



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER NOT LYING ARCH

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AGGRO-CHEMICALS

It was around midnight the 2nd December 1984, when a poisonous gas cloud enveloped the hundreds of shanties and huts surrounding a pesticide plant in the central Indian city of Bhopal. As the deadly cloud slowly drifted in the cool night air, sleeping residents awoke, coughing, choking, and rubbing painfully stinging eyes. By the time the gas cleared at dawn, thousands were dead and injured; ranking it alongside Chernobyl as the world's worst industrial disaster, or as one commentator put it "the Hiroshima of the Chemical industry."

The deadly gas had leaked from the nearby Union Carbide factory, built in Bhopal in 1969 to produce pesticides as part of India's Green Revolution, which promised to increase the productivity of crops and feed the country's poor - but once again only fed the profits of the multinationals.

It could have been any poor country desperate to attract multinationals at any cost. As Jamie Cassels, author of 'Lessons From Bhopal', wrote: "Developing countries confer upon multi-national corporation's a competitive advantage because they offer low-cost labor, access to markets, and lower operating costs. Once there, companies have little incentive to minimize environmental and human risks. Lax environmental and safety regulation, inadequate capital investment in safety equipment, and poor communications between companies and governments compound the problem."

Carbide's safety standards at the Bhopal plant were well below those of a near-identical factory it owned in West Virginia, USA. In fact, safety standards had been deteriorating and ignored for years. Even a report by the company's own US safety team commented on "a serious potential for sizeable releases of toxic materials...due to equipment failure, operating problems or maintenance problems"

But it's not just the company that should shoulder the blame. What little environmental laws there were, were ignored by the state of Madhya Pradesh and an Indian government afraid of frightening off big business.

When the victims protested, their cries were often met with violence. Thousands were arrested, some on trumped up charges such as attempted murder or violation of the Official Secrets Act. One health clinic was raided, with

police confiscating medical records and arresting six volunteer doctors. After 15 years most victims remain uncompensated. Meanwhile, according to 'The Lancet', victims suffering from serious health problems are being misdiagnosed or ignored by local doctors, while Union Carbide claim the pesticide is merely a "mild throat and ear irritant"!

The disaster gave rise to the world's largest lawsuit that dragged on for more than seven years. In the end the company received a slap on the wrist fine of just \$470 million showing just whose interests the Indian government really serve.

WE ALL LIVE IN BHOPAL

As one Bhopal activist put it "Bhopal is not something unfortunate that is only happening to the people of a central Indian city. It is happening everywhere around the world. The routine poisoning of living systems that accompanies the storage, transport, production, consumption and waste treatment of hazardous chemicals are part of our industrial society. The silent and slow Bhopals that are happening in everyday life often go unnoticed and are seldom resisted."

Bhopal has become a symbol of the way corporations treat humans and the environment. Or as author Ward Churchill puts it: "Union Carbide's success in avoiding prosecution underscores the present reality that transnational companies are lawless monsters roaming the earth."

In 1992 the official death toll for Bhopal stood at over 4,000. However, according to one senior UNICEF official it could have been as high as 10,000. In addition, 30,000 to 40,000 people were maimed and seriously injured, and 200,000 were otherwise affected through minor injury, death of a family member, and economic and social dislocation.

* Greenpeace's ship the 'Rainbow Warrior' is currently on a two-year "toxic free Asia" tour and will be visiting India next month to highlight the plight of the victims of Bhopal disaster. * This year Dow Chemicals bought Union Carbide for £7.2 billion to create the world's second largest chemicals producer. * A report published by the National Toxic Campaign and the International Council on Public Affairs, showed that even after the disaster Car-

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For spreading peace and love.

Two girls in Canterbury who'd cheered up locals for ages by chalking 'fluffy' directives around town urging folks to 'choose love', 'just be' and 'listen to the colour of your dreams' found themselves being forced to 'choose law' by the unamused, spiky hands of the local Plods who, as always, find it easy to 'just be' misanthropic, humourless tossers. Backing the cops up were the local McDonalds, who supplied brushes and water so the girls could be forced to scrub off their positive vibes. To add insult to injury, local rag 'The Kent Messenger' printed up mug shots of the girls three days after the event with the caption 'Have You Seen These Men?'...

bide continued to be "a major discharger of toxic substances into the environment, and a major generator of hazardous waste". In 1988, the company generated more than 300 million pounds of such waste - an increase of 70 million compared with 1987" **recommended reading** Ward Morehouse and Arun Subramaniam 'The Bhopal Tragedy' and 'Abuse of Power'

BRIEF ENCOUNTER

Marks and Sparks were caught with their trousers down at the opening of their new Manchester store on Thursday by Super-heroes armed with the biggest pair of pants in the city- and we don't mean the Gallaghers. The Underwear Ubermenschen* unfurled a four-metre pair of shreds and then attempted to pull down all the tasteful trolleys on display in the store. "Y, Ob Y, **Our** Y-fronts?" panted perplexed employees, before cottoning on after a briefing from the heroes, who included SuperPants and Captain Y-Fronts. For they were from 'Superheroes Against GM Pants', sniffing out stains in M&S's 'organic' gusset: the use of genetically-modified cotton in their otherwise graceful grits**. "GM cotton is undiesirable for superheroes and the public alike. It's below the belt and should be removed without delay" said a spokesperson. "McS have taken many steps to take GM out of their food and animal feed, but this policy is inconsistent if they continue to sell GM cotton."

Don't get yer knickers in a twist, but GM cotton is the product of SchNEWS faves Monsanto and is bred to be herbicide and pest resistant. It has all the inherent risks of gene transfer and increased pesticide usage of other GM crops- and it does nothing to prevent skidmarks, either.

Watch for further actions! More info:0161 224 4846 **SchNews vocab watch:** * Supermen. Honest. Ask Nietzsche ** Pants. Honest. Ask Viz

POWER ADDICTS

"A clique of the richest, economically and politically most powerful and influential men in the Western world [who] meet secretly to plan events that later appear just to happen"-
The Times

Heard all about the 'leaked' minutes from the last meeting of conspiracy-faves the Bilderberg Group? How Russia was given carte blanche to bomb Chechnya, and all the rest? Well you can read the leaked documents IN FULL on the SchNEWS website (Most of the 'surfers' visiting our site since we put the Bilderberg thing on it have been US security agencies and multi-national companies. True!)

POWER DRUNKS

Ever wondered how you get to be a Bilderberger? Well, there's a kindergarten where you'll learn all you need to know. The British American Project for the Successor Generation (BAP) was set up by Ronnie Reagan, Rupert Murdoch and Sir James Goldsmith in 1985 for the elite of up 'n' coming thirtysomethings from both sides of the Atlantic to be nurtured in the 'special relationship' existing between the two nations. Past members Peter Mandelson and George Robertson have both recently spoken at Bilderberg. BAP has just held its 14th annual shindig (described by ex-member Jeremy Paxman as 'four days of beer') in Harrogate, with this year's theme 'Making Culture Count'. No Tracy Emin here, of course, just Saatchi & Saatchi execs and the like discussing art's role in the global marketplace and in the words of Alison Holmes, chair of the executive committee: *"It's all been quite mad, sorting out the world's problems and drinking too much"*. Quite. BAP emerged in response to worries about the anti-nuke, anti-American drift of the Labour Party in the early '80's and the current co-ordinator is all-round bad egg Lord Carrington, ex-NATO chief and chair of the Bilderbergers for 9 years. Sounds dodgy? Never! As Alison Holmes told a Big Issue journalist: *"Bilderwhat? I've never heard of that in all my life."*

BLAIR WITCH

Cherie Blair went hungry last week after students from the Non Payment Campaign occupied the restaurant at Sussex Uni and cancelled the Chancellor's Society Banquet where Cherie was booked to give a speech. The Uni Chancellor, Lord 'Dickie' Attenborough, displaying shock and horror when told of the Uni administration's coercive tactics towards non-payers, sympathised with the occupiers and expressed support for the cause of Free Education. Despite this 'understanding', the Uni administration is still threatening criminal and disciplinary proceedings against students: there are now 50 refusing or unable to pay the £1025 tuition fees at Sussex.

This action was inspired by the recent occupation at Oxford Uni where buildings were occupied by 200 students from 12th-16th Nov. Their demands were similar to those at Sussex, including an end to the 'residency' requirements which prevents those who have not paid from obtaining their degrees, an end to fee collection by the university and no penalisation of non payers. They encourage others to organise similar action in support of the students everywhere who cannot or will not pay their fees so they can build up the momentum and spread the campaign in the run up to the NUS Demonstration on the 25th. Info: Campaign for Free Education PO Box 22615, London N4 1WT. / Tel: 0958 556 756 http://members.xoom.com/nus_cfe/ Sussex Non-Payment Campaign, Falmer House, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 8DN or e-mail susxnonpay@hotmail.com.

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SchNEWS in brief

****The next Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp** is on Friday Dec 10th (evening) to Sunday 14th (noon) sian@aldercamp.freemove.co.uk ** Happy first birthday to OXYACETYLENE, a free newsletter about actions and campaigns mainly in the Oxford area. Visit www.oxfordcity.demon.co.uk/oxyace/ or send stamps and/or cheques to Box G, 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RQ ** Get digging through the skips and recycle yer old (or new) junk to create an exhibition for the **Cultures of Resistance** celebration of creativity art exhibition from 12th-17th Dec at a squatted venue soon to be revealed. Contact rachred57@hotmail.com or 0958 765151 before 5th Dec to contribute. ** The **Housmans Peace Diary 2000** is now on sale containing an up to date world directory of 2000 peace, environment and human rights organisations, international peace days and more. Send £6.95 plus another £4 if you want to sponsor a diary sent free to third world campaigners to Housmans, 5 Caledonian Rd, London, N1 9DX, UK ** Don't breed or buy while stray pets die - then **National Day of Awareness Against the Pet Trade** Sat 4th Dec, for peaceful demos and leafleting outside pet dealers contact; PO Box 233, Liverpool, L69 7 LF or 0151 228 3730. ** A **West Papuan** tribesman fighting Indonesian occupation will be addressing the Worthing Eco-Action meeting on Dec 7th. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month upstairs at 42 Marine Parade 7pm, but as they remind us if you're the kind of person who does what you're told you're going to want to stay away! www.worthing.eco-action.org or PO Box 4144, Worthing, BN14 7 NZ ** **Reclaim the Railways** in opposition to tube privatisation on November 30th in London. Meet Euston Sta. 5pm. Transport from Brighton leaves 2.30pm, Corn Exchange, tickets £3/£5 from Peace Centre ** **Shutdown Citibank**: world's largest holder of student debt, backed by Japanese loan-sharks who steal clients' organs to pay off their debts. Shut 'em down as part of the international protest at the WTO. 12 noon, 30 Nov, Lewisham. Out of the station and look up! ** **Anti-Nato Picket** organised November 30th to welcome Jamie Shea and George Robertson (spokesman and new head of NATO respectively) who are arriving by river for a 'celebratory meal' in their honour at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich SE10. Meet 6.30pm. **

IT'S GOOD TO STRIKE!

For the first time in 13 years, British Telecom workers kicked off a series of one day strikes, which began on 22nd Nov. BT staff are walking out from call centres across the UK in protest over the low wages, agency casualisation, battery hen working conditions and constant phone monitoring by management. Despite the fact the company earned over £4.3 billion over 1998, and awarded it's fat cat boss Peter Bonfield with an annual pay rise of £1 million, BT continue to employ the majority of it's staff from agencies like Manpower and Blue Arrow - with no contract, no sick pay, and no job security. Call centre workers, over 70% of whom are recruited from agencies, are electronically logged for Call Handling Times (CHT), and monitored by snooping bosses, who are instructed to sack them if they do not meet 'customer service' performance targets. In June this year 120 workers were sacked from their jobs at the Directory Inquiry call centre in Stirling due to 'regrettable advancements in technology'. As one ex worker described it, working at BT *"is like contracting a microchip tumour of the brain"*. Fact sheet: send SAE to: BT - Black Technology, PO Box 3157, Brighton, BN2 2SS.

Communication Workers Union, 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX

COPS IN RUBBER SHOCKER

Right that's enough of the funnies- this is serious. Why do coppers in Durham and West Mercia Police forces need Rubber Bullets? Looking for a new war to fight? Not just content with introducing a new definition of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (see SchNEWS 237) the government is slowly arming the Police Forces of Britain with Baton guns that fire "solid four inch long polyurethane rubber rounds"- rubber bullets to you and me. Don't be fooled by the name, rubber bullets are killers; so far they've killed 14 people in Northern Ireland, 7 of them children. A recent report by the Belfast based Committee on the Administration of Justice warned that the use of rubber baton guns in Northern Ireland "appear[ed] to have become a weapon of first resort" and that the current guidelines for their use were "much too weak" and often ignored. But don't worry cos the police describe rubber bullets as "non-lethal" and promise only to use them in "pre-planned operations..." and only as a last resort, like CS gas. Er... since October '98, when it was launched onto the streets, CS gas has been used more than 10,000 times with the Plod receiving hundreds of complaints- such as that against South Wales coppers, who sprayed and incapacitated a man as he broke into his own home.

"There's a tendency for it to be used to ensure an easy arrest, and that's worrying - if I'm a middle-aged officer who is a bit worried about his abilities to handle a situation, the temptation is to pull out the CS spray and use it at an early stage so that I don't have any trouble" Peter Moorhouse, chairman, Police Complaints Authority

So giving coppers who can't handle situations baton guns and rubber bullets makes perfect sense then? More info: Committee on the Administration of Justice Tel 01232 232394 fax 01232 246706. also Statewatch (vol.8 no. 5), PO Box 1516, London, N16 0EW

...and finally...

CITY TRADERS IN DESTRUCTION ORGY

A Hotel had to be evacuated after a late night party descended into chaos and ended in a suspected arson attack reports the Southern Daily Echo. Sixty guests were evacuated from £180 a-night Careys Manor Hotel, Brockenhurst when a blaze began after furniture was placed on a log fire in the residents lounge. Damage alleged to have occurred during a party by 11 City traders on a two-day visit to the New Forest. Det Sgt Steve Davies said, "They had just had dinner with plenty of alcohol and began playing a game of indoor cricket." {as you do!} Police said the hotel faces a bill of up to £20K due to damages A police spokesman said "It would appear the blaze began in the residents lounge after a private party got out of hand."

The trip was organised by London based Intercapital whose managing director Paul Newman was reported as saying, "They are just a bunch of boys who got drunk. It was high jinks and a case of boys behaving badly. We will sit down and talk to them and they will pay the repair bill themselves." {just stick it on the Gold card gov} Two of the group arrested on suspicion of arson but released on police bail until January.

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all world domination conspirators if they eat a Cheesey Bildeberger BAP they'll get gas in the pants. Then they won't be content. Honest