ACT TO GRIND

And the big charade of a newly fluffy government actually listening to the public about anything didn't take long to crack - just a few days in fact. It turns out the next piece of the state crackdown on civil liberties is already in place. Ladies and gents, having just gained the big nod from her Maj, QEII, let us introduce you one to of the newest Acts already on yer statute book... the Serious Crime Act 2007 (SCA). Effectively already law, it can now be rolled whenever the government wishes.

SPORT THE DIFFERENCE



I PROFOUNDLY REGRET THE TERRIBLE FAILURES WHILST I'VE BEEN IN CHARGE, BUT IT'S NOT MY FAULT...

SACKED AS NATIONAL MANAGER AFTER SHORTEST TENURE EVER

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Amongst a number of measures, such as beefing up powers of asset recovery and transferring even more power to the Serious Organised Crime Agency, it's out to create new offences. As well as bringing in 'Serious Crime Prevention Orders', making it easier to get court orders to detain people before they actually do anything wrong, we also look set to be living in a 1984-styled country where you can get nicked for the offences of 'assisting or encouraging'. We kid you not.

The current incitement laws are to be dropped and replaced with the new crimes, even more open to police interpretation and abuse. Apparently, "A person commits an offence if he (a) does an act capable of encouraging or assisting the commission of an offence; or (b) he intends to encourage or assist its commission.

Just in case this wasn't enough, "It is immaterial for the purposes of subsection (1)(b)(ii) whether the person has any belief as to which offence will be encouraged or assisted." In terms of protesting, let alone ramifications across the whole of police interaction with the public, this will mean carte blanche for police to basically arrest anyone at a protest where someone is committing some kind of offence or it is believed that some offence might be committed.

Maximum penalties are not light either, with a 51-week prison sentence or a £4,000 possible.

Who knows, banner and placard waving or being nice to someone d-locked could easily be seen as 'encouragement', for example. Giving someone a lift to a demo could turn out to be assistance. The standards of proof required to be convicted under the act also appear vague and open to exploitation.

Whatever the outcome of the sham public consultations turn out to be, the chosen way for 'managing protest' seems to have already decided. And yes, it's more open-to-all-interpretations laws given police more discretionary powers to crack down on anyone they don't like the look of - presumably all handily in place for when society cracks under the weight of climate change, peak oil, Armageddon etc. They plan ahead these people.

* SOCPA The Movie: www.socpa-movie.blogspot.com

* There is a public meeting about the proposed SOCPA changes on Sunday 2nd December at LSE room H102, Connaught House, 2-4pm. www.lse.ac.uk/resources/mapsAndDirections/Default.htm

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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HITLER'S BOMBER FOUND ON HOME FARM RD

Another blow for Brighton's favourite bomb builders EDO MBM. Parent company US arms corporation EDO Corp is being bought out by ITT, former bespoke weapons manufacturers to Herr Hitler.

Employees of the Brighton company are anxiously awaiting a visit of executives from an even bigger arms conglomerate ITT Corporation. ITT, the worlds 12th largest arms firm and former bomber manufacturers for the Nazi's, (as well as numerous other historical pro-fascist crimes in

league with Franco, Pinochet, Nixon/Kissinger, etc) will very probably take over EDO Corp in early 2008 unless another arms giant makes a better offer. As part of the deal ITT have agreed not to change any conditions or benefits for the current EDO workforce for 18 months after their takeover of EDO Corp.

This may protect the poorly performing EDO UK workforce from the Nazi blitzkrieg for a little while, but given ITT's reputation for aggressive and illegal management tactics it is unlikely that the Brighton warmongers can survive much longer than that, especially as security surrounding

highly classified projects like the F35 bomb release interface and the next generation Paveway IV guided missile guidance systems is compromised by disgruntled employees.

The 15-year lease for EDO MBM's Home Farm Road premises reaches its half way get out point around the same time, so all the signs point to this being a financially prudent point of departure from

Brighton for new parents ITT, although the lease does allow them to leave a little sooner if need be, especially if EDO MBM's security leaks – as publicised by the SmashEDO campaign - burst into a major breach.

The drip of bad PR makes the Brighton company a real liability for ITT Corporation, who are already under the scrutiny of the US Department of Justice after being caught this year selling classified night vision technology to 'foreign governments' (inc. China, suppliers of Iran) without a licence, as well as being exposed for other willing violations stretching back decades.

Thanks to friends in high places ITT were let off the hook with a plea bargain resulting in a \$100 million penalty and no convictions for the CEO responsible, Louis Gulliano, who simply moved to a new job as senior advisor with the just-as-lovable Carlyle Group. But another slip like the leaking of even more US military secrets could impact dramatically on the prospective parent conglomerate.

Andrew Beckett press spokesman for the campaign to SMASH EDO told SchNEWS "We're going to be intensifying our campaign to show new owners ITT that weapons manufacturers in Brighton isn't going to be profitable. We don't tolerate bomb builders let alone Nazi bomb builders" www.smashedo.ork.uk

*Coming soon: On the Verge – the Smash EDO campaign movie. Expect to see the trailer on the SchMOVIES site shortly!

OXYGENOCIDE

Activists from London Rising Tide are not being fooled by the blag that is the 'Emissions Trading Scheme' (ETS). As a corporate-sponsored shindig was being held at the swanky Selfridges Hotel in central London on Thursday (22nd), participants had their fun interpreted when protesters burst into the main conference room. They were giving out free shares granting delegates the "right to own the air we breath." In an impromptu speech they drew attention to the fact that the ETS is nothing but Greenwash and represents the true nature of the corporate Europe's response to climate change – i.e. they don't give a toss unless it's business as usual. Shareholder value, innit'?

On the face of it the scheme, which came into force on 1st January 2005, sounds pretty good; it sets limits to the amount of emissions different parts of the economy can emit. If, for example, a factory belches out more pollution than they've been allocated that year they face big fines. But... in the free market you can just buy the right to pollute. If you've got enough readies there's no stopping you.

Rising Tide has been particularly vocal about how the scheme not only fails to tackle the area where carbon emissions are rising at their fastest – air travel - but how it will actually enable ever-greater expansion. Last October, Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute said that the UK will never meet its target to cut carbon emissions by 60% by 2050. Not unless the growth in the aviation industry is curbed, that it. Yet, this week UK plc unveiled plans to build a new runway and terminal at Heathrow...

With such a big increase in carbon emissions on the agenda, the plan is to bring aviation within the ETS and build those extra runways with a few gift vouchers fleeced, perhaps, from some ageing industries in Eastern Europe desperate for a bit of extra cash. Any of the big contributors to global warming over the next century is going to be able to buy up pollution permits from those companies which have reduced their ecological footprint. The shareholders of such businesses will, of course, make a tidy sum from such a venture as the airlines bribe their way to a flightful future. Find out how to take action against such madness at <http://risingtide.org.uk> (and www.planestupid.com).

...and finally...

Nicolas Gaubert of Leeds copped a shock when trigger-happy armed police tasered him for being asleep on the bus. Although the incident happened in 2005 (just a week before the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes), Nic didn't speak out 'til now as he was naively expecting officers to be charged over the incident (no pun intended).

On his way to meet friends, Nic slipped into a diabetic coma and arrived at the bus depot still clutching his rucksack. Despite the fact that he was alone on an empty bus, terror police – who later attempted to justify their response by saying that they thought he 'looked Egyptian' - hit him twice with 50,000 volts for failing to respond to their questions.

Two years later, with Nic still suffering post-trauma-stress from the shooting, the Independent Police Cover-up Committee is still considering any disciplinary action but has predictably already decided that no officer has any criminal or health and safety case to answer. Well, any other findings really would have been shocking...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - all we can do is Assist and Encourage you into Public Disorder...Honest!

CONCENTRATION CAMPSFIELD

Conditions at government immigration gulag Campsfield haven't gotten any better, despite all the protests, hunger strikes and riots (see SchNEWS 580 - and as far back as issue 172). Campsfield House is an Immigration Detention Centre at Kidlington, six miles from Oxford. It is run for private profit by Group 4.

In fact, detainees are telling anyone who'll listen campaign that many of them are again close to breaking point and another major protest could kick off at any time.

And that's not surprising when you put yourself in the shoes of these poor souls, imprisoned without charge or judicial process for committing no moral crime – merely wanting to get the hell out of somewhere. The centre's regime falls well below even the standards of a regular UK prison, with dehumanising and heavy handed treatment of inmates, coupled with poor sanitation and crap food, meted out on a daily basis.

The Campaign to Close Campsfield holds monthly demonstrations outside the centre, the next one - on the 14th anniversary of the detention centre's opening - will be from 12-2pm on Saturday 24th November. For more details see www.closecampsfield.org.uk

Positive SchNEWS

A new social centre, Section Six, has opened its doors in Norwich. With a space in the old Eastern Electricity building in Duke St, its new use will also be to provide power to the people and a space for the usual mix of gigs, film nights, workshops, tea and decent conversation. To find out more tel: 07944 874393 or contact www.myspace.com/wherewillitbe

For yer full Party & Protest listings, updated weekly, see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

BYE BUY

The tills are sure to be ringing in the run up to Christmas as shoppers stick more crap they don't need on the never-never plastic. The UK is already more than £3,000,000,000,000 in debt, but the shopping centres (and landfill sites) remain full to bursting. .

This Saturday its time to buck the trend with Buy Nothing Day. In London, there'll be a free 'Give or Take Day' at the Orchard Estate Community Hall, Broadmead Road in Woodford Green between 12 and 3pm.

The Cowley Club in Brighton will be hosting a make your own gift workshop from 11am and Southamptonites can attend a bric a brac swap shop between 12pm - 3pm at the the Art House, 81a Bedford Place.

More events will be coming up and there's a host of useful info and resources on the buynothingday.co.uk website. If only the event happened a bit more often – daily perhaps...

PLANE STUPIDITY

Ciaran O'Reilly, participant in the Pitstop Ploughshares action taken against US military aircraft at Shannon airport (see SchNEWS 414), found himself of the wrong end of UK counter-terrorist police when he flew into Luton airport.

"As I entered the Luton terminal, three plain-clothes detectives approached me. They stated that the Irish Gardai had alerted them that I was a threat to the aviation industry. They asked me if I was a member of Plane Stupid Having paid £1 for my Ryan Air Flight I responded, 'If I was with them I guess I would have come by train!' A detective responded "You'd be surprised!"

Ciaran was detained under the Terrorism Act. "They continued to ask me about my activist history. I told them, "Look I'm going to stop answering these questions some time, so it may as well be now!" I said I was concerned about the civil liberties ramifications of co-operating with their behaviour. He was eventually released without charge

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