

WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER CLIMATIC...



# SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 13th January 2012

Free/Donation

Issue 803

## HEAVY WEATHER

### AS A DEPRESSIVE FRONT PAGE SETTLES OVER SchNEWS

With deaths attributed to climate change now nearing an estimated 350,000 a year and with the annual COP17 UN climate talks just over, SchNEWS looks at the events of the last few years and assesses where we are heading.

It was only two years ago that the promise of a deal to "save the world" at the COP15 talks in Copenhagen foundered on the rocks of "green capitalism". The majority of the world's countries refused to sign up to a US inspired plan whose main focus seemed to be preserving the global economic status quo rather than tackling carbon emissions.

While many of the activists who faced tear gas, mass arrests and police batons outside the

### DOIN' IT FOR THE CRAIC

Despite being deep in to the austerity shitpit, a job dead zone and with the IMF/ECB prescribing round after round of cuts, Ireland as a whole has been pretty quiet on the protest front – although 2012 may see that changing...

The small-scale Occupy camps of Dublin, Cork and Galway appear to have spawned a radical offshoot in the form of protest squats set up in government-owned empty buildings.

The Irish government was forced to takeover property-related loans from collapsing banks in 2009 when the property bubble burst and thousands of newly built homes were left unsold. It created the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) to take debt worth 72.3 billion euros from financial institutions. With it, the Agency became the owner of vast amounts of property, including around 600 'ghost estates'. Originally owned by individuals and companies that went bankrupt, they now stand as a stark symbol of 'bust' Ireland.

So-called Occupy NAMA protesters are taking up residence in such spaces, which have been left disused and abandoned despite a rising homelessness count and long social housing waiting lists. On January 2nd in Cork, a group entered a 7-storey city centre office building and set to work creating a Community Resource Centre. This Youtube vid shows the entrance (which may be the smoothest squat crack ever recorded, thanks to the key-distribution Christmas elf). Elsewhere, Occupy activists in Dublin have taken residential properties, and promise to expand their activities to house the homeless.

A father of seven who squatted in a NAMA ghost estate after being on the housing list for five years was granted leave to remain last October. The judge threw out the case of 'trespass' after hearing that he had improved the property. Whether the authorities are as sympathetic to the recent, overtly political, repossessions remains to be seen.

See <http://corkcitycentre.wordpress.com/> for more on the Community Resource Centre.

Bella Centre, expressed cynicism regarding the outcome of the talks at the time, Copenhagen still clearly casts a long shadow over the climate activist movement. Whatever people were hoping for from COP15, either some sort of deal or the de-legitimisation of the UN process or even the birth of a grassroots global alternative, they were bitterly disappointed.

### PLANE DRAIN

With economic crisis grabbing the headlines climate activism of all kinds has faltered. From the collapse in numbers attending the mainstream national climate march each year to the implosion of Climate Camp and the mysterious departure of Plane Stupid, energy for action based on somehow influencing governments to address climate issues (whether through direct action or otherwise) has evaporated.

The "decision" that was made in Durban, to definitely, definitely (scouts honour) do "something" by 2020, is not likely to inspire any revival. The bulk of the more radical elements of the movement seem to have gone AWOL since Copenhagen. It has been ironic that this year has seen the release of a film, 'Just Do It', documenting climate activism from the inside in the run up to the COP15, just as, in the most optimistic reading, climate activism has reached its lowest ebb.

Meanwhile in the real world things getting more dire by the minute. Despite a global recession carbon emissions have risen to their highest level ever, as has the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The world is presently on course to tread the path of the worst case scenarios climate simulators have imagined. However even these models do not include poorly understood potential feedback processes such as methane release from Arctic permafrost or the drying out of the Amazon rainforest – any of these could make this planet even more hostile to our species than the worst model predictions. From methane bubbling out of the Arctic ocean in ever increasing quantities to growing numbers of weather related disasters across the globe, the portents do not look good.

On the flip side of the coin, the thirst for hydrocarbons is straining systems of resource extraction to their limits. Oil prices spiked to record levels in 2009, after several years of flat production. The pressure this placed on the pyramid scheme that is the world financial system soon tipped large parts of the world into recession. Oil prices crashed as demand fell in the recession but two years later prices have risen again and the financial system is back on the brink. We now face a situation where just to maintain the present plateau of fossil fuel extraction requires an ever increasing portion of the world economy to be diverted into these extraction processes. This diversion of more and more resources means cutting other parts of the economy,



as it becomes ever harder to extract the worlds remaining fossil fuels.

Welcome to the world of extreme energy. While the tar sands of Alberta, Canada have long been the poster child for how far the system will go to feed its addiction, hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for shale gas is bringing these extreme extraction processes to the doorsteps of much greater numbers of people. The destruction of the sparsely inhabited forests of Canada may have only evoked token outrage but the sacrifice of areas much closer to major population centres is now being demanded. The desperate thirst for fossil fuels is driving the frenzy that is threatening the countryside and environments of some of the most affluent areas on the planet.

### YOU'VE MADE YOUR COAL BED, NOW LIE IN IT

Unfortunately shale gas is but the tip of the extreme energy iceberg (probably a melting iceberg. Coal bed methane, which is in many respects worse than shale gas, is well advanced in the UK. A new generation of much more powerful and dangerous nuclear power stations is now on the cards. An expansion in open cast coal mining has been underway for some time and looks set to metastasise into full blown mountain top removal.

However, these extreme energy methods pale into insignificance compared to underground coal gasification (UCG), the most extremely ludicrous extreme energy method that has been seriously considered to date. This involves setting fire to coal seams underground and piping the partially burned gases (mostly carbon monoxide) to the surface for combustion. Due to the wide range of toxic chemicals that are produced by the partial burning of the coal and the heat produced which drives convection in the water in the rocks above, UCG tests have usually resulted in massive contamination of ground water. A test that lasted 5 days by Cougar Energy in Australia resulted in benzene and toluene being found in the fat of animals grazing nearby, as well as in ground water. Also, the case of the accidental fire in underground coal workings under Centralia, Pennsylvania which has been burning out of control for almost 50 years and forced the abandonment of the town by the end of the 1980's should give people pause for thought.

While the local environmental impacts are horrific, the global consequences of UCG are even worse. Full scale development of UCG worldwide has the potential to quadruple the carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and raise average global temperatures by up to 10 degrees, which would render much of the globe uninhabitable. Burning all of the conventional fossil fuels we have already discovered is enough to cause catastrophic climate change by itself but plunging headlong into the world of extreme energy is entering into a whole other realm of insanity. So far 18 UCG licences have been issued around the UK, all for areas just off the coast. Admittedly this won't actually lead to tapwater being inflammable but might well turn the sea into a toxic soup. Attempts to exploit UCG in the UK will get started seriously some time in 2012.

CONTINUED ON BACKPAGE

## HEAVY WEATHER

...CONTINUED

In tandem with this drive towards extreme energy, a campaign of "extreme greenwash" has been rolled out aimed at justifying this insane course of action. The mainstay of this greenwash campaign for several years has been the hypothetical "technology" of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS). This "have your cake and eat it" propaganda tool is extremely useful in blunting the urgency of calls for emission cuts. Squeezing the genie back into the bottle is always difficult and in the real world CCS has failed to get a major test project going in the UK even with the government dangling a £1 billion grant as an incentive. But then its real usefulness is in its promise not its realization. Now, however, a new contender is rearing its head, geoengineering. Forget about trying to squeeze the carbon back into the ground when you can attack the root of the problem, the climate system itself. From constellations of mirrors in space to creating artificial volcanoes geoengineering is a grab bag of mad ideas to hack the climate. Like CCS it is unlikely to have much direct effect on the real world but as a psychological tool to support business as usual it will doubtless prove invaluable.

### FRACK TO THE FUTURE

Fighting against this bleak future is a much smaller, more divided and much less certain climate movement than existed a few years ago. A scattering of remnant groups from the heady years of 2008/2009 are still active but they are groping around in the dark looking for a new direction. The Climate Justice Collective, the direct successor to the Climate Camp national process, is bizarrely concentrating on the issue of "fuel poverty" (an odd category the Queen is in danger of slipping into) which the Tories are using as their justification to "drill baby, drill". Meanwhile most environmental direct action in the last year has been undertaken by a handful of small groups against extreme extraction targets, most recently under the banner of Frack Off.

While the issue of fracking and extreme energy in general, and the traction it is gaining in the public consciousness (witness the packed public meeting in the sleepy village of Balcombe on Wednesday), holds out some hope that a reinvigorated climate movement might yet rise from the ashes of the old, the problems that it faces are huge. Even if such a movement does take off it may be as doomed to failure as the last one; unless it can sidestep the temptation of becoming another establishment lobby, and instead concentrate on building a grassroots resistance to the present system of power politics.

### CLERMONT FERRAND IN FLAMES

Rioting hit the streets of Clermont-Ferrand, capital of the Auvergne region in France, this Tuesday (10th). Thirty vehicles went up in flames in just a single night as the local citizenry reacted to the maltreatment of Wissam El-Yamni, aged 30, who ended up in a coma after his arrest on New Year's Eve. He supposedly suffered a heart attack, however no plausible explanations have been offered as to the cause. All that is known is that he had no previous heart problems in his medical history and some very visible injuries on his neck. Wissam passed away on Monday (9th). Police pre-emptively filled the Gautherie area with more police in a bid to avoid more trouble. As one bystander reported to our Schnews team on the ground "Why would they fill the streets with more cops if they'd done nothing wrong? Of course they are guilty! They killed him!".

## FLYING SAUCERS

On Wednesday 21st December Brighton squatters fought off an eviction attempt carried out under orders from the Green led council.

The heavies arrived at the ungodly hour of 8am, but fortunately the squatters were ready for them. The metal Sitex sheets had been replaced on all the ground floor doors & windows, and barricades had been hastily prepared. The occupants had been on guard all night and the alarm was raised as the bailiffs waddled down the path.

Bailiffs brought up an angle grinder under a hail of crockery from first floor windows. They set about cutting through the metal Sitex door but before they could get very far a well aimed fire extinguisher dampened both their spirits and their generator. They then retreated back down the garden path and called the police.

Though a van and three car loads of coppers arrived they didn't fancy their chances of running the plate gauntlet and the eviction was called off. By the time the crockery had settled the building was held for both Christmas and New Year without further eviction attempts, breathing space that most occupants used to crack new accommodation.

The council clearly pushed eviction proceedings through – High Court Writs are rare and bailiffs were more than likely booked before the court date. Local paper, *The Anus*, knocked out several poorly written biased pieces of drivel (stay off our turf) about the squatters since they moved in at the end of November. The building had been empty for two years but plans for the first council housing in 30 years were put forward by the previous Tory council. Planning permission was granted in April but no work has been done and no contractor has even submitted a cost breakdown.

Politicians of all colours seem happy to blame the squatters, though quite how they can be responsible for 3 decades of no new social housing is anyone's guess. The simple reason the squatters have been targeted is because they inadvertently highlighted the council's inaction around housing.

The Greens appear to be in a hurry to shed any semblance of principles as they continue to refuse funding to homeless organisation that offer help to people who don't have a local connection – effectively cutting most homeless people off in the hope they'll move somewhere else. This policy has now forced St. Patrick's Night Shelter (the last shelter not to apply the criteria) to close down.

While the Green rhetoric may still be nice and fluffy the reality is very different. The clear message they are sending to the homeless is "piss off your not welcome here".

\*For more on the dishonest Greens' and the latest Brighton squat bollocks see the longer, even more rambling version of this article at [SchNEWS.org.uk](http://SchNEWS.org.uk)

### NOT IN MY FRACK YARD

The week saw two large public meetings on fracking – the process of hydraulic fracturing for shale gas, one on either side of the Pond. The first took place in the old steel town of Youngstown, Ohio - held on Tuesday in the wake of a magnitude 4.0 earthquake, the latest in a series of 11 over the last 12 months. The earthquakes are linked to an injection well disposing of fracking fluid (a mix of groundwater and industrial chemicals). The second took place in the sleepy, extremely affluent commuter belt village of Balcombe, in Sussex, just north of the Ouse Valley Viaduct on the London to Brighton railway line. Cuadrilla Resources, made infamous by their earthquake producing facilities in Lancashire, have planning permission to drill a test well south of the village. The process has been compared to setting off a small nuclear bomb underground. Needless to

say there are some ruffled feathers in well manicured lawns of this community.

The meeting was extremely well attended with no standing room let alone seats free, and began with a screening of the short film, 'Fracking Hell'. Two of Cuadrilla's most masochistic senior management, CEO Mark Miller and COO Eric Vaughan, turned up, along with their PR guru, Nick Sutcliffe – a Guildford Borough Councillor in his spare time, Sutcliffe (from PR company PPS Group, which is accused of writing fake letters and posing as students to help their clients secure planning permission). Cuadrilla were on the defensive from the outset and they repeatedly shot themselves in the foot throughout, until even their opponents found it painful to watch. Many concerns were raised – effects on water supplies in the area and the potential of earthquake damage to the 170 year old railway viaduct were top of the list. The meeting was mercifully brought to a close through lack of time with residents still keen to continue haranguing Cuadrilla. It's unlikely the Cuadrilla chiefs will be back any time soon. The real question is whether this outpouring of nimby rage can lead to anything more substantive. The road protests of the 90s are an example of a movement that had supporters from all walks of life. The fracking issue with its potentially large numbers of sites that can affect anyone in their path have similarities with the threat to the countryside in the 90s. The somewhat awkward and tentative interaction between local residents and activists in the Balcombe village hall on Wednesday, if built upon, has the same potential to produce such a broad based movement against the tidal wave of extreme energy processes that is bearing down on us. It will be interesting to see whether such alliances can be forged again under the present conditions. Cuadrilla and other such companies will certainly be hoping not.

See [SchNEWS.org.uk](http://SchNEWS.org.uk) for  
**NO OIL TAINING** - Shell to Sea  
keep on the pressure as woodland is  
cleared for gas pipeline.

### ...and finally...

The German public has reacted to President Christian Wulff's evasiveness after being caught threatening a journalist by coining a new verb 'to wulffen' – meaning to talk on and on unprompted.

Inspired by their world renowned sense of humour we thought we'd have a go...

**Blair** (vb) – scheme and arselick your way to the corridors of power in order to cream the most off for yourself. See also **Blair**.

**Brown** (vb) – spend a decade desperate for a job, but never have the balls to apply for it, before finally getting it handed to you on a plate and completely screwing it up.

**Clegg** (n) – a unpleasant dry clump found hanging from a Tory arsehole.

**Thatcher** (vb) – stomp on the working classes so effectively that by the time your finished there really is no such thing as society.

**May** (vb) – shrilly make outlandish claims about immigrants

**Obama** (vb) – To 'Hope' As in the sentence "I hope people don't see beyond empty slogans"

**Johnson** (n) – synonym for penis. See also **Cheney**

**Bush** (n) – another word for shrub

**Abbot** (vb) – to self-harm through social media

**Osbourne** (vb) – to sit in a multi-million pound mansion while reassuring everyone else that they're all in it together

**Cameron** (vb) – to do a Blair, but more overtly.

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, it's not as bad as it looks... it's much, much worse. 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](mailto:mail@schnews.org.uk) Web [www.schnews.org.uk](http://www.schnews.org.uk)