

WAKE UP!! ITS YER WEEKS LATE BUT BRIGHTON EARLY...

SchNEWS

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RUDE AWAKENINGS

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST IMMIGRATION POLICE STATE

6am. A cold autumn morning. A young woman and her two young children are woken by loud banging at the door. They know who it is; this is what they have been dreading for months. Eight to ten large, burly, aggressive men are outside. As soon as the door is opened they arrest the woman - who has committed no crime - and order her to pack her things. If she hadn't opened the door they would have just smashed it down. She is terrified, her children are terrified. They are bundled into the back of a van and driven to a nearby compound where they are locked up. Then they are bundled back into the van and driven to a prison several hours away. Bogota? Bagdhad? - No, Bristol... it's the routine morning removal of an asylum-seeking family to a detention centre.

Answering the call-out from the No Borders camp (see SchNEWS 604), and marking UN International Migrant's Day on 18th December, activists round the country simultaneously blockaded Immigration Reporting Centres - the bases used for snatch squad seizures of asylum seekers. Arriving at the centres in the early hours of the morning, the activists aimed to prevent Immigration Enforcement Officers from staging dawn raids, in which families are often rounded up in preparation for removal to countries from which they have been forced to flee.

In Bristol, activists arrived in time to lock onto vehicles, and a police officer was over heard confirming that a dawn raid had been planned. In Portsmouth, activists were locked on to the swing barrier and gates by 4.30am another dawn raid from that site was thwarted.

Glasgow activists were in place by 5.30am when the Immigration Goon Squad arrived, who were unable to leave the car park in their vehicles due to a tripod, whilst other people d-locked to the gates. Newcastle activists dressed in Santa outfits, locked on to the gates and used arm tubes to prevent vehicles from leaving the car parks. Two of the Glasgow activists were cut free from their d-locks and arrested, whilst a tripod continued to ensure that vehicles could not leave the car park. Activists at the other sites were able to leave without any arrests taking place.

In Manchester the local Immigration Reporting Centre, Dallas Court, had its gates locked with a motorcycle chain and a banner reading "Caution snatch squads - we are watching you" was hung. Later, at 10am, the Home Office in Marsham Street SW1, London was disrupted after activists blocked the entrance and unfurled a large banner declaring "No Child is Illegal: Child Detention is a Crime".

Meanwhile, Nottingham activists were campaigning to stop the deportation of Jane Mary Mutetsi a Rwandan national who fled to Britain via Uganda after her husband was murdered following which she was subjected to a gang rape and severe beating by Rwandan soldiers in which she lost the sight in one eye, her left ovary and several teeth. Jane Mary faces deportation to Uganda, where it is rumoured that there is a warrant for her arrest.

One activist on the Portsmouth blockade told SchNEWS, "It was crucial to directly intervene in this inhumane and secretive process. Dawn raid seizures are like a form of extraordinary rendition, targeted at individuals and whole families - and are taking place in British cities with barely any public awareness. These raids are carried out with maximum secrecy and the government relies on public ignorance of, or indifference to, their brutality. Where is the coverage of the two-and-a-half thousand people currently imprisoned without having committed any crime?. Where is the coverage of the dozens of children, some not even a year old, in prison? Where is the coverage of the real situation of asylum seekers who came here for peace and safety and are instead humiliated, abused, locked up, attacked and treated like dirt at every turn?"

These bases are all around the country. There are no statistics on the number and regularity of the raids carried out because the government will not release the figures. But the fleets of vehicles blockaded on just one day this morning and the harrowing personal accounts of families show a large scale operation.

Dawn raids are used to gain custody of whole families in order to imprison them before anyone has gone out to school or work. Every day, doors are kicked in and families are snatched from their beds and taken to detention centres, where they are punished for seeking refuge in this country. They are taken away from their houses, jobs, schools and communities - their lives. The timing ensures no witnesses are present. So far - except when detainees riot in the conditions at detention centres, there has been little

mainstream coverage of this aspect of the UK's inhumane immigration policies.

Liam Byrne - Minister for Immigration has admitted that these raids take place without warning in the early hours is because otherwise families due to be removed might attract public sympathy.

Other activists have continually targeted the weakest link in the removal process - the airlines. Up until recently asylum seekers were forcibly removed on ordinary passenger aircraft. While some detainees have been able to frustrate the process by forcibly resisting, many others have been jettisoned out to a uncertain and dangerous future sat next to cheerful holidaymakers off on their latest cut-price bargain citybreak. Following unwanted attention from campaigners, and an action at it's Crawley premises during the climate camp, one airline - XL airlines - has now pulled out of a £1.5 million contract with the Home Office. Staff and pilots were leafleted and informed that they were 'flying people to their deaths'.

Airline spokesmen expressed their "sympathy for all disadvantaged persons in the world" but claimed they "did not understand the political dimensions involved" in such charter flights! Well they obviously need the education activists can provide then. Meanwhile one Bradford campaigner was arrested and is on trial this week at Horsham magistrates for 'aggravated trespass'.

Hoping to step into the gap however are Asylum Airways, a pint-sized Austrian outfit, linked to British security firms, who want to use planes with padded rooms and specially designed seats enabling guards to strap down and restrain detainees. They've made their bid to the government who will surely lap up their 'blue skies' thinking, so watch this space...

Activists don't intend December's actions to be a one-off, merely the start of a new wave of regular resistance to the racist immigration regime in general and the dawn raids in particular.

* The main campaigning organisations:
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns - www.ncadc.org.uk - 0161 7406504
Refugee Council - www.refugeecouncil.org.uk - 0207 346 6700
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) - www.jcwi.org.uk - 0207 2518708
No One is Illegal - www.noii.org.uk
Barbed Wire Britain - www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk
No Borders - www.noborders.org.uk



INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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COP STROP

Another year, another major demonstration march planned in central London. Up to 15,000 disgruntled workers are wanting to descend on Downing St on 23rd January and, predictably enough in crackdown Britain, the Met have already outlawed the event, are sharpening their riot shields and threatening their usual heavy handed response.

So what's the twist? Well, the latest group of work-shy wasters to fall foul of the government's tough anti-protest line are... the Police Federation!

The coppers announced plans to march past Parliament in the biggest police demo since 1919. On 23rd January a thick blue parade of bobbies from all over the country want to head to Downing St to whinge about pay.

Last October we reported how Neo Labour was dusting off the 1839 Sessional Orders legislation to ban a Troops Out march from going anywhere near the mother of all Parliaments (see SchNEWS 605). Now the 19th century rulebook is out again and the Met has threatened to re-route the march.

Oblivious to the irony, Alan Gordon, Federation spokesman said 'There appears to be some behind-the-scenes government interference - there is pressure being brought on the Metropolitan Police to either postpone the march altogether or to reroute it in such a way that it will disappear into side streets where it will be out of the public gaze.' You can hear this twinge of disbelief in his voice despite this being standard Police tactics he surely should be aware of?! SchNEWS reckons we're watching the genesis of another anarchist. In any case police vs riot police has got to make for some cracking telly.

To make things even more interesting SchNEWS wants to put a general call-out out for thousands of anarcho-types to turn up on the day complete with banners defending the poor Met's coppers right to join the protests for higher pay. With a bit of luck they'll be forced to call the army in and we'll be on our way to all out civil war...

Home Sweet Omar

Omar Deghayes might be back in Britain (see SchNEWS er, no we didn't cover it - well, we only like to give you bad news...!) , he remains on bail under threat of deportation to Spain and finally being 'free' doesn't exactly make up for years of unlawful detainment and torture... Meanwhile there are still plenty of others not as fortunate as Omar.

It's the sixth anniversary of the opening of the Guantánamo Bay gulag this Friday 11th. The London Guantánamo Campaign and the Cage prisoners group are marking with it with a well-intentioned visit to some of Central London's most famous statues, prior to assembling from 6-8pm in Parliament Square (nearest tube: Westminster) to call for an end to the injustices. They'll probably be shouting their slogan: No more torture! No more detention without charge or trial! No more anniversaries!

More details at www.cageprisoners.com or email the London Guantánamo Campaign: london_gitmo@yahoo.co.uk

* And it's all part of the National Guantanamo Coalition - for more national events on the day, see www.guantanamo.org.uk

MAYA GOLD

Anti-SOCPA activists are asking people to take the time to take part in the public consultation on the repeal of controversial Sections 132 and 138 of SOCPA which control demos and marches outside Parliament. The government plans to 'harmonize' protest legislation with SOCPA - i.e drop some references to Parliament but still extend the general crackdown throughout the country (see SchNews 612). Maya Evans, vegan celebrity chef and professional arrestee said: "The danger is that the Government will be able to score media points for repealing unnecessary and draconian legislation, whilst in reality further tightening the screws on protest and dissent around the UK."

There will be a daily handing in of a petition to Downing St. You can sign the petition everyday in Parliament Square until the end of the consultation on 17th January.

Check out www.repeal-socpa.info

What's ITT All About?

On 20th December a group of 15 activists targeted the ITT offices in Basingstoke, equipped with a healthy dose of ripe horse manure.

The protest coincided with ITT's takeover of Brighton based arms manufacturer EDO MBM with the aim of demonstrating the kind of reception ITT would receive when they arrive in Brighton. The shit was spread across the main entrance of the (SH)ITT compound and employees cars were leafleted, informing them of the 4 year direct action campaign that has been waged against EDO and making it clear that ITT can expect the same special attention.

ITT Corp. have established an infamous reputation over the years, supplying Hitler with military equipment throughout WWII and sponsoring Pinochet's CIA backed coup in Chile amongst other accolades. Make sure ITT get the welcome they deserve by joining the Freedom to Protest march through Brighton on 19th January, meeting at midday at Churchill square. See www.smashedo.org.uk

Pimp My Social Centre

After four years in London serving up a social club, film venue, art space and much more besides, RampArt lost their court case against eviction at the end of December. It was all doom and gloom as they looked set to close, but they haven't given up on 2008 yet. They have filed an appeal hoping to stay actual eviction for another month and have already lined up another building to open as the pithily named Ram Part II. As a result they are still continuing with publicised events and are still taking bookings for new ones. Much help is needed to knock the new place into shape and the wish list includes a free-standing gas heaters/cookers, wind turbines, solar panels, thick curtains and doors (erm, wasn't Christmas a fortnight ago?!). Any plumbers or electricians would also be as welcome as social collapse. To find out more, get down to their regular open meeting on Monday nights, 7pm at RampArt, or email rampart@mutualaid.org

We're now taking advance orders for TAKE THREE - the latest SchMOVIES DVD collection - all the best films from 2007 - out on Jan 19th. Cheques to the address below and the web will er, get sorted, eventually

GET STUCK IN

Police came unstuck during the prosecution of one climate camp activist in Uxbridge this week. After months of delays the judge threw out the charge of 'obstruct police' saying there was no case to answer.

Penny Edwards glued herself to a gate at last years camp for climate action to prevent a police incursion on to the site. During the Camp large numbers of police invaded the site, only to be resisted by the Campers and ejected from the site. The pretext for this attack by the police was so that the Forward Intelligence Team could "do a headcount" (in spite of the fact that local police officers were already patrolling the site, and were presumably perfectly capable of fulfilling this task).

It is far more likely that the real reason behind the police action was their desire to provoke a riot, and thus have an excuse to destroy the camp and bang heads. After the incursion, the Territorial Support Group (riot police) were ordered to kit themselves out in full gear, to prepare for a second assault on the camp.

Penny said "I was trying to de-escalate the situation after aggressively over the top policing had created tension. There were riot police crouching behind the hedgerow.

It was very scary, particularly as there were children on site. I am a climate activist because I am a mother and I want to ensure that my children have a half-way decent future - that's why I see it as my duty to oppose acts of environmental lunacy, like airport expansion. I thought that the riot police were trying to shut down the climate camp, and I didn't think that that was right or fair. The trial has been hanging over me for several months, and it is a huge relief that my action has been vindicated by the judge."

SchNEWS in brief

JANUARY: 12th -- Stall and demonstration to mark **sixth anniversary** of the imprisonment of innocent men in **Guantanamo Bay**. Please bring banners to 'Close Guantanamo Now!'. Holders Corner, Montague Place, Worthing, 2pm ** 17th - '**Humanitarian Intervention. Is it always just a cover for states to pursue their own interests?**' Talk by Mary Kaldor, Professor of Global Governance at LSE and author of 'Human Security: Reflections on Globalisation and Intervention Polity 2007. Brixthelm, North Road, Brighton. 7.30-9pm ** Sat 19th - **Freedom to Protest march**. From Churchill Square, Brighton. Gather 12 noon. ** 13th '**The Free Voice of Labor**' Film about some Jewish American anarchists. The PAD social centre, Cardiff see: <http://news.southwalesanarchists.org>

...and finally...

Want to move your curtain twitching habits into the digital age? Think Eastenders is losing it's appeal for it's lack of reality? Well Derby Police are asking for nosy parkers willing to keep their beady eyes firmly on the real goings on down Derby way.

Yes, Police have now got so many cameras keeping Britain under surveillance at all times that they can no longer keep up with actually watching them all so are having to beg the public to step in and do the job (unpaid, of course) instead. Unsure potential citizen snoopers needn't worry either - you'll get twenty hours training on how to watch a computer monitor... Anyone interested (or with an interesting comment and access to a public phone booth, should contact Vicki Marriott on 0115 9072019 or 0115 9512027.

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