

BLOODY POOR SHOW

THE FOX HUNTING/SABBING SEASON IS BACK ON - BUT WILL THIS BE THE LAST YEAR BEFORE THE TORIES GET IN AND REPEAL THE BARELY ENFORCED SHAM BAN?

While the papers have all been running photos of blood-rich seas to mark the start of the whaling and dolphin hunt season in Japan, closer to home, bloody animal abuse scenes not so far away...

Around the country, fox hunts are back out at dawn as Cubbing season (the hunting of fox cubs) kicks off. Hunts around the country are out from first light up to seven days a week, training their new younger hounds to develop a blood thirst by setting them on young fox cubs.

Whilst the main hunting season starts mid October, Sab groups are already gearing up for another season of sabotage and monitoring.

The Hunting Act – which supposedly banned fox hunting - has withered away under everybody's eyes (see SchNEWS 623) and now it looks like the Tories plan to repeal it if elected. With both Anti and Pro sides agreeing that the Act is an unworkable law - and prosecutions against Hunts for illegal hunting being dropped left, right and centre - the Police have stated that they will no longer monitor hunts for illegal practices. But ban or no ban, it's been business as usual for both Hunts and Sabs since the Act came in in 2005.

The Hunt Regulation Authority (HRA) is now being created to win back public support

for hunting and create a so-called blueprint for the repeal of the Act. The Countryside Alliance, with the backing of Tories including William Hague and Edward Garnier (the shadow Justice Minister), are fully gearing up for a repeal. And as it looks quite likely that David Cameron (a hunter himself) could be the next prime minister, the Act could be a goner in the next couple of years (as predicted back in SchNEWS 658).

Just last week, the Tory Sussex MP and shadow Environment Minister, Nick 'Wotta' Herbert, was exposed for having accepting various four figure campaign 'donations' (£1,500 from gun seller and hunting outfitter William and Sons, £2,000 from grouse-shooting big businessman Michael Cannon and £2,000 from the Alnaharra hunting, fishing and shooting estate) – just days before announcing that the Tories new manifesto commitment will be to hold a free vote on hunting.

Meanwhile, in theory, any hunt breaking the set rules of the HRA could have a disciplinary procedure brought and face a fine, suspension, or at least a mild slap on the wrist. Anyway, with a new wildlife-killing-for-fun season about to get underway, it's time again to pull on yer boots on and get sabbing or monitoring now...

* See www.hsa.enviroweb.org

HARROWING ORDEAL

It was another pasting for the hapless far-right group the English Defence League on 11th September. Together with another group of like-minded half-wits, Stop the Islamification of Europe, they planned to march on the site of London's biggest mosque in Harrow. A handful of fash were met by nearly 1,000 counter demonstrators and basically run out of town under a hail of bottles and bricks. On eyewitness said "It showed that fascists cannot go looking for trouble in Muslim communities, and if they do try it they risk getting a hiding. It showed that they can't attract enough of a periphery to back them up in their efforts".

The same lot tried again to draw attention to themselves on Sunday by protesting against the annual Al-Quds 'pro-palestinian' march in the centre of London. According to eyewitnesses around forty EDL types put in an appearance, which means that numbers at least for now seem to be on the decline. This time there was no agro – possibly due to heavy policing but also because the 'Al Quds' march, although concentrating on Palestine, is seen by many on the left as a front for the hard-line Iranian regime.

The EDL's next few outings are 19th September in Luton (although this is supposed to have been banned by the Home Office), 10th October at Manchester City Centre and 31st October in the Leeds City Centre. Get down there to run them out of town.

TURNING ON THE MAINS

After well over two months of successful disruption of preparations to carve out a new open cast coal mine in Scotland, campers at Mainshill Solidarity Camp (See SchNEWS 682) need urgent assistance. Taking advantage of the lull after this year's roving Camp For Climate Action – which set up at the site in August (See SchNEWS 687), Forestry Commission workers have re-started clearing trees within the intended site in the past few days.

This is despite Scottish Coal still not yet having carried out the ecological surveys at Mainshill 'ordered' as part of the planning approval process. It'll be pretty hard to assess woodland life, the badger setts or bat and bird colonies once their habitats have been ripped up, but maybe that's the point...

The protest camp is continuing to construct defences - including tunneling – but more numbers are needed to keep up the pressure, and to prevent them completing the destruction of this site ready for more fossil fuelishness, bitterly opposed by a huge majority of residents... and anyone else of sound mind. To plan yer spell up north or for info on other ways to help, see <http://mainshill.noflag.org.uk>



SchNEWS Benefit
Sat 26th September 2009
Head Subjects
2 SICK MONKEYS
Resolution 242
PLUS short films from
SchMOVIES
@ **Westhill Community Centre,**
Compton Ave, BN13PS
1pm til Late - £4/Donation

WIND TURBULENCE

As Vestas tried to remove wind turbines from the Isle of Wight following the closure of their factory in July with the loss of 600 jobs (See SchNEWS 686, 690), ex-workers and climate activists had other ideas, occupying cranes loading the blades and the barge sent to remove them from the island.

On Tuesday activists dropped banners saying "Our blades, Our power" and "Wind power to the people" from the barge and crane. The 'Blade Runner' barge occupiers were escorted off after an hour and banned for life from Port Authority premises. The four on the cranes were initially threatened with terrorism charges before being subjected to the trauma of the cranes being moved and lowered, defying all health and safety precedents known to trade unionists on the docks. They were then arrested for aggravated trespass and held overnight before being bailed with strict conditions, including not to associate with each other. The four will be pressing charges for reckless endangerment of life following their crane ordeal, during which they were exposed to serious risk of injury.

One of the crane occupiers Jackie Sheedy said, "After the factory occupation ended, Vestas and the government hoped we'd all just quieten down. But we're united in this blockade. The island workers need those jobs, and we all need them if we want even a chance of combating climate change for our children."

Ex-Vestas worker Jamie Rigby, who was at the blockade, said "We made these blades, and now Vestas want to take their profits and leave us high and dry". Jamie was one of 11 workers sacked for occupying their factory after Vestas announced the mass lay-off in July. He was joined by supporters from the island community, climate activists and workers from the mainland at the action.

Meanwhile, other sacked Vestas workers are at the TUC conference in Liverpool, lobbying the labour movement for solidarity action and support for last Thursday's "National Day of Action For Wind Power". The workers received a great reception from trade unionists and heckled Ed Miliband, Secretary for Energy and Climate Change.

* See <http://savevestas.wordpress.com>

HAZE OF SMOKE

Last weekend (Sept 12th-13th) saw a protest at the Hazlewood Coal-fired power station 200km east of Melbourne, which is Australia's biggest source of carbon emissions and the dirtiest coal plant in the world. It is owned by UK company International Power.

After setting up a camp near the station, the big demo was on the Sunday, with over 500 turning out in a range of affinity groups, including the Wombat Warriors – one of several teams who broke through the fence but were nicked approaching the station – and the Ministry For Silly Walks. The 250-strong police contingent included horses and helicopters. 22 were arrested.

Australia has the highest carbon emissions per-capita in the world, and generates 78% of its electricity from coal, when it's stating the obvious that the country should be using solar. In a situation that mirrors the Vestas story here in Britain, what was going to be Australia's largest solar energy plant near Mildura, Victoria was closed after the company Solar Systems went into administration on September 7th. Demonstrators will be visiting there this week.

* Back in the UK, people are mobilising towards a big action to shut down the **Ratcliffe-on-Soar** coal-fired power station over October 17th-18th. See www.thegreatclimateswoop.org

* There will be an **International Day Of Climate Action** on October 24th – see www.350.org

* Things are building up towards the **COP15 Climate Conference in Copenhagen** on November 30th (incidentally the 10th anniversary of the Seattle WTO conference that kicked off the global summit hopping movement). This will be the biggest summit on climate change ever held so let's make the protest a biggie as well. See www.risingtide.org.uk/copenhagen

BACK TO BASE-ICS

Activists are gathering for a not-so-fond farewell party outside the US embassy in London today (18th) to say Hasta La Vista to American military bases in Ecuador. The withdrawal follows the expiration of the lease on the US base at Manta, a lease that Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa had offered to renew on one condition – that Washington allow him to open an Ecuadorian military base in Miami. The Americans declined the offer and now the US military has until the start of November to pack up their guns, boots and abuses of sovereignty and get the hell out.

Unfortunately, Uncle Sam's boys won't be going far, just a quick march across the border to Colombia, where they will establish five new military bases to compliment the two already active.

The expansion of the US military presence in Colombia is part of the recently renewed and deeply controversial "Plan Colombia" (see www.schnews.org.uk/sotw/plan-coca-cola.htm). Late last month regional leaders gathered in Argentina to condemn the move, which is also facing resistance from human rights organisations and social movements within Colombia.

Indigenous organisations have been particularly vocal in their opposition, as communities close to the proposed sites are set to be among those most affected. Luis Evelis Andrade, head of the National Indigenous Organisation of Colombia (ONIC), surmised the mood saying, "The Colombian state and the government are riding roughshod over what I understand to be the feelings and the collective imagination about the meaning of foreign military bases in any country, and especially in Latin America".

* See www.upsidedownworld.org

COUP DE TWAT

Last Tuesday (15th) Hondurans celebrated 188 years of freedom from the tyranny of Spanish imperial rule. The day also marked 80 days since that freedom was revoked in a military coup which deposed elected president Manuel Zelaya (See SchNEWS 682).

Since June 28th, when the Honduran military escorted Zelaya out of the country at gunpoint, an increasingly organised resistance has been met with increasingly vicious repression. Action against the coup has taken place daily, with street protests, blockades of major transit routes and national general strikes involving over 30,000 teachers and lorryloads of police. The newly formed National Resistance Front (FOMH), representing more than 50,000 teachers, the country's three largest unions, and the Popular Bloc, which groups more than 10 trade unions representing over 30,000 public employees, has coordinated opposition to the coup.

The Organisation of Community and Ethnic Development (ODECO), representing Honduras' Afro-Honduran community, has also been active in demanding the return of democracy, spurred on by the blatant racism of the new regime which recently appointed disgraced former presidential candidate Rafael Pineda Ponce as 'minister of government'. Pineda-Ponce dropped out of the 2001 campaign following comments in which he referred to Afro-Hondurans as "monkeys hanging from trees".

The military response has been brutal. They have killed dozens of protesters and detained over 3,500 people for their roles in demonstrations, while there have also been numerous reports of horrific rapes of women protesters.

The coup regime remains internationally isolated. The US government has suspended millions of dollars in aid and last weekend revoked the US visas of leading members of the regime and the Honduran judiciary, vocal supporters of the coup. Aid money however, has continued to filter through, not least from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a taxpayer funded agency set up to promote free trade style development boasting Hilary Clinton on its board of directors.

Internationally brokered talks between Zelaya and coup 'president' Roberto Micheletti resulted in a proposed compromise which Zelaya eagerly accepted, despite clauses which would have reduced his powers and prevented him from even discussing the constitutional reform which led to the coup in the first place. Micheletti however, refused any agreement which would lead to the return of Zelaya, instead preferring to hang on for November elections.

The coup regime could well come to regret their hardened stance. A weak and ineffectual Zelaya, grateful for the restoration of his presidential trappings, could have proved easy pickings in internationally recognised elections with all the usual opportunities for ballot stuffing and voter intimidation. Instead, they face the prospect of a sham poll, not internationally recognised and boycotted by a determined and organised opposition with a list of demands which already goes far beyond the return of Zelaya and includes an assembly for constitutional reform – the very thing they were so desperate to prevent in the first place.

* See <http://hondurasresists.blogspot.com>

PARTY & PROTEST
For events listings updated weekly see
www.schnews.org.uk/pap

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

The US Army has always targeted the young, poor and disadvantaged when deciding how to shell out on recruitment drives, but their latest big gun may end up exploding in their faces.

The hilariously named 'Army Experience Center' opened earlier this month inside a shopping mall in one of less respectable areas of Philadelphia, a fertile ground for canon fodder in the past.

The uber hi-tech interior and free gaming zone – including goes on the actual simulation hardware used to train real soldiers – is all designed to lure in the youngsters and put them in a excited, emotionally aroused state. And then softly, softly hard sell them. The real sweetener on offer is to sign up in return for the army paying your college fees – get out of the ghetto and on your way to the American dream...

But, by establishing and then advertising their permanent (and expensively kitted out) presence, the infallible US Army (current slogan 'Army Strong'TM) have committed the obvious error of giving their position away. And this hasn't escaped the notice of anti-militarists, who have been turning up regularly in their hundreds to protest at the sheer crass obscenity of it all.

Activists have been maintaining a regular siege on the building. Last weekend police felt it necessary to steam in and nick six protesters and a journalist (all for practically no reason), who will now face criminal conspiracy and failure to disperse charges. But it's all been terrible PR for the army – who also wouldn't want potential gullible recruits to be educated about a few things before they get their hands on them.

Forced into another 'tactical withdrawal', the army has had to announce it will shortly be closing the AEC and not opening more in other malls, as previously planned. Back to more Guerilla style recruitment, popping up in mall carparks looking for fresh meat eh boys?

* For a jaw-dropping (and blackly amusing) 'experience' of the blatant manipulation still currently on offer, take a virtual tour at www.thearmyexperience.com

...and finally...

Probing the English Defence League's assertion that they aren't racist, recently we were perusing their website and stumbled on something that had us coughing up our cups of tea: Clicking on the Forum section of the site, you are met with an ad for mail-order Muslim brides, complete with picture of a pretty Middle-Eastern woman with head-dress but sans burkha. The site it links to – called Muslims For Marriage – does the job of putting you in touch with a range of up-for-it single Muslim women.

So there you have it – when it comes to mail-order brides, the English Defence League don't mind if their new soul-mate keeps getting up before the crack of dawn to pray to Mecca. Who said the EDF were Islamophobic? If you want to "send 'em back" – apart from that one special lady – have a look before someone points out the irony in the webmaster and it gets taken offline – see http://s1.zetaboards.com/EDL_The_Forum/index

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