



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER BADLY PHOTOCOPIED

SchNEWS

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SALE OF THE CENTURY

If you've been getting all hot under the collar recently waiting for your passport, who have you been pointing the finger of blame at? The government? The new childs passport? Initial teething problems of a new computer system? Perhaps you jumped on the Telegraph bandwagon and blamed the Millennium Bug? Or nodded in agreement with the Times that it is the "culture of mismanagement...that is still ingrained in parts of the public sector." No-one it seems wants to face facts and shake an accusatory digit at big business for making such a monumental cock-up of the passport system.

Welcome to the world of the **Private Finance Initiative (PFI)**.

Siemens Business Systems were given the £120m contract to install the passport department's new computer system under the little publicised Initiative, which is essentially privatisation by the back door. The scheme was hatched by the Tories and has - oh, *surprise* - been taken up rather enthusiastically by New Labour. Schools, hospitals, the fire service, you name it, are being touched by the hand of big business (see SchNews 210).

Siemens managed to get the passport contract by promising to make the system: **cheaper** - sacking staff to reduce costs, they've now had to re-employ more people to sort out the backlog; **faster** - waiting time at the two offices with Siemens new system has more than doubled. And more **secure** - in desperation at the backlog 'security procedures' have now been relaxed.

As that blatant anarchist kill-joy publication Computer Weekly pointed out, Siemens' "reducing staff in anticipation of a new system's introduction is madness." But if you think that's bad check out the Immigration and Nationality Department, which makes the Passport Agency look efficient. Here some of the world's most vulnerable people fleeing repression and torture are forced to wait for up to six years for a decision on whether they can stay. In fact things have got so bad at the immigration offices in Croydon that a roomful of unopened letters has started to rot, and staff can no longer even enter the room due to health risks!

But don't panic it's Siemens to the rescue, who have missed both their deadlines, sacked

staff and made refugees wait even longer. But they still made a mint from the 'efficiency gains' they hadn't even made, because they get paid for reducing costs, not improving the service. Nice little earner, this one: the more people you sack and the more chaotic the system becomes, the more you get paid.

Meanwhile over at the National Health Service, that well-known revolutionary organ the British Medical Journal, called the PFI "perfidious financial idiocy that could destroy the NHS." Clearly they haven't understood that the whole point of the PFI is that it allows corporate fatcats to get their claws on some of the last bits of the country they don't already own.

Nearly all the new hospitals being built are funded under the PFI, which means the NHS doesn't get to choose where they will be built, but has to pick up the bill later anyway. And as the 'miracle' of private finance is involved, the treasury doesn't give 'em any more cash to pay, which means... yep, cutting beds, sacking staff and closing hospitals. One PFI scheme alone, at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, will mean 900 medical staff getting sacked.

So if you've been fingering your collar in queued annoyance waiting for your passport, are holed up in some dodgy refugee detention centre, or waiting for an operation, don't jump on the Tory Blair bandwagon and blame the public sector for its 'lack of modernisation and reaction to change'.

WELCOME TO THE PFI EVERY-THING MUST GO SALE

The basic idea of the PFI is that business stumps up the cash to pay for big capital projects like building a new hospital, then lease it back to the local health authority over a period of time. This saves the tax-payer money. Simple. Except it doesn't, because unfortunately PFI schemes require interest payments some 5% above the rate the Treasury would pay if it borrowed directly. This means for every £1 billion of PFI contracts there is an extra cost to the public sector of £50 million per year.

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CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For handing out leaflets! Two people were dishing the dirt in the St.Helen's branch of NatWest Bank, letting customers know about the banks £24.5 million loan to vivisection experts Huntingdon Life Sciences. The two were held overnight and charged with the well known 1361 Justices of the Peace Act (an act so old it actually predates parliament!).

RING OF ROSES

Have you heard the one about the evidence gatherer that forgot to gather any evidence? Or maybe the one about the Ring-of-Steel being replaced by a Ring-of-Roses? The City of London Police have.

In a vain attempt to redeem their sorry little arses for the mass protests that happened on June 18th, the police attempted, to get their grubby mitts on all journalists notes and footage of the day, a right they thought they had under the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act. But The Old Bailey this week said "Oi, No! You had 9 months to sort out a decent surveillance operation, and polish up the steel. Leave it out." The media world feared they would be seen as agents of the police.

21 people have been arrested so far, all for violent disorder. Yet it was the police who showed themselves as 'violent' and 'disordered'. The girl who was run over by the police van has only just come out of hospital where her condition was diagnosed as 'critical'.

One person still inside since the day is due in the City of London Magistrates court this Friday. CeeJay (Charles McBride) is being held in Feltham young offenders. If you saw him arrested about 2:15pm on the corner of London Wall and Moorgate (sorry, no description of CeeJay) ring London Defence Monitoring Group 0171 837 7557. Letters of support to Charles McBride DC8504, HMYOI Feltham Bedford Rd Middlesex, TW13 4ND.

If you want to see a copy of June 18th video send £5 + SAE to Undercurrents, 16b Cherwell St., Oxford, OX4 1BG

There will be a defendants only meeting for those nicked on J18 on Sat. 24th July 2 pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London (Holborn tube)

* SchNews has been leaked some interesting internal email memos sent to workers at Natwest. They mention "nuisance calls...we are unfortunately not able to stop these calls coming in, but should you receive such a call, just hang up the phone". They then talk about the "day of action against the financial services sector planned for Friday 18 June. A number of demonstrations and disruptive actions are anticipated...we all need to be vigilant..Threats could manifest themselves in many ways, the most likely being denial of service, virus infection and attempted vandalism of web sites." We hope this warns the cockles of our readers, that corporations do take our threats more seriously than they often care to let on.

DOCK ON

This is a shout to all SchNEWS readers to be glued to a TV this Sunday (11th) to watch 'The Dockers' Channel 4 8pm. The drama was co-written by 14 of the former sacked Liverpool dock workers, Jimmy McGovern of 'Brookside' and 'Cracker' fame and Trainspotting's Irvine Welsh. As you would expect it's all about their 28 month epic dispute against low-pay and casualisation.

SchNEWS finds it rather ironic that the dockers are now getting more press about Sunday's drama than they ever did during the dispute. As one sacked docker told SchNEWS this week "We're like dead artists, once they've killed you off, people realise what they've lost!"

Not that the dockers have been idle since the end of the dispute. They've been busy trying to sort out decent training, life long learning and employment opportunities for local people, setting up a workers co-operative *Liverpool Dockers and Stevedores Ltd, Transneeds*, and *The Waterfront Trust*. And they've established the Initiative Factory to bring these and the other myriad of projects to life. With a mission statement like "Work can be, and should be, creative; it should illuminate a life and not dampen it; seen as a liberating and not an incarcerating force; and should release the potential of individuals" the message and actions from the dockers is as relevant as ever. Respect. Initiative Factory, 29 Hope St., Liverpool 1 Tel 0151 207 9111

SISTERS OF MERCY

Workers across the world are fighting back against bosses and governments for better pay and conditions. For sheer numbers, check out what's happening in Canada. More than 47,000 nurses in Quebec have been striking for nearly two weeks, demanding a wage increase and an improvement to their stressful working conditions.

This despite the Quebec government, having extraordinary powers to deal with "illegal" strikes. They've threatened the nurses with fines, the loss of one year of seniority for every day on strike, and the loss of two days pay for each day on the picket line.

Despite this the strike is holding strong and the nurses have widespread support. During the day in Montreal, nurses' picket lines outside major hospitals are supported almost continuously by passers-by with honking car horns and bike bells. And according to the Order of Nurses, not one complaint has been received from patients.

GET KETTED OUT

It's the summer of 1549 and a time of uprisings by the dispossessed rural peasantry. Enclosure of common land was leading to starvation, begging was met with whippin', hangin' & mutilation and any help from the Church was forcefully put down. Robert Kett, a landowner seeing the injustice of what was happening to the common folk became leader of a 20,000 strong army, tearing down fences, filling in ditches and returning the land to common ownership. The area was run equitably from under an oak tree in Wymondham for 2 months, and the worst landowners were locked up before defeat by mainly foreign mercenaries at Norwich.

450 years on and this Saturday (10) The Land Is Ours is organising an occupation against the fight against enclosure of public space. Privatisation has seen closures & developments grow drastically in number, local councils selling allotments, schools selling playing fields and access to the countryside denied by Forestry Commission & landowners. Meet 12 noon, Haymarket, Norwich. Bring yer camping gear, instruments, pitchforks, etc. Contact 01603 484412 *Ketts celebration info
www.paston.co.uk/commonlot/links.htm

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SCHNEWS IN BRIEF

Quote of the Month "I can proudly say that on my farm, that employs not only all my family, but also four outside workers, there are no badgers, no rabbits, no mice, no snakes, no lizards, no rodents, and if I could stop the birds flying over I would. My farm produces food, not fluffy little animals. I am a farmer not a zoo keeper"... Letter to the North Devon Journal from C Roberts, Black Torrington

** Last Friday, two asylum seekers detained in Campsfield Detention Centre decided to give them selves permanent admission to the UK, via a back window in the detention centre. One Russian and one Kosovan, scaled a 18 foot high fence, topped with 3 coils of barbed wire and disappeared into the country-side! ****The Heckler** is a splendid new free newsletter from south east London, mixing anarcho politics with real life and a good sense of humour. Urban survival hints and no pompous critiques of dead intellectuals. So get it. Send stamps and/or donation to Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE84WX Tel 0171 358 1854**

Defend Public Services Conference 11am-4pm Sat 10th July Mechanics Institute, Princes St Manchester, six sacked Tameside care workers opposing privatisation, cheap labour, casualisation, corruption, sleaze and all forms of prejudice have invited speakers from trade unions and various care services to assist them in their fight to defend a decent public care service £3/1 Contact Tel:01618618390****Brighton Urban Design & Development (BUDD)** spearheading opposition to supermarket development on Brighton station site. Meetings every Thurs 7pm; 01273 681166/389279 for venue details. Also BUDD Picnic, 1pm July 18 @ Harvest Forestry. Bring food & drink** Support the **Portsmouth Three** demo 19th July 1pm Portsmouth Crown Court, Winston Churchill Ave: 3 sabs on conspiracy charges for mass sab on notoriously violent hunt****Anti-Live Exports** March and Rally: Sat July 17. 11 am, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park****National Anti-vivisection** demo against Harlan UK & Astra Chamwood, Loughborough 25th July 12noon & every Wednesday tel:01162366450**

July is **Gene-Free** month including a Stop the Crop National Rally & GM site visit 18th July 2pm Model Farm nr Watlington 12miles S of Oxford, for details of more actions tel:01813749516 ** There's a **Genetically Engineered Free Forests** Action July 14 Oxford, meet 9.30am meet in front of University of Oxford National History Museum Parks Road. T e l : 0 1 7 1 - 5 6 1 - 9 1 4 6

m a i l t o : G E F F c o a l i t i o n @ h o t m a i l . c o m
GEFFcoalition@hotmail.com. And while you're about it, **Smash Genetic Engineering**, meet 12 noon sat 31st July, bring transport w/ full tank of petrol, road map, flags, costumes & disguises. More precise details from the 24th onwards tel:0708 191858****WHAGA** Open Day all day Sat July 10th at Whitehawk Hill Allotments, with free food, bouncy castle and kids entertainment, and loadsa fun and games inc.** The **'Les Tanneries'** social squatted centre in Dijon, France needs you! The former slaughterhouse had stood empty for five years before it was turned into a squatted social centre for the past couple of years. Now the local council want to evict and knock the whole area down - not that they've got any plans to replace the site with. There's a letter of protest to be sent to the local mayor on their web-site www.ville-dijon.fr/contact/index**

Traffic Roundabout and a sound system** Also on Saturday **Kemp Town Carnival**, starting at midday, procession of floats leaving the gala bingo hall at 1pm and then wandering round ending up at the NHS Trust buildings... see ya there!**

** We thought you like to know that one of the nets premiere on-line casinos is **giving away \$50.00**. Checkout www.worldcasino.com**www.ville-dijon.fr/contact/index** Please only send e-news to <mailto:schnews@brighton.co.uk> schnews@brighton.co.uk, not to the webmaster he's going spare!

Target Tarmac Big Day Out

17th July, will kick off somewhere in the Midlands & be a big chance to take action against Tarmac's trouncing of our green & pleasant land. Tarmac is the main exponent of corporate greenwash bullshit tactics, placing ads in the nationals advising companies to green themselves for the 21st Century & even running courses on how to pull the green wool over our collective eyes... But we know the dirty truth beneath the slick PR machine. Luckily we're not as stupid as they think... They helped to destroy Twyford Down, they provided the roadstone to the Newbury by-pass, they're trying to bulldoze through what remains of Sherwood Forest, etc. Tel:07971755823

* There's a Critical Mass bike ride this Sunday (11th) Meet George Green, Wanstead, E11 (near Wanstead tube), 3pm, for a ride on the M11 Link Road for the last time before it turns into a rat run. The M11 Link Road destroyed more than 1,000 homes and already a new Tesco hypermarket, an Asda/Wal-Mart hypermarket, and a 1,000 Millennium Dome car park are planned for the area. Contact STORM 0181 527 9857

THE NATIONAL TRAVESTY

Protesters who have been living in tree houses in the National Trust owned Arthur's Wood since last summer, occupied the Trust HQ in London on Wednesday. The woodland is situated adjacent to Manchester Airport's controversial Runway 2 and the airport authority want to chop down the trees because they reckon they will block radar signals. The Trust granted a license to the Airport to fell the woods and to evict the campaigners in direct contravention to the Trust Act of 1907 which states 'They shall by all lawful means prevent resist and abate all enclosures and encroachments upon and all attempts to enclose or encroach upon such property or any part thereof...'. Obviously this decision has nothing to do with the fact that the Airport is a sponsor of nearby Quarry bank Mill, owned by the National Trust, and apparently used to host conferences for the airport, AMEC and Tarmac.

The protester's recent appeal in the Lords was rejected so eviction could be anytime. The good news is that Wednesdays occupation has resulted in the Trust agreeing to talk with the protesters. And Manchester Airport have had to pull out of their plans to build a massive staff car park on Green Belt land after it was called in for a public inquiry due to the large number of protests. Contact Tel:0161 225 4863/0961-517324

...and finally...

Carry On Indulging, everybody: Chocolate Is Good For You- Official. It's rich in many beneficial compounds and minerals, is packed with antioxidants which may reduce the risk of cancer, and as for obesity from scoffing all that luvverly gak- well, there's just no link. Dentists have the cheek to blame it for tooth decay, but that's bollocks too. Not only that, but it also increases athletic performance and improves driving skills. It must be true, cos it says so in a new book, 'Chocolate and Cocoa: Health and Nutrition', from no less an authority than the International Cocoa Research and Education Foundation. "We're just interested in established facts" said Eduard Kouame, one of the book's sponsors. "Researchers are discovering new information about this cherished treat." SchNEWS scorns all readers who may be moved to cynicism by the fact that the authors are employed by Mars and Nestle. Why should that have to mean they're just interested in flogging more Snickers? Unfortunately, Dr Carol King, president of ICREF, lets the side down a bit by mentioning that the Asian market is still 'largely untapped' and that the book might help, er, increase... sales. Oh dear. Time to stop gobbling that sexy Flake and pick up the gun...

disclaimer.. SchNEWS warns all readers to get someone else to put up their PFI wardrobes!