

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER DEPRESSION AND REPRESSION...

SchNEWS

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END OF WORLD IS NIGH...

...ON IMPOSSIBLE TO SECOND GUESS - BUT SCHNEWS TRYS ANYWAY

Another fifty issues under the belt and its time for SchNEWS to once again take stock. Two years ago back in issue 550, SchNEWS went all Mystic Meg (or Cassandra - for you ancient Greek fans) in our 'State of the Indignation' address. At the time the economy was bubbling along happily for those lucky enough to get on the housing ladder and there was little sign of popular discontent around the 'nuclear-powered police state' in the offing.

But we predicted that 'the cracks were already beginning to show' and suggested that the inevitable recession would represent a major political opportunity. And this downturn looks set to be a real corker!

In hindsight of course it was bleedin' obvious that a debt-fuelled consumer boom based on the idea that that house prices would rise infinitely was a bubble ripe for bursting. And now falling house prices, dropping at records rates, are bringing down the economic house of cards - further fuelling the falls... Yer ever prophetic SchNEWS hit that nail firmly on the head with our truth-hammer. Funnily the article was so persuasive that just two years later the economics correspondents of all the major newspapers are now united in their dismissal of the fools who were naïve enough to believe that free market capitalism was ever considered a good idea.

But what's stepping into its place? Bigger monopolies and mergers are concentrating power into fewer hands and no doubt there will be vulture capitalists picking up the remains. As banks go under, the state turns a blind eye to flagrant abuse of anti-monopoly rules as Lloyds TSB takes over HBOS, turning into an uber-behemoth with its hands on everyone's houses and wallets. Most of the £700 billion US bail out is to be handed straight to the small elite which caused this meltdown in the first place.

In the meantime the surveillance state shows no signs of receding. Not content with having the largest CCTV network in the world (one for every fourteen of us and counting!), the stealthy introduction of I.D cards, 28 days detention etc, Britain's ruling class now want the ability to instantly interrogate every single piece of data-transfer happening in the UK - that's every phone call, text message and e-mail - in real time. The Intercept Modernisation Programme is a £12 billion scheme to spy on the entire telecommunications system. Current UK law requires a warrant is to intercept communications (or at least to produce the evidence in court) but that will change with the implementation of the new database.

Meanwhile, Scotland - traditional home of unpopular pilot schemes - is now hosting a national roll-out of Automatic Numberplate

Recognition (ANPR). Around 450,000 number plates will be recorded every day and used to flag up the whereabouts of known suspects. The £2.4m system will also help investigators build up evidence using a database of millions of car journeys. How soon before the scheme is rolled out across the whole of the UK?

This massive expansion of state surveillance will make ruling the country in the rocky times ahead easier for the power elite. They already have the framework of repression: tighter public order laws, terrorism legislation and the power to declare martial law (The Civil Contingencies Act, SchNEWS 437) all passed with little resistance in a time of peace and little social strife.

The elite knew that the clock was ticking and have prepared accordingly. Increasing numbers of police have gone hand in hand with centralization of law enforcement. The Police Reform Act 2002 gave the police the ability to hand out police powers to 'accredited' organisations. Private security firms and council busybodies are now being issued with the right to issue fines for 'anti-social behaviour' - a slippery term which easily becomes a euphemism for state interference in every aspect of your life. For example, Parkguard - a firm which patrols parks and housing estates, now has powers in Hertfordshire and Essex to issue fixed penalty notices for anti-social behaviour and confiscate alcohol and tobacco.

Continued overleaf...



CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For seeking greener pastures...

Cops in North Wales last week set a new low for police abuse of an unarmed 'suspect' when they attacked a sheep with a Taser stun gun. Their woolly defence was they had to prevent the ram "causing major disruption and possible danger to motorists" on the A55. The poor lambs might have been temporarily held up from getting home to watch 'Ewe've been framed' so decisive police action was needed.

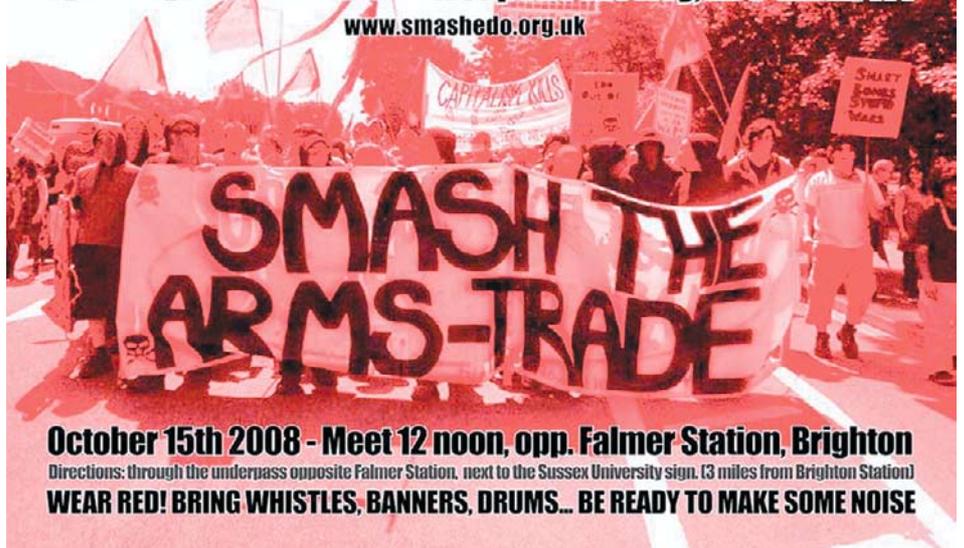
The tooled-up bright sparks were obviously affronted by the sheep's lack of respect for their authority, as it refused to give them its name and address (and they couldn't be sure it wasn't actually a terrorist in sheep's clothing), so they decided not to wait for helicopter backup or a team of crack negotiators to arrive (or even the RSPCA) and decided instead to cause major disruption to the animal's internal organs and possible danger to its life.

This is despite Home Office Minister Tony 'Nutt' McNulty's electrifying speech easing restrictions on the use of tasers last year, where he claimed they would only be used "where officers are facing violence or threats of violence of such severity that they would need to use force to protect the public, themselves and or the subjects of their action."

Still, bleating about cops not following the rules is hardly 'shocking' news in the SchNEWS archive...

SHUT ITT! Mass Demo against Brighton's weapons factory, EDO-MBM/ITT

www.smashedo.org.uk



October 15th 2008 - Meet 12 noon, opp. Falmer Station, Brighton

Directions: through the underpass opposite Falmer Station, next to the Sussex University sign. (3 miles from Brighton Station)

WEAR RED! BRING WHISTLES, BANNERS, DRUMS... BE READY TO MAKE SOME NOISE

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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Even private companies like Group 4 now employ large numbers of people legally authorised to use "Control & Restraint" techniques to ensure the compliance of the awkward. Abuses within the Asylum detention system largely run by these companies are well documented. The existence of different 'members' of the police family gives the state the option of playing one against the other – could the Community support brigade be inflated into a strong-arm squad to keep order on the streets if the police ever made good on their threat to strike?

So what should SchNEWS readers make of the current "crisis"? Clearly there is a lurch to more state control over the economy as the whole free market system unravels, with a serious potential shift to national socialism as states adopt a protectionist policy and take control of the economy and put up borders.

Capitalism's current decline wasn't bought about by anti-capitalist direct action, which itself had declined in the west in recent years – with more energy being put into the war on Iraq and the recent resurgence of eco-action around oil use and climate change. So have these shifts in the direct action movement been misguided? Not entirely – the War on Iraq and all the associated "terror" scares and repression still needs to be resisted. And climate change ain't gonna go away just yet – the government is still gonna dig up loads of coal as a quick and dirty solution to the energy crisis bought about by years of reliance on gas which the UK now has to import. Also the skills learned by the direct action movement in organisation, resistance to state power and a culture of self-reliance and cooperation should prove us in good stead in times of crisis. These skills and vision need to be shared with the wider population if they are not merely to remain part of a sub-culture getting by in the recession, while the majority of the population struggle with crippling debts and job insecurity.

How long the recession and how deep it hurts is anyone's guess, but is doubtless that, as ever, the poorest will be hit hardest. However, we are at least used it to some extent - the question is how will the consumer classes take it when their ivory-towered aspirational lifestyles grind to a halt? The shock might finally persuade them to think about something more radical than giving David Cameron a go...see you in 50 issues when we're eating our words (or each other).

NAVY BLUES

Sussex Uni students have struck again against the Royal Navy recruitment unit at their University. Last week (SchNEWS 649) we reported about an attack by a group of clowns who wrecked the Navy's recruitment stall with paint and confetti.

This week more students descended on the mess hall of the University Royal Navy Unit (OK, as no-one pointed out it a barrage of emails, we mistakenly called it UNRU last week..oops.) chanting, "No more war" carrying a banner reading, "If recruiters told you the truth you wouldn't want to join". For the next hour they seriously wound up the Navy officers by making as much noise as they could.

Eventually three car loads of cops turned up, but didn't make any arrests - but did try and glean some information out of the students for last week's attack and the upcoming Smash EDO demo.

TATA FOR NOW

Earlier this year there was much media fanfare over the unveiling of the world's cheapest car – the Nano, to be made by Indian car manufacturers TATA corporation. And if plans to sell bucketloads of them to less wealthy Indians succeed, "Tata" is what they'll be saying to hopes of reducing the impacts of climate change. Due to roll out in October and set to retail at less than £1500 quid, the idea is to make it affordable to the many millions of people who currently buy motorbikes, which outsell cars by seven to one in India. But not for long - car sales are projected to more than quadruple to £90bn by 2016.

Apart from the fact that the cars are made largely from oil-intensive plastics and other environmentally unfriendly natural resources, their proliferation will also mean a massive upscaling of India's infrastructure – huge road building programmes and petrol stations etc etc. Claims from TATA that they aim to make less polluting cars in the future, with electric Nano's being touted, look pretty hollow when you consider that India largely generates its power from coal and TATA made headlines earlier in the year by buying the not-so-eco Land Rover and Jaguar brands from Ford.

But a huge grassroots movement is delaying the launch. The land for the factory in Singur, West Bengal – some of the most fertile in the area, where most of the 150,000 population make their living from agriculture - was forcibly taken off local farmers by the regional government, keen to lay out the red carpet for the industrialists – who promise to create just a thousand jobs, most of which will go to outsiders.

Just under a thousand acres was annexed for the plant leading to a mass outcry and the start of a campaign of direct action by many of the dispossessed, inspired by a local opposition politician, Mamata Banerjee, who even went on hunger strike to support them in December 2006. Protests at the fenced off site that month – heavily guarded by police - saw the rape and murder of a teenage activist who was burned to death.

Intermittent attacks on the site have continued in the intervening period, with all the usual bullying tactics wheeled out to stop them. Demanding the return of at least 400 acres of the land stolen, since Aug 24th, protesters have laid siege to the factory, blockading it, harassing workers and stopping TATA from completing the construction of the site, which they have pumped \$350 million quid into so far. They also have blockaded the main highway between Delhi and nearby city Kolkata, hitting supplies as trucks are left stranded on the road.

And the protests have proved so effective that last week, TATA were forced to completely abandon the plant. This is despite head honcho Ratan Tata having once claimed he will not pull out of Singur even 'at gun point'. In the end guns weren't needed and TATA have had to walk away from their \$340 million investment in the facility. They are now looking for new land elsewhere to start all over again, delaying the launch of the car for a long time to come. Meanwhile, protests are continuing to get land given back and more compensation for those displaced. The message from West Bengal is clear – Just say Nano...

IT DOESN'T ADD UP

In Maryland, USA, paranoid police have been getting all hot under the collar about a dark and sinister group called "Algebra." This group was approached by someone from "Homeland Security" who asked what the group's message and agenda was. The Al-gebra Project, however, has no links to Al-Qaeda. It is actually just a group trying to improve young people's maths skills.

The Algebra Project is just one of over thirty groups who have been spied on by Maryland State Police, which included the Coalition to End the Death Penalty; Maryland chapter of the National Organization for Women; Equality Maryland (gay rights group) and Amnesty International.

Michelle Shropshire from Algebra reported how, at its demonstration seeking more academic help for Baltimore students outside the Baltimore Board of Education offices in March, police showed up with flex cuffs, mace and riot gear.

Maryland's big brother antics came to light in a review ordered after July's revelations of state police spying on peaceful protesters found that officers, "violated federal regulations" and conducted a surveillance program that was "misguided" against anti-war and anti-death penalty groups. The American Civil Liberties Union is seeking release of more documents relating to 32 other groups believed to have been spied upon, including Children First, a children's advocacy group who were contacted by Baltimore undercover agents who were asked to call off a planned protest. Tyrone Powers of the group was informed that an "intelligence file" had been opened on him and cops were aware he was a former FBI Agent.

The ACLU's freedom of information requests may well turn up more cases of spying on anyone involved in protests, but SchNEWS knows that events in Maryland are merely a small chip off the ol' surveillance iceberg – the bulk of which is likely to remain very much submerged in the name of freedom and 'Homeland Security'...

...and finally...

With those in charge of global capitalism having done such a bad job, maybe the solution is to put animals in charge...

That's what happened in the small Japanese town of Kishi and the experience has left them asking 'What credit crisis?' as the local economy is booming. In 2007 the local train company jokingly made a stray cat 'Tortoiseshell Tama', adopted by a grocer who lives next door the local station, into 'Stationmaster' of the unmanned platforms, humiliating the feline by making it wear a tiny 'Wakayama Electric Railway cap'.

With so much perceived cuteness in one place, and convenient transport links to boot, it has sent the Japanese wild and tourists have flocked in. Over 55,000 more people than normal came in by train last year and Tama is now credited with having bought over a billion yen (£6m) into the local economy with tourists desperate to see the superstar feline line manager.

Why they couldn't just dress up their own cats in bizarre anthropomorphic outfits is unclear but the research into the Tama-gotcha effect might just give economists paws for thought.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers...don't let yer ScNEWS collapse under its own mountain of debt - Honest!