



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER TAKING A FREE KICK...

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SNATCH OF THE DAY

AS PROTESTS TARGET REFUGEE DEPORTATION DAWN RAIDS

“Following on from the successful day of action on UN International Migrant’s Day on 18th December last year, we want to maintain the pressure on the frontline agencies of so-called ‘Managed Migration’.” - Paul Johnson from the UK No Borders Network.

Protests against the forced removal of migrant families have been continuing (see SchNEWS 618), with a second ‘UK-Wide Day of Action Against Immigration Snatch Squads’ taking place last Thursday. The actions happened in the early hours in order to intercept snatch squads as they attempted to leave on dawn raids to forcibly take asylum seekers into custody for deportation.

Although activists found themselves being greeted by numerous police vans when they arrived at the Norman House removal centre in Portsmouth, campaigners in Newcastle and Cardiff had more success.

Protestors from the South Wales No Borders network successfully blockaded the Cardiff offices of the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) from 5am, preventing snatch squads from leaving the building and holding a picket outside.

In North Shields, Northumberland, activists managed to blockade the car park of the Northumberland House reporting centre, while in Newcastle there were banner drops from key locations around the city.

The Leeds No Borders group made their move the following day with a demonstration outside the Waterside Court reporting centre. Leaflets were handed out to the staff and a stall was set up providing information about anti-deportation campaigns and the No Borders network. A ‘Free Shop’ was also set up and food and drinks were provided for those having to sign.

In Portsmouth however, activists had less luck and were pulled up by three van loads of coppers as they were approaching the Norman House removal centre. Their van was searched for articles used to commit ‘criminal damage’ under Section 1 of PACE (The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 – the one that gives cops all their stop’n’search-for-no-particular-reason powers, and recently amended to mean that, in the event of arrest, the right to legal aid has now become the right to ring a call centre – see SchNEWS 618). All their D-locks, chains and arm tubes were confiscated.

HARSH PENALTY

The Cardiff blockade was drawing attention to the recent deportation of Ghanaian woman Ama Sumani, who was being treated for cancer

at the University Hospital of Wales when she was forcibly sent back to her homeland in January. With the necessary drugs for her treatment unavailable in Ghana, she died on March 20th – ironically just days after her family had learnt that fundraising on Ama’s behalf had raised £70,000. The Lancet medical journal called the removal “atrocious barbarism” and even rock guru Sting was up in arms.

The BIA was unmoved though, with its boss, Lin Homer, telling MPs that there was nothing important about Ama’s case that stood out from the pile of other deportations in her out-tray. Instead, Home Office minister Alun Michael put the blame on Ghana for not providing free medical care and told the public that the real question was, “whether it’s right for somebody who has no right to be in this country to be given medical treatment” - errr, if they’re dying of cancer Alun, here at SchNEWS towers we think that’s an unreserved ‘yes’.

Meanwhile Alun Michael’s sponsors in the boardrooms of the City of London continue to clobber Ghana with more than £2 billion of debt – four times the country’s annual health budget ... but that’s another story.

EARLY KICK OFF

Not content with picking on the terminally ill, the newly formed UK Border Agency also happens to snatch kids from their beds as part of the ‘managed system of migration’. Careful not to get a bad press for snatching children from the class room (or risk solidarity actions from other parents), BIA goons prefer to remove the family as a whole while the rest of the world snoozes in bed. But not everyone’s been sleeping - with further dawn actions in Glasgow and Newcastle keeping immigration officials

firmly in the office and migrant families in their homes – at least for a little while longer.

Some of the migrants facing an early morning wrestle for their freedom already have UK passports. Often leave to remain in the UK is dependent on toeing the line and forced removals of people busted merely for a traffic offence have taken place. Even if you’ve got an appeal pending you can be sent to a detention centre pending ‘removal.’ The Home Office has not yet contracted out the removals system to the private sector, but to keep some of the expenditure ‘off the balance sheet’ - as party-donating corporations profit from taxpayers money and provide revolving door jobs for their political chums – they have handed over the refugee detention centres to become a nice little earner for companies like Serco (See SchNEWS 545).

Amongst their huge portfolio of public-spirited contracts - from nuclear weapons to surveillance to offender tagging to waste management to railways (see SchNEWS 497) - Serco run detention centres including Colnbrook and Yarl’s Wood, which is currently home to hunger striking mothers in the centre’s ‘family unit’. Seven women, including two mothers still breastfeeding, have been starving themselves to highlight the brutality of the Serco regime and, in particular, the forced removal of a Burundian woman and her baby on 17th April. In their petition the women say, “They treat us like animals. We are claiming asylum, we’re not animals. They treat us as if we’ve done something terrible.” And shareholders get paid dividends from this line of work...

Can’t believe that UK plc snatches kids from beds and deports the terminally ill to certain death? No Borders are keeping up the pressure – why not get involved with your local group or set one up?

* See www.noborders.org.uk for more

COURT OUT PLAYING SQUARE

This Saturday (3rd) sees a **Day Of Action For Free Assembly** around Parliament Square. While the government have announced a repeal of the SOCPA laws limiting protests within one kilometre of the Houses of Parliament (See SchNEWS 612), this is not a victory, but rather a retooling exercise for more police control powers. Yes, the Met Police support the repeal of SOCPA - but instead are recommending a beefed up Public Order Act which would include special provisions for an area around parliament, plus an extension of powers to limit demonstrations elsewhere around the country.

Gather at 1pm at the ‘Charles I Island’, the roundabout on the south side of Trafalgar

Square, just on the border of the SOCPA exclusion zone. For more info see <http://freedomofassembly.blogspot.com>

* Another Neo Labour initiative aimed at providing the police with new measures to crack down on civil liberties – the **Counter Terrorism Bill** - is due to be voted on in parliament in June. These laws will undermine the rights of ‘suspects’, introduce new powers of detainment and make life harder for immigrant communities and asylum seekers – particularly Muslims (See SchNEWS 619). There will be a demonstration on May 12th at 10 Downing St, 5pm-7pm. Speakers include Mark Thomas... For more see www.campacc.org.uk

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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Published in Brighton since 1994

LIKE A VERGE ON?

It seems that even students are in the firing line when it comes to censorship in UK plc. In an unprecedented lack of concern for freedom of expression and academic inquiry, Southampton University has collaborated with Hampshire Constabulary in banning *On the Verge*, the *Smash EDO* campaign film from being shown on campus. The film was due to be screened on May 2nd, hosted by student group Green Action. But they were forced to cancel after pressure from staff members in the student union, one of whom told them:

"Please be assured that my involvement has been instigated by external authorities and, while my primary role is to look after and safeguard the interests of the Students' Union, I am also concerned that you, your colleagues and your society do not fall foul of legislation."

The students did not feel able to face down this pressure, telling SchNEWS: "We are very disappointed to have had to cancel our showing of 'On the Verge'in the circumstances, we feel that we have no other option but hope to put on an alternative showing in the near future."

This of course is just the latest episode in the story of the film they are trying to ban as *On the Verge* has faced harassment and censorship since its ill-fated premiere (see SchNEWS 625).

However, we are not encouraging anyone to contact George Clegg (Tel: 023 8059 5215 gc@soton.ac.uk), the staff member so keen to suppress freedom of academic thought to ask him what action he will be taking against all the other unlicensed films that are undoubtedly regularly shown on the campus, or why he ignored the clause of the licensing act that states that any film is exempt from certification if its purpose is for information, education or instruction.

Smash EDO UK Tour Upcoming Dates:
5th - Cambridge, The Locomotive, Mill Rd, 7.30pm ** **7th - Hastings**, The Rooms, Western Rd, 8pm ** **8th - Birmingham**, The Rainbow Pub, Digbeth, 7.30pm ** **For more see www.schnews.org.uk/on-the-verge**

* **After a torrent of interest:** search for 'On the Verge' on yer favourite bit torrent engine from next week...

SHAC RATTLE & ROLL

SHAC was on the move again last Saturday (26th) as they marked **World Day for Lab Animals** by marching through the town of Horsham - not only a stomping ground for the Crawley and Horsham hunt, also home to the HLS (Huntingdon Life Science - see SchNEWS 581) supplier Novartis UK, where experiments see primates, guinea-pigs and other animals tortured for profit. Around 400 campaigners gathered at Horsham Park to listen to speeches before setting off on the march through the town centre to Novartis.

At first cops were claiming to be softly policing the event by only having a few scowling officers at the meet up point. What they didn't mention was that people driving past Novartis on the way had already noticed a paranoid looking amount of riot vans parked 'secretly' across the road, in a car park. The amassed plod (what is the collective noun for police? A thicket?) included the London FIT team and the ever so smug looking Seany McDonald from Sussex police (see rival publication www.roughmusic.org.uk issues 8 & 15).

This fun cast was completed by members of the Crawley and Horsham Fox hounds who turned up and started trying to film people. Not to be intimidated, the march passed off and somehow it remained a calm day with no known arrests. Unfortunately the only excitement came from a merry band of about seven black-mask-clad kids who started a bit of argy bargy...

* For more see www.shac.net

PARTY & PROTEST

For full listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

May ** 4th - Beltane at Thornborough Henge - Celebrate the beginning of summer. Camping and music for the entire weekend at Lenthor Farm, near Northallerton (where a modern Stone Circle is being constructed). Camping costs £10 for the weekend, or £5 per night (children under 17 free) Near Ripon, in North Yorkshire, from 1pm www.sacredbrigantia.com ** **5th - The Indymedia Story - Monday Love Special** - As part of a season of events exploring the political and cultural legacies of 1968, this will present the history of Indymedia with guest MC Lee Harris, footsoulja of '68. At Roxy Bar & Screen, London Bridge SE1, 7pm, tel 07779294342 ** **May 9-11 - Big Blether 6** - A gathering for activists to share ideas, information and enthusiasm, with

everyone welcome. At Talamh Life Centre, 30 miles South of Glasgow www.bigblether.org.uk ** **10th - 1968 and All That** - Be Realistic! Demand the Impossible! An international conference and bookfair to celebrate the hopes and dreams of May 1968 - forty years after. With films, food, art, books and talks from veterans of '68 from many of the countries involved. At Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, 10am-10pm. www.1968andallthat.net ** **10th - National Palestine Demonstration** in central London to commemorate the Nakba and continuing dispossession and denial of Palestinian rights. Meet 1pm at Temple tube/Victoria Embankment, rally in Trafalgar Square. www.palestinecampaign.org

CATCH THE FERRY

Z-list celeb and fox hunt scumbag Otis Ferry is up in court. On 7th May he visits Cheltenham Magistrates Court for assaulting two female hunt monitors (not hunt saboteurs as the mainstream press reported) and stealing their video camera. In a rare instance of police taking action against the hunters who attack anti-hunt protesters, he was arrested the day after attacking the two hunt monitors for having the cheek to film him on the Heythrop Hunt. Otis attacked one of the women by trying to pull her out of her car by the arm, stole the video camera and tried to forcibly remove the keys to the car.

By rights they should be throwing the book at him of course, but Otis has a history of being rather teflon-coated as far the law goes. In February he was cleared of criminal damage after successfully snatching the car keys of two tabloidistas to stop them from snapping his paparazzi-whore girlfriend Sienna Miller (if he doesn't like the fast life he shouldn't be riding the starlet-express?).

Ferry also previously got a mere caution for invading the Houses of Parliament, and amazingly managed to keep his driving license after being caught sky high over the drink-drive limit. He did this by claiming his mates had bought him treble vodkas when he thought they were only singles! Well that's ok then! Remember, it's one rule for them and we wouldn't recommend any non-elite SchNEWS readers try this Ferry tale in similar circumstances...

UNI-LATERAL ACTION

Two students at the University of Nottingham held a hunger strike last week to highlight the on-going siege in Gaza, as well as to put pressure on the University to cease investing in the arms trade. Over four hundred Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip in the last 5 months, whilst food and medicines are scarce due to Israel's continued blocking of all borders.

Along with a number of UK Universities, all happy to put financial gain ahead of any silly qualms about ethics, Nottingham invests in companies who have a vested interest in the continuation of this type of suffering, forces for good like BAe and Rolls Royce. The strike started on Tuesday 22nd and ended on Friday 25th April, as planned. They also managed to get hundreds of signatures supporting a letter to the vice chancellor that urges the University "to institute and support a ban of all Arms Trade companies from recruiting on campus and to ensure the University adopts an ethical investment policy". Check your who your local uni supports at www.caat.org.uk/campaigns/clean-investment/universities

...and finally...

After smashing 7000-year-old relics from the Sumerian civilisation to dust under the tracks of US tanks during the invasion of Iraq, one US philanthropic venture capitalist firm is giving something back to the war-torn city.

Central Baghdad is about to have a new Disneyland-style amusement park, called The Baghdad Zoo and Entertainment Experience - courtesy of \$500 million from US investment firm C3. Designed by the same people that did Disneyland, it will feature all the big rides, plus a zoo, museum and concert theatre.

Says Mr Werner, chairman of C3, "The people of Iraq need this kind of positive influence. It's going to have a huge psychological impact... I think people will embrace it. They'll see it as an opportunity for their children regardless if they're Shia or Sunni." A Sunni family's money is as good as a Shias' obviously.

The amusement complex is set for land annexed by the imperialist-capitalists handily adjacent to the Green Zone - the fortified control centre for the occupation - on land which was previously the old zoo and Al-Zawra park, the most popular in Baghdad. Werner now magically has a 50 year lease on the land now, and retains rights to housing and hotel developments around the site.

And while on the subject of the zoo, SchNEWS may not be a big fan of incarcerating animals for entertainment purposes, but a startling fact about Baghdad Zoo is that during the invasion in 2003, only 35 of the 700 animals survived - most perishing, some being eaten by starving Iraqis.

The first part of the new centre is about to open - a skateboard park - where 200,000 skateboards have been flown in from the US and given out free to 'the kids'.

It would be bad taste to speculate whether the park will have a ghost train or a house of horrors or whether the scariest ride will be called 'insurgency attack'...



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SchNEWS warns all readers - don't let them take you for a ride. Honest!

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