



SHOWSTOPPERS!

AS POLICE SEEK TO AXE ANTI-ARMS TRADE MOVIE

Yet another below the belt blow to civil liberties was struck by the Sussex Plod this Monday. The long-awaited world premier of SchMOVIES 'On The Verge' - the cinematic debut of the Smash Edo campaign - was cancelled after police intervention. In the days that followed, across the country venues due to show the film on the forthcoming tour have received visits from the police and licensing authorities keen to stop screenings.

Early on Monday evening, the SchNEWS crew were squeezing into our tuxedos and ballgowns ready for the red carpet reception at local independent cinema the Duke of York's (DoY). But barely had the first champagne cork been popped when we received a call to tell us the show was cancelled. The cinema had been contacted at 4.15pm by environmental health officer, Martin New, claiming that as the film does not have an official BBFC classification, the DoY would be in breach of their licence if the screening went ahead. The timing left the cinema with no option but to cancel. According to one source, the police then phoned the cinema and warned them that they should "bolt the doors" as these protesters were "extremely violent" and likely to try and force entry! One manager said the decision to question the film's classification this way "was virtually unprecedented in my experience".

Yer ever-good-in-a-crisis SchNEWS crew swiftly relocated the showing to a local pub, where around 140 people (over two screenings) were able to watch the 'illicit' film.

THE PLOD THICKENS

The next day, local rag the Argus ran the story as front page news: "Anti-war movie banned by council at the last minute". They quoted top cop Chief Inspector Lawrence Taylor denying any police involvement in the sting, saying, "We would never get involved with the certification of a film - it is not something we do. It was as much a surprise to us as anyone else". Well it must have then come as a real surprise when, the next day, B&H council's press office confirmed that the police had in fact called them up and prompted their action.

Swiftly back-tracking, Sussex Police pinned the blame on a mysterious 'junior officer' (and inadvertently admitted they don't bother knowing the law regarding showing films!): "Brighton and Hove Police were aware that 'On The Verge' was being shown at the

Duke of York cinema. However, we do not become involved in, nor do we have knowledge of, the law relating to film certification. That is a matter for Brighton & Hove City Council. However, a junior officer, who is not based in the city, alerted the city council to the showing and they advised the cinema of its responsibilities.". So either Lawrence Taylor was lying or his rank-and-file are showing a little more initiative than usual.

Whoever the 'junior officer' is, it seems she/he's been pretty busy organising a co-ordinated clampdown on the film. By this afternoon venues due to show the film across the country were receiving visits from the police. Staff at the Arthouse Community Cafe in Bedford Place, Southampton were approached at 11am by police and licensing officers. Threats were made concerning their licensing if the film, due to be shown on Thursday night was screened. Jani Franck of the Community Cafe said, "I grew up in South Africa and this feels awfully familiar. This has nothing to do with protecting the public - this is nothing but censorship".

As SchNEWS goes to press, the first tour venues in Bath, Southampton, Oxford and Chichester have all been visited and leaned on to pull the plug.

Classifications for similar independent films are not normally an issue - especially for private showings where no money changes hands (and with official BBFC certifications costing up to a grand, it would kill any local independent no-budget film making). Given that there is no swearing or nudity in the film, and that the only violence in the film is at the hands of Sussex police, offences against public morals are unlikely. But in an unusual bout of sensitivity towards the public, police decided that although it's OK to violently attack protesters, it might disturb members of the public were they to see it on film.

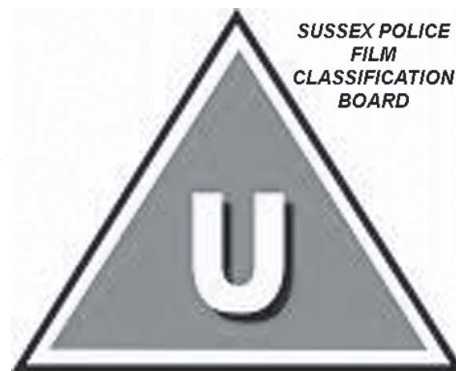
Steve Bishop of SchMovies told us exclusively "We're not exactly surprised by the police action. Yeah, the film doesn't have a certificate but since when has this applied to productions with a budget of under five hundred quid! What next, a PG certificate for yer wedding video? The only reason they want to ban this is 'cuz it shows 'em in a bad light."

* **Want to see the film they tried (are trying) to ban?** People are re-arranging showings in many of the towns - for more info check out www.smashedo.org.uk or local Indymedia postings.

* **Interested in putting on a screening**, e-mail: on-the-verge@hotmail.co.uk

* **View the trailer** at www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies/index-on-the-verge

SUSSEX POLICE
FILM
CLASSIFICATION
BOARD



UNSUITABLE FOR ALL

WATCHING YOU

...IN BIG BROTHER BRITAIN

As they travelled through the City of London on private business on 31st July 2005, two peace campaigners - John Catt, an 80 year old pensioner at the time and his daughter Linda (with no criminal record between them) - were stopped and their vehicle searched under section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 by City of London police. They were both threatened with arrest if they refused to answer police questions.

Unbeknown to them the vehicle in which they were travelling had triggered an alert as it passed an automatic vehicle number plate recognition camera - part of the cops' 'Ring of steel' around the City of London.

After they made a complaint about both the manner and the circumstances in which they were stopped, it was revealed that it had resulted from a police marker being placed against their vehicle on the Police National Computer (PNC) by Sussex Police.

A follow-up formal complaint to Sussex Police discovered that the PNC marker had been placed against their vehicle as a result of being spotted near EDO MBM demonstrations in Brighton. The marker stated "OF INTEREST TO PUBLIC ORDER UNIT SUSSEX".

Sussex Police justified the big brothering stance on the grounds that the vehicle had been seen at three demos outside the arms factory, which "were associated with a campaign which gives rise to crime, disorder and the deployment of significant resources. Sightings of the vehicle may give rise to crime, disorder and the investigation, prevention and detection of crime". A damning verdict indeed. The complaint was rejected - guilt by association is all in a days work.

Last week their appeal to the IPCC has also fallen on deaf ears with the independent body ruling that this type of harassment is just the ticket for Supreme Leader Gordon Brown's busy bobbies.

You have been warned.

SchMOVIES presents

on the verge
the Smash EDO campaign film

Upcoming Tour dates still on (Screening & Talk):
24th - Oxford. OARC www.theoarc.org.uk**
25th - Bath. Friends' Meeting Place. www.bathquakermeeting.org.uk ** 26th - Hereford. The Barrels Pub. www.hereford.uk.com/barrels ** 27th - Bristol. Kebele Social Centre. www.kebelecoop.org
Check with venue for late programme changes!

INFOMERCIALS
FOR ACTION

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NO FOREST FOR THE WICKED

There was victory in court this month (3rd) for voluntary sector group the Celtic Heritage Trust (CHT) in their case against Gwent Police force, who had beaten the crap out of them for no reason at a Easter celebration at Wentwood Forest, Wales, last year.

OK, so yer resource-strapped SchNEWS can't win 'em all and misses the odd story here and there -. so let us take you back to the golden days of early spring 2007...

The all chat and smiles not-for-profit CHT, an educational group who peddle a mix of environmental and sustainability information – were invited to take their library and youth cinema to attend an Easter Gathering festival to be held at Wentwood Forest. They thought it would be a good place to follow their not extremely anti-state mission of encouraging young people to vote and to understand how important it is to become an active citizen.

Upon their arrival they were shepherded in to the site by police usual florescent-jacketed staff and proceeded to set up and their pitch and began spreading the message – and were pleased to sign up thirty new volunteers keen to help with their subversive programmes of tree planting and working with a pensioners gardening initiative.

But little did they know that the organisers of the festival had committed that most heinous of 21st century crimes and had not got prior permission for their do. This meant their day was about to take a frightening turn for the worse.

Karen Sumser-Lupson told SchNEWS “In the late afternoon a police presence became evident and the young people began to clear up the picnic area and were filmed packing up audio equipment – they were without a doubt complying with the orders of the Gwent police force. Our organisation was not at any time informed of what was happening even though we attempted to speak with officers. Some two hours later another police force dressed in black riot apparel appeared – and within five minutes of their arrival all hell broke loose.” She reports how one cop came at her with baton raised, tucked his shield under her feet and sent her flying. All their equipment was seized – including suspiciously dangerous

items like books and film equipment.

She then tells how she witnessed (all of it handily recorded on police video), “police officers striking and beating young individuals for truly no reason at all. I am still stunned by the events of that afternoon. Never have I seen such an awful bloodbath meted out on peaceful individuals some of which were barely 16 years of age.”

After the baton-twirling display, the cops finally said they were free to go – battered and shocked, they'd barely got a mile down the road before their vehicle was pulled over and they were ordered out of it. Police seized it and drove off – leaving the CHT staff to walk nearly ten miles out of the forest. A few miles down the road, and some hours trudging later, they actually came across their truck – crashed with one of the tyres hanging off. It was later moved to a Police holding bay where it was impounded for two months as it was ‘unfit for the road’!

The Gwent Police investigation (unknown whether it was worked on by the ‘Seaside Five’ - see SchNEWS 623) eventually led to 23 defendants, including the two CHT staff present, facing a court case under Section 63, of the CJA for failing to leave the land. The defendants were originally split into three groups. By November magistrates duly found all the accused guilty, handing out large fines and ASBO's all round.

Karen's conviction was based on video evidence of her assault in which they decided she “did not look scared enough”. Yes, in modern Britain your facial expression will be taken down, subjectively assessed and used against you in a court of law.

Fair play to Karen though – they lodged an immediate crown court appeal which finally got to court at the start of March. They successful and swiftly managed to convince a jury of the real facts of the case and their convictions – and those of the other 21 people – were quashed. CHT have also submitted complaints to the ‘Independent’ Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) – but are yet to hear back how Gwent police will no doubt be blameless and face no further charges, but a double SchNEWS thumbs up for their dogged persistence... www.celticheritagetrust.org.uk

Coming Soon...

ON THE PURGE

- WATCHING YOU WATCHING US WATCHING YOU
SchMOVIES new documentary exposing the blatant conspiracy by Sussex Police to censor anti-arms campaign group Smash Edo...
“Arrestingly post-modern” - The Argus

NO PAINT NO GAIN

It was off to the slammer for two anti-arms fair protesters this week as they continued their resistance to the right of the DSEI arms fair to flog guns and weapons of mass destruction in the heart of London's East End.

The two London Catholic Workers had previously been fined £700 for criminal damage after they admitted pouring fake blood (aka red paint) on to the gangway entrance to last year's death trade show, effectively closing it for four hours (one of the more successful protests on the day, see SchNEWS 604).

They contended in court that it was not criminal damage, with one saying: “To pay this fine would be to co-operate with a system that is fuelling murder and mayhem around the world by promoting and protecting the arms trade. We withdrew our co-operation at the DSEi arms fair last September. We continue that refusal to go along quietly with manifest evil...” Stratford Magistrates duly sentenced them to five days inside for their impertinence. More at www.londoncatholicworker.org

MINING FOR NEWS

Here's a belated postscript to the 1986-97 Wapping printers strike: At the height of Thatcherism in the mid-80s - fresh from 'victory' over the miners (See SchNEWS 39) and the travellers at the Beanfield (See SchNEWS 25) – the printers strike became a year long struggle centred around the move of Murdoch's New International plant from Fleet St to Wapping, and was about smashing workers' rights, job losses and increased mechanisation.

Well...it's happened again and Murdoch is closing the Wapping print works. Although the new site, near Enfield, will be the largest print works in the World (with double the capacity of Wapping), it still needs less people to operate it and some 400 jobs will be lost. See www.libcom.org

...and finally...

Plotting global domination? You could do worse than up periscope for a gander at what the German government's stuck up on e-Bay. AU-Boat Bay! Yes, you're own Nazi submarine factory - dank and dark, built by slave labourers - the vast concrete complex known as Valentin is now up for sale.

A silo the size of a cathedral: 426m long, 97m wide, 25m high. A million tonnes of gravel and sand had to be dug up and 1,232,000 tonnes of cement was mixed. There's even a diving basin to test out your machines of underwater destruction

The asking price is vague but government officials say that they could be accommodating for any serious bidder. The place has become a millstone, its upkeep swallowing up nearly £600,000 a year from the Defence Ministry budget. “And that's just the absolutely essential investments needed to stop the place crumbling,” says Kommandant Wolfgang zu Putlitz., (no prizes for guessing he's) in charge of guarding and maintaining the site – but currently looking for a new job. Das Boot's on the other foot now, Kamerad!

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - we're expressing our free speech while we still can... Honest!

BLIX-PLOITATION

Unofficial Weapons inspectors paid a visit to the weapons testing range at Dundrennan, Scotland, on March 13th, following the recent government announcement that new Depleted Uranium tests would take place there (see SchNEWS 624). They entered the site from a public footpath and although monitored, no action was taken to stop them. Unfortunately (well, fortunately actually – perhaps the heavy rain had stopped play) no tests were being carried out at the time and the activists were able to have a good old nosey round the site.

Among the treasures uncovered was a burnt-out tank that the military had previously promised to remove due to its high levels of radioactivity. Obviously the MOD had forgotten (a possible side-effect of radiation poisoning maybe). Other sights on offer for the intrepid team were a 6 foot wide bomb crater, not spotted on the previous visit in 2003, and a friendly sign advising: “AVOID PICKING UP ANY DEBRIS AS IT MAY EXPLODE AND KILL YOU.” Well, that's informative and to the point... For more equally frank information about the effects of DU used in war, see www.savewarchildren.org
* The international campaign to ban the weapons is at www.bandedpleteduranium.org

PARTY & PROTEST

MARCH 22-26 - Bikes Not Bombs - London to Aldermaston bike ride. Joining the CND mass action on 24th April. Riding about 30 miles a day with accommodation arranged. Accompanied by Pedals2 bikesound system. Leaves Parliament Square, London at 10am. See www.bikesnotbombs.org.uk or Tel: 07840 494177 ** **24 - The Bomb Stops Here – Demo at Aldermaston** to celebrate 50 years since the first march to the Atomic Weapons Establishment - the heart of Britain's nuclear weapons programme. All welcome at Aldermaston AWE, Berkshire. 12 noon. Web: www.cnduk.org/aldermaston Tel: 08453 370282 ** **APRIL 5: Benefit for Radio 4a** – in support of the local Brighton alternative radio station. 7-10pm. With music from My Federation, Gloria Cycles & Dirty Social (look 'em up on Myspace!). At Concorde 2, Marine Parade, Brighton. Over 14s welcome, Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult. Free 4a badges to first 100! See www.concorde2.co.uk for more info. Listen to: www.radio4a.org.uk (if you get any streaming problems, SchNEWS recommends downloading a little free program called 'Online Radio Tuner' – works a treat for this and all other internet radio)

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