



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER DON'T CULL ME SURELY...

SchNEWS

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TB OR NOT TB?

AS BADGER CULL LOOMS – SCHNEWS ASKS WHAT ARE THE REAL CAUSES OF BOVINE TB?

Last year's badger cull was successfully brought to a halt before a single shot had been fired. A combination of public pressure and the threat of direct action carried the day. Now the bell has rung for round two as Tory environment minister (and bloodsports enthusiast) Owen Paterson has announced that another attempt at a cull will go ahead this June.

Opposition will no doubt be as determined as before and the opening shots will be fired on the 27th of February as protests will be held outside the National Farmers Union (NFU) Conference. The NFU have consistently been the strongest advocates for a cull.

The National Farmers Union is a lobbyist group for large agricultural corporations with aims that benefit them, rather than that of animal welfare and independent farmers - they have strong political ties and lobbying power.

The first talk on the opening day of the conference is called 'Farming and Politics' and will in most part be a discussion about the badger cull.

Of course the publicly announced purpose of the cull is to try and eradicate bovine TB. So far the war of words has revolved around the extent to which badgers even contribute to Bovine TB. All seem to agree on the need to control the disease. Unfortunately the nature of the industry the cull is supposed to protect, the production of the UK's milk supply hasn't really been scrutinised.

Bovine TB is mostly considered to be a problem in the country's dairy rather than its beef herd. To answer why, it's necessary to take a step back and consider how our food ends up on the table in the first place.

Sixty years ago the techniques of industrial production began to be applied in a co-ordinated manner to agriculture. At the time this was referred to as the 'Green Revolution' and was part and parcel of the idea that the application of science was about to deliver an eternity of plenty.

UDDER DISGRACE.

One of the strangest products of this process was the modern dairy cow. Up until the 19th

Century there was little difference between the dairy and the beef cow; both were fearsome beasts - horned and wild. In order to get cattle into city dairies, intensive breeding for the polled mutation or hornlessness gradually led to a narrowing of the gene pool. But it wasn't until the 1950s that scientists at the ministry of Agriculture, fisheries and food (MAFF) developed a national strategy of breeding for specific traits in dairy cows and the milk they produced.

At that time around a dozen bulls were selected for the tendency to throw calves that were good milkers. In a real mark of the industrialisation of the process they didn't mate with any actual cows. They were kept in concrete sheds, sprayed with cow oestrogen and masturbated to produce sperm. The semen was (and is) taken, frozen and split into thousands of straws - each containing enough ejaculate to sire a cow through artificial insemination.

GENE GENIE

These carefully monitored lines of descent have been repeatedly cross bred into each other to produce herds of near genetically identical animals - real hothouse flowers. This process is set to advance with the introduction of embryo transfer where less 'genetically desirable' female cows are used as surrogate mothers for the artificially induced offspring of their more productive siblings. UK dairy cows now produce an average of 22 litres of milk a day - double the amount of forty years ago. A host of veterinary problems are associated with the distorted shape these animals have been bred into such as mastitis, lameness and infertility.

Male dairy cattle arguably have it worse - of course the vast majority of them are simply surplus to requirements - they form the basis of the trade in veal calves. Those that survive to breed are rightly regarded as extremely dangerous and are kept isolated inside concrete enclosures until their useful lifespan is over.

In the normal course of evolution parasite and host co-evolve, but the evolution of the dairy cow in the last 50 years has been anything but normal. It has been driven



solely by the need to increase milk yields - a process intensified by dairy farmers need to drive down costs to make a living from the prices offered by the big supermarket chains - the largest purchasers and redistributors of milk.

The result has been a dairy herd with virtually no natural immunity.

PINT OF CONTENTION

So, to TB itself. Originally most human cases of tuberculosis came from drinking infected cows milk. This came to an end with the introduction of pasteurisation and TB from milk consumption is no longer a threat to public health.

Despite this the state still runs a £100m per year campaign to compulsorily slaughter any herd which contains 'TB Reactors'. A TB reactor could be a cow with bovine TB or due to the nature of the tests it could be an animal with some vestige of natural immunity. The compulsory slaughter programme means a further genetic bottleneck and the result is the total suppression of any natural defences against Bovine TB.

But why slaughter at all? Why not vaccinate against the disease? The answer is seemingly the need to preserve the export market for cattle as the EU currently maintains a ban on TB vaccination in cattle - although this is valued at far less than even the cost of the cattle slaughter policy let alone the potential financial costs of the national badger cull.

With the farming industry refusing to set its own house in order they badly need a scapegoat - Badgers are set to be sacrificed yet again when it is the UK dairy industry that needs to set its house in order. Last year public disgust and the threat of direct action was enough to cancel the cull.

Back to the fields!!

SchNEWS Benefit Roast
Another Fundraising Sunday Vegan Roast for Brighton's direct action collective.
 Activist, anti-corporate and international news, all to be served up with nut roast, roast potatoes, mash potatoes, a medley of other vegetables - and oodles of gravy. And only a fiver...!
Venue: Brighton's premier anarchist theme pub, The Cowley Club (where else!), 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA
Time: 2pm to 6pm

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

COOMBE HAVEN EVICTION

It took three days and a huge security operation to evict the last of the three camps on the route of the Bexhill bypass this week. The eviction had been delayed by over a week because of the snow. Campers used the extra time to build more defences including a tunnel, barricades and more nets in the trees.

Everything pointed toward the eviction starting on Monday so Sunday saw hordes of people arrive from all round the country. This included the Chief Executives of Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Wildlife Trust and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England. Around 40 people stayed (none of the Chief Executives alas) overnight to greet the Shergroup bailiffs in the morning.

The bailiffs did indeed arrive on Monday and spent the whole day at ground level. They set up fencing, cleared protestors from the site and then had to cut five people out of lock-ons, as well as investigate and fill in the flooded tunnel.

The weather got really wet and windy overnight. Some of the people in the trees had no shelter. The weather didn't improve in the morning so some people were pretty glad the climbing bailiffs started evicting nets, walkways and the concrete lock-ons in treehouses. Quite few people agreed to be taken down, which meant they weren't arrested even though it took just as long for the climbers.

At the end of the day, there were still two treehouses and 5 protestors left for another night. Supporters tried to deliver food, water and blankets but the bailiffs were employing siege tactics and refused to allow any assistance in at all. Protesters had to suffer the cold conditions with limited supplies. Some supplies managed to get through eventually but more because of the general overweightness and age of the security guards rather than their goodwill and kindness.

On Wednesday, the climbers had another lock-on to deal with before they could get to someone hanging from a rope between the tops of two trees and some others climbing high in the trees. At about 1pm the last protestor was evicted and then the chainsaws moved in immediately to fell all the trees, including 200 year old oaks.

One of the tree dwellers told Schnews: 'This eviction, along with all the other resistance, has really shown what strong opposition there is to this road, and increased the cost of building it. The passion and determination of so many people made this a long and expensive eviction of a very small area. It's gutting to see this woodland destroyed but the campaign has plenty more energy and ideas yet.'

Another protestor said 'More roads mean more road protests!'

This battle may have been lost but the war has only just begun...

CALAIS COPS TO COP IT?

Police persecution of migrants in Calais has featured on these pages nearly as often as bourbons feature in the SchNEWS office, but recent political developments following the presentation of Calais Migrant Solidarity documentation and footage could herald a bit of a turning point.

CMS have been collecting evidence against the cops for years. Last year the material was collated and the resulting correspondence co-signed by many other migrant and human rights associations. It was sent to the 'Defender of Rights', the French equivalent of a Human Rights Ombudsman, who undertook an investigation into policing tactics in the migration hotspot and has produced a highly critical report of police activity. Now the Ministry of the Interior (like the Home Office) is working to a three month deadline to explain how its going to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Picking up on the sort of harassment which has taken place on the border town's streets week in, week out, over the last decade or two, the report highlights police abuse such as: Repeated arrests of the same person in short spaces of time, arrests made with no realistic chance of an outcome which amount to unjustified harassment, continuous and repeated raiding of living spaces, ID checks and harassment occurring at the supposedly safe spaces of humanitarian assistance like food distribution, and destruction of personal belongings and stuff given out by humanitarian organisations.

Particularly embarrassing for the pigs are the videos. For example this one, showing police vans driving into living areas with lights flashing and African music blaring in the middle of the night to intimidate sleepers. Incredibly, police spokespeople have tried to mutter their way out of it with statements like "The officers were trying to have a moment of joviality with the migrants", and "Some of our officers may like African music, but obviously this was inappropriate."

Whether or not there's a wholesale change for the police - and anyone who's witnessed the racist, violent police culture in Calais is probably thinking there's more likelihood they'll just sprout wings and fly - the issue has got the coverage in media and amongst politicians where before there was radio silence. On the ground the cops are trying to behave themselves - in public at least. Continuing the trend of the last few months, they're conducting more small scale evictions of squats and less raids. Although the topic's being talked about, the reality on the ground for homeless sans papiers is as hard as it always has been.

* <http://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/>

WRI BITE THE BULLET

War Resisters International held a demonstration outside Revenue & Customs headquarters in Westminster on Thursday (17th). It was a funny sort of demo: After withholding PAYE taxes since 2007 in protest against the government's military policies, the WRI activists were being forced to cough up by the tax office.

Deciding that if you're going to be threatened into paying your share of the bomb bill, you may as well do it with a bang, the anti-war mongers insisted on paying up in person and staging a demo outside at the same time.

At around half past two, around ten people congregated outside the HQ with banners and placards stating "FUND WELFARE, NOT WARFARE", "WAR TAXES PAID UNDER PROTEST" and "NO TAXES FOR WAR". At the same time a few other demonstrators went into HMRC to pay the war taxes they have withheld for the last five years under protest.

The protesters managed to gain entry into the ground floor reception but could go no further as they were stopped by security. Typical of the tax office, nothing is easy, and the protesters were informed both that the police were on their way, and that they had to go to a different branch of the HMRC in Euston (would they call the cops there too?). The demo ended a couple of hours after it started.

SchNEWS spoke to Javier, a spokesperson from the WRI group, who nodded to the fact that the scale wasn't up to what he'd have like: "It was an emergency action and we only had 3 days to organise it, so considering that I feel the outcome and support network was good but it could have been much better with more time."

So it was a small demo, but it sure ain't a small issue. How much of yer tax money goes on the military? According to a handy online app (at [www.wheredoesmymoneygo.org](http://wheredoesmymoneygo.org)), which wouldn't let us choose lower than 10 grand a year (so unfortunately is not representative of many SchNEWS readers and writers), on even that sort of slave wage 68p a day goes on defence. Over a year that's just about £250. If you earn the average of £26,500 that's about £630 a year on the bombs and bullets.

For news and updates from War Resisters International network go to www.wri-irg.org

...and finally...

Ever heard of Supreme Master Hai? If you've ever gorged yourself senseless on vegan fake meat at the Loving Hut cafe then chances are you have - she's their spiritual and temporal leader with a permanent slot on "Supreme Master TV" - so unswitch-over-able that it's the only station you'll ever see a Loving Hut telly tuned in to.

Unsurprisingly for a religious cult her messages of peace and harmony are mixed up with a particularly bizarre set of beliefs - life on the planet Venus, the Pyramids are UFO lighthouses, and the usual cosmic silly-bollocks you come to expect from weirdo cults such as the Hari-Krishnas, Scientologists, Mormons, Catholics, Apple Mac Evangelicals and Pentecostals.

Amongst Supreme Master Hai's teachings is the promotion of breatharianism- the new age belief that the truly enlightened can survive on nothing but pure air and the spiritual energy of the universe. This is a pretty counterproductive philosophy for the owner of over 200 fast food outlets; you'd have thought that she'd have kept schtum. Hear her in her own words (at www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvILftuOrd8), it'll leave you breathless...

More tasty vegan cultish dishes on the menu at <http://skepticalvegan.com>.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, the only thing that should be black and white but re(a)d all over is yer SchNEWS, not badgers. Honest.

269 - BRAND LOYALTY QUESTIONS?

As far as demos go, it would have been a dramatic one. At least until the *Daily Mail* pissed over it with a sensationalist story on "the horror of 'human branding' coming to Britain".

Last October animal rights activists in Israel pulled a painful stunt. They publicly used a red-hot iron to brand each other with the numbers 269 - the significance of the number being the branding on one calf featured in footage of a slaughterhouse. Chained to metal railings, volunteers had the numbers burned onto them to show the suffering and torture inflicted on animals in the meat trade.

The stunt attracted the attention of hardcore activists in other countries and similar '269' actions were set to take place in London, Leeds,

Washington DC, Buenos Aires and Prague. But the London one at least has been put on hold after the *Daily Mail* ran a story personally attacking a participant and causing her to back out. She'd felt the backlash of the singeing criticism in her personal and professional life and, understandably, couldn't hack the notoriety.

The '269' meme isn't limited to public branding demonstrations. Vegans the world over chose to tattoo the number on themselves as part of World Vegan Day 2012 in November, as political statement and personal protest.

Footage of the original Israel demo organised by the people behind 269life.com can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA4q1pU957c

That's gotta hurt - but each to their own...

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