



WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER NOT MUCH COP...

AS EARTH HANGS BY ACCORD...

SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Sunday 20th December 2009

Free/Donation

Issue 704

NOT A HOPENHAGEN

AS WORLD LEADERS DITHER INSIDE, SCHNEWS LOOKS TO THE THOUSANDS OF DISSIDENTS OUTSIDE

In the end there was no deal on the table in Copenhagen (see SchNEWS 700) and COP 15 was the big global cop-out we expected.

The rich countries, the biggest polluters and the ones who have clawed their way to pre-eminence on the back of one hundred and fifty years of carbon emissions are simply not going to compromise enough. Contrast the rapidity with which the global financial system was rescued last year with the bureaucratic bog-down that happened in Denmark. Capitalism must be maintained at all costs – life on earth is not so urgent.

Having no real deal suits the dominant powers very well - they can afford to hang on until the poorer nations buckle (suggestions that the World Bank should administer the Climate Fund gives you an idea what sort of deals have been proposed). It's full-scale carbon trading and business as usual or nothing for the richest nations. Despite half-hearted last ditch attempts to salvage something to save media face, the volutary 'accord' arm-twisted through at the last moment is virtually meaningless.

So much for what was (or wasn't) going on inside the fortress-like Bella centre to the south of the city. If the delegates of countries like the Maldives (which will literally disappear if sea levels continue to rise) can't get themselves heard – what hope did the protests have? Accredited delegates at the main conference on Wednesday who attempted to leave and join the People's Assembly outside the gates got the same rough treatment as those already assembled there.

The message from the authorities in Copenhagen was clear, there is no place for dissenting voices, however inept political attempts to save the world prove. For the climate activists who arrived in Copenhagen the story was one of stop-n-searches and mass arrests. New legislation passed by the Danish government allowed for preemptive arrests of anyone. Countering protest in the city was effectively given a police state mandate.

Intentions became apparent with the arrests of around 750 people forming the anti-capitalist block in the middle of the main march. In a coordinated swoop (described by one arrestee as 'incredibly slick') police sealed off the roads with vehicles. They then charged the crowd with batons drawn before forcing protesters to sit in rows, hands cuffed behind their backs with cable ties. Some were there for hours sat in the road in sub-zero temperatures.

Others were taken to a pre-prepared detention facility in the Valby area of the city. Here the police had built wire cages – a human containment facility. One activist told SchNEWS, "They're around the size of a shipping containers, built of wire. Only 2 ½ metres high with bare concrete floors – roll mats to sleep on.

They put ten or fifteen of us in each cage."

In cases where angry activists kicked off inside the cages – some pulling benches off the walls – police fought back with pepper spray and batons. All in all not a pleasant experience of 'liberal' Denmark to take home from the summit-hopping city break.

In fact pepper spray and batons were much in attendance all week – when not charging crowds or spraying those assembled too close to the conference venue gates, cops continued to arrest anyone they wanted left right and centre, taking whole groups en masse. There was a constant flow of reports from the twittersphere of rough treatment and baton-beatings from many of those detained.

And, let loose to be as proactive as they liked, it was no surprise when on the morning of the 16th police arrived at all the convergence centres for a mass stop and search. All part of the intimidation service, along with complementary repeat van stop-n-searches for anyone unlucky enough to be driving.

Wednesday's 'Hit the Production' day of direct action at the dock was typical, with riot cops moving in to arrest 270 before anything had actually happened.

While many of the arrestees were later released, a fair few were deported for minor public order offenses and others were bailed until 4th January.

As the dust settles, it's clear that Copenhagen was no Seattle or Genoa. Despite the respectable mobilisation of local and international activists, they were no match for the scale of the lockdown, cops given carte blanche to allow world leaders to fail the world unhindered. One thing the big build up and hype does seem to have achieved is that the authorities were obviously extremely worried - and fear just breeds aggression on their part.

But the protesters presence alone stole some of the media spotlight and reminded a global audience that when conventional political solutions fail, as they inevitably will on current course, there are other options. How long before the visible effects of climate change convince enough of the public to make the cause truly mass? The longer the politicians dither away the earth's future, the sooner that day comes.

*If this conference has been notable for one thing other than pre-emptive repression, its the sheer amount of content produced by activist media. You could drown in it. A full round up of events is beyond the meagre space of SchNEWS - just some of the minute by minute timelines, reports, pictures, footage, a million twitters and links are all available at <http://icop15.org> - Go on, gorge yerself...

** List and links to reports of many other climate actions from around the world at www.indymedia.dk/articles/1928



Consume all the resources you want this Xmas - while stocks last!

TOP COP TIP OF THE WEEK

It is very common for activists to get compensation from the police in Denmark. If you are arrested and released without charge you can apply and you can automatically receive compensation (and quite quickly, unlike in Britain). This does not apply for the preventative arrests they have been using, but if you think you have been unfairly treated you still stand a fair chance of receiving compensation.

Contact: Copenhagen Legal Support: Retshjælpen Rusk, Baggensgade 6, basement – Nørrebro. Phone: 0045 28255320 E-mail: retshjaelprusk@hotmail.com

TAR VERY MUCH

Some decided to keep it local in the fight against climate change last week. The Camp for Climate Action were active from their base at Trafalgar Square, established after the Climate Wave. Over Monday and Tuesday activists from the UK Tar Sands Network and the Camp for Climate Action pulled off a direct action and protest combo outside (and on top of) the Canadian High Commission in Pall Mall.

On Monday activists protested outside the entrance to Canada House before blockading the Pall Mall end of Trafalgar Square with banners reading "Shut Down the Tar Sands"

Day two, three activists scaled the side of the Canadian High Commission and cut lose the Canadian flag, dunking it in crude oil, before locking and glueing themselves to an upper floor balcony.

Over the last few years Canada has managed to fix its squeaky clean image with an industrial sized dose of oil from Alberta's tar sands. For those who don't already know (see SchNEWS 644), Canada's Tar Sands represent the world's latest and greatest threat to the climate.

Underneath layers of pristine, biodiverse, boreal forest (which locks carbon away from the atmosphere), underneath the permafrost (which, when melted is a huge source of climate-warming methane) and mixed in with the soil and sand, are deposits of oil almost equal in size to Saudi Arabia's. Because the oil is so 'dirty' (mixed with debris) its costly to extract - taking around one barrel of oil to extract six from the sands. It needs a huge amount of water as well, which runs off the site and pollutes Canada's lakes and groundwater.

These sands have become Canada's largest industrial project and, dollar for dollar, a good contender for world's most polluting industry.

Canada's dirty tricks to protect the tar sands by scuppering any deal at Copenhagen have caused the country's negotiators to win the 'Fossil Award' given out by environment campaigners at Copenhagen. Join the climate activists and indigenous communities fighting back.

* See tarsandsinfocus.wordpress.com/about

NO OIL FOR WAR

The first of the long-planned major sell-offs of Iraqi oil fields took place last weekend. The auction of Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs) in Baghdad has long been fantasised about by Bush, Cheney and the rest of the neoconservative gang that we can now safely call 'former regime loyalists'.

It didn't exactly go as planned for the Americans though. In a bidding war that Iraqi officials insisted was 'not political,' virtually everywhere except the USA scored rights to share the profits (sorry development) of some of Iraq's major oilfields.

Rights to explore/exploit Iraq's biggest oilfields went first to China and Russia, with European oil corporations having to compete with Asian companies. SchNEWS' perennial favourite Shell managed to get its grubby fingers round some of Iraq's oil pumps by partnering up with Petronas, a Malaysian corp.

Meanwhile US oil corporations won virtually nothing. Neither Chevron nor ConnocoPhillips, both of which had been lobbying heavily, won anything. Exxon was the only US corporation to buy the rights to any large oilfield.

Its not just that the US corporations were sidelined. The main winners were national corporations - Gazprom (Russia's nationalised oilgarchy), the China National Petroleum Corporation, Norwegian Statoil, Malaysia's Petronas, France's Total and Angola's Sonangol.

After several years of marching behind 'No War For Oil' banners and statements from former US politicians that the war was 'mostly about oil', this seems like pretty weak stuff. The Americans spent some \$2trillion on the war. There's also the small matter of the million lives lost. But the Iraqi government has been desperate to play the nationalist card and to let US corporations in would be politically disastrous; European and Asian corporations are a little more palatable to Iraqis.

Yet these deals between Iraqi politicians and oil execs totally ignore the wishes of the Iraqi people, unions and oil workers. Sami Ramadani, British-based spokesman for the Iraqi General Union of Oil Employees, had this to say, "The barometer of public opinion is the oil union. They think that these contracts with the corporations will give Iraqis a very poor deal. The corporations want to use cheaper imported labour, like from Dubai and

Kuwait. Our oil is very close to the surface, we don't need outside investments to pump the oil out. Why do we need these guys except to steal a maximum proportion of profits?"

As well as this, no actual oil law has been agreed on, leaving open the possibility of legal challenges. And let's not forget there is always strike action.

Ever since the invasion, the US has faced the same problem in Iraq: they've never had any real power over the country. Bombing the shit out of somewhere isn't the same as controlling it. In fact (cue all of the lessons of the war on terror) bombing the shit out of somewhere is likely to make it much less controllable. The Americans invaded Iraq, destroyed its Baathist state and forced 'democracy' on them. The government that Iraqis elected is nationalist and, in the last few years, has done some very clever political manoeuvring to limit US influence in their country. Just before last year's US elections Iraqi PM Nuri al Maliki sweet-talked Obama - basically handing him a vote winning 'get out of Iraq free' card just before he got elected.

Added to their problem is that US corporations shot themselves in the foot by being just too damn greedy. The Iraqi government (we can use the word without inverted commas these days) had insisted on no more than a \$2 per barrel profit for corporate Production Sharing Agreements. The Americans weren't happy about this and set their side of the deal much higher, only to find that they'd been out-bid by the Angolans.

With violence on the increase, an increasingly authoritarian president with a tight grip on power and their natural resources divided up between foreign corporations, things aren't looking much improved for the average Iraqi.

But with nothing to show for their trillion dollar foreign adventure but over a million dead and a shattered international reputation, things haven't quite gone the way the Americans wanted either. - oh well, at least W. and friends can be content that a slew of US corporations got in a few years of unregulated looting with their war, and while the casualties mounted, managed to suck a vast amount of American taxpayer cash straight into their pockets as profits into the bargain. Never mis-under-estimate the scale of what happened in Iraq...

NAZI PIECES OF WORK

A prominent member of the EDL was charged with soliciting murder and using threatening, abusive or insulting words likely to stir up racial hatred on Thursday (17th).

The charges against 'Wigan Mike', aka Michael Heaton, stem from his stint as an administrator of the to-the-right-of Mussolini-on-a-bad-day website Aryan Strike Force. Together with his administrator in crime, Trevor Hannington, Heaton spent his time encouraging other far right nutjobs to murder Jews.

Hannington is also accused of terrorism offences having been caught in possession of a complete set of How-to guides to terrorism and having posted instructions on how to make a flame thrower out of a water pistol (with some sticky-back plastic no doubt) on a website.

Although Heaton allegedly broke ties with Aryan Strike Force last year, he has been recently spotted at EDL demos in Manchester, Birmingham, Wrexham and Leeds. While we're not going to condone banging people up for possessing books or writing things (no matter how vile), the case is another blow to those who want to portray the EDL as a non-racist group with legitimate concerns.

BACK IN FELINE-MENT

The Black Cat community centre in Bath is on to its second life after being evicted on Wednesday (16th) and promptly re-squatted on Thursday (17th).

The centre was first squatted three months ago and has since been used as a library, cafe and freeshop, and for film nights and benefit gigs raising money for local causes.

After the eviction, local activists and residents decided to take immediate action to save Bath's only autonomous social space. One of the new squatters said, "The work that the original Black Cat squatters put into the social centre was so inspiring, and such a benefit to the community that we felt that we had to act, and re-open the social centre to the community for as long as possible."

If all has gone to plan then the Black Cat Mark II should already be open, with all of its previous uses and events up and running. For more info call 07794 774938

PARTY & PROTEST

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

THE LIVNI DAYLIGHTS

Christmas came early (or Eid came late, or Hanukkah arrived bang on time) for activists seeking justice for last year's massacres in Gaza when an arrest warrant on charges of war crimes was put out for Tzipi Livni, the Israeli foreign minister at the time.

The UK government was quick to act - David Milliband immediately phoned up Livni to apologise that occasionally British courts act independently and do strange things like try to prosecute criminals.

There's some confusion about what happened next. Media sources in the UK say that Livni cancelled her trip to Britain after she heard about her arrest warrant and that the sources who informed the lawyers they had spotted her in the country were mistaken. However, Arabic news sources say that she was in the country but had to be whisked away to a secret Mossad safe house to escape arrest.

The Israeli government was furious (always a good sign), growling that the cosy British-Israeli relationship was being put in jeopardy. The Israeli state also blustered that Britain's role in the peace process would be put at risk. This brings two questions to mind - first, what role in the peace process? And second, what peace process? Do they mean that Tony Blair will have to give up his job as 'Quartet Envoy'? And if he did, would anyone (except Blair's accountant) notice?

Back in the UK, human rights lawyers are concerned that Britain might try and change the law to avoid any future 'embarrassments' for their allies. Meanwhile, scores of Israeli army officers and politicians have been warned not to travel to countries with 'universal jurisdiction'. The warrant against Tzipi Livni, although never served, must have scared the shit out of some of the shadier characters at the Israeli embassy.

AHAVA GO HEROES

Two activists shut down the Covent Garden branch of Israeli cosmetics company Ahava on Saturday by locking on to a concrete block inside the shop. The activists were finally removed by a police cutting team at 4.30pm, by which time the shop crew had given up on the day and gone home.

Ahava sells products made from Dead Sea mud and minerals. It has a production facility on the illegal settlement of Mitzpe Shalem and extracts the mud for its products from a site close to the settlement of Kibbutz Kalia in the occupied West Bank. * See www.bigcampaign.org

...and finally...

Scrooge security guards at Yarl's Wood detention centre got embroiled in a Santa stand off this week as they tried to prevent a Father Christmas from delivering presents to the immigrant children detained inside.

Having obviously decided the kids inside were on the naughty list (why else would we lock up innocent children after all?) the security guards refused to let Santa through the perimeter fence. When the spurned St Nick began calmly blessing his sack of gifts the irate guards called the police.

The Father Christmas in question, the Rev Canon James Rosenthal, is an Anglican expert on St Nick - the patron saint of children and the imprisoned. The Rev said, "St Nick has never been turned away from anywhere before." He obviously never tried to get into Britain without papers then.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, you've had enough bad news to keep you going til mid-January. Honest.

Subscribe! Get SchNEWS free every week by email in pdf or text file - visit our site, or send us stamps and we'll post it to you. Copy and distribute! Keep SchNEWS free with donations (via website or cheques payable to Justice?). Posted free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email mail@schnews.org.uk Web www.schnews.org.uk