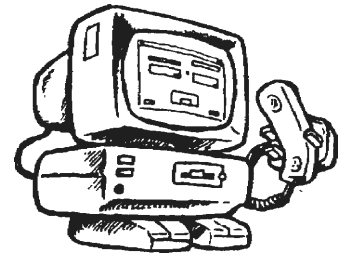




WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER SIZE DON'T MATTER

SchNEWS

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NANO NANO

“What is possible and what is bananas is hard to judge at present, but from our experience every bone in our bodies says this technology will happen because of the similarities with the bio-tech industry.”

- Pat Mooney, Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI)

Smaller than the SchNEWS bank account, nanotechnology is set to be the next big thing in the manipulation of reality since biotechnology. Who says? The American Association for the Advancement of Science who had their Annual General Meeting last week, and believe that machines made up of a few atoms could be possible in a few years time.

After the dazzling and life-affirming science that led from the discovery of the atom to the atom bomb, from DNA to Frankenfoods, SchNEWS readers will excuse us for not jumping up and down with excitement at this next big leap forward.

So what is nanotechnology? And why aren't we digging in the SchNEWS biscuit tin for our long lost microscope in anticipation?

A nanometre is a billionth of a metre. If you put 50 million nanos side by side they'd be the width of a human hair. Where biotechnology manipulated genes to alter what was there already, nanotechnology can build pretty much anything atom by atom, or alter existing structures. Which could mean much faster and smaller computers that assemble themselves, or manipulating the atomic structure of objects so they that may even be turned into something else. As Pat Mooney puts it, “You could have a household microwave which you simply pop the garbage into and out pops - well another microwave if you want. Or a hamburger, a piece of furniture, TV set, anything!”

As is the case with a lot of science, whether the new research gets used for everyone's benefit depends on who controls it and what their motives are. Nanotech could be used for microsurgery, since it would be a lot easier to inject surgical robots to perform operations rather than cutting people open, or for recycling waste into something useful. However, on a darker note, the U.S has already developed a spy plane the size of a pound coin that can fly up to 1000 feet at 40 mph, with built-in sensors, and it is only a matter of time that ones smaller than the eye can detect will be invented. How can you prevent yourself being monitored, if you don't even

know it's happening?

Governments are taking the technology seriously. Following the Japanese lead in investment, the U.S gov't's National Nanotechnology Initiative (N.N.I.) has been given a proposed budget of \$500 million dollars for next year, but as Pat Mooney notes, “We don't know what is being spent by the Department of Energy or Dept of Defence, but it's considerably more than that.” Research is accelerating fast, and we are no more than a few years away from nanomachines. Last year researchers in the U.S built a motor from just 78 atoms, small enough to fit in a cop's brain (okay, that's not what they used it for, cops are VERY clever really).

Now call us cynical but we at SchNEWS are a little concerned. Control of research and funding is already in the tiny hands of national governments and corporations. Among those funding the N.N.I., are the U.S Department of Defence, and NASA, and the current corporate leader of nanotech research is IBM, an early backer of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (SchNEWS 141) which threatened to strip away the worlds labour and environmental laws. If nanotech follows the same pattern as biotech, then we can look forward to companies like Monsanto moving in to try and get a stranglehold on the nanotech market, as they have tried on the agricultural markets with their GM products. If they start patenting this research as they are doing with GM products, then you could find that you will only be allowed to use such technology if you pay them a hefty fee. Pat Mooney: “When I discuss it, it's like talking about bio-technology in the 70s - people asking how could it be possible. They say we're crazy. But at RAFI we reckon that bio-technology will not be with us much longer. We are in a transition towards nano-technology if you look at where the money is being spent on research around the world.”

TERROR TUBBIES BENEFIT NIGHT THIS SUNDAY 27TH FEB

To raise awareness of the Government's proposed Terrorism Bill

@ The Gloucester, with P.A.I.N., Tragic Roundabout and Mark Leveller

5pm-10.30 Free food B4 7pm

£3.50/£2.50 concs.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For having dirty sheets! A couple had their house searched by Manchester cops and were locked in police cells for seven hours (while their three young kids were left unsupervised at home) for the alleged theft of a bed sheet from a Road Chef hotel. They had put the sheet in a laundry bag and left it outside for collection after one of her children had spilled a drink on it. The next day hotel staff found the missing sheet.

Maybe we're being a bit too pessimistic about all this fiddling around with atoms, and it will turn out to bring nothing but good for humanity. After all the nanobots in Star Trek are sometimes mischievous, but basically cute little robots who help out the crew of the Enterprise from time to time. However, does anyone remember what happened the first time scientists started playing round with the atom?

Check out www.rafi.org in mid-March for more info.

OFF THEIR STED!

What do you reckon the Government does to a school which has exam results 27% above the national average? Praise them? No, tries to close them down!!

Summerhill in Suffolk is an independent progressive school founded in 1921 by A.S.Neill, a teacher and revolutionary. He created a community free from authoritarian rule, in which pupils' personal interests and development have priority. Children have a direct say in the running of the school through weekly meetings. The school's ideals have influenced educational theories and political thinking worldwide. However, not everyone is enthusiastic. The Education Authorities equate 'the pursuit of freedom' with 'the pursuit of idleness', and they can't handle the non-compulsory lesson attendance policy. Despite having only 58 pupils, Summerhill is the most inspected school in Britain. Last May's OFSTED inspection led to them being served with a Statutory Order of Complaint. The order required changes including compulsory attendance of lessons and stricter discipline. Failure to comply may lead to closure. Summerhill believe that these measures go against the fundamental principles on which the school is founded. An appeal has been lodged with the Independent Schools Tribunal, it's hearing will take place over 8 days, from 20th March. Please show your support for Summerhill in it's fight against closure. As Zoe Readhead, Principal, said “If Summerhill is closed it would simply be another nail in the coffin of anything that's different.” Save Summerhill Campaign, Summerhill, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4HY. 01728 830 540. www.s-hill.demon.co.uk

IT'S A SIN

In December 1991 a woman was held captive at knife-point and raped. Her attacker took obscene photographs, asking his victim to smile for the camera. He attempted to force pills down her throat. He took the number of her car to further intimidate her. When she started to receive threatening phone calls, terrified for the safety of her two children, she went to the police. But a policewoman advised her to drop the case. A year later the same man committed an almost identical attack at the same premises. Christopher Davies was arrested, the case was forwarded to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) who decided not to prosecute.

Why? The two women are prostitutes, so the courts deem them "not credible". Forget preconceptions - of these two women one was saving to buy an electric wheelchair for her disabled husband, the other was funding her degree. The English Collective of Prostitutes estimate at least 70% of prostitutes are mothers, mostly single, struggling to support their families in the face of benefit cuts and low wages.

Prostitute women, being criminalised, are very vulnerable to violence and are forced onto the streets by laws which say that women working from the same premises constitutes a brothel despite the fact that working on the streets is ten times more dangerous than working indoors. Men who attack prostitute women are hardly ever arrested; only one in twelve women who is raped reports it to the police; only one tenth of recorded rapes result in a conviction.

Though prostitutes' clients include police, lawyers, judges and MP's, it is the women who are considered corrupt, not the men who use them. If the police neglect to investigate a crime because the victim was 'only' a prostitute then all women are vulnerable to attack from the rapist who remains free. In the case of the Yorkshire Ripper the prosecuting Attorney General Sir Michael Havers said of the Ripper's victims, "some were prostitutes, but perhaps the saddest part of this case is that some were not. The last six attacks were on totally respectable women."

When a sex worker secures the prosecution of her attacker the next hurdle is the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority who are likely to refuse compensation on the grounds that the victim's job puts her at risk by choice. But, as Harry Cohen MP wrote to the Board, "If it is regarded that their profession is by nature a dangerous one then the logic of your argument breaks down. On that basis you would refuse compensation to policemen who have been the victims of crime and their families."

When the CPS decided not to prosecute, the ECP helped them to bring the first ever private prosecution for rape in an English court. Their case made legal history when 3 years later, Christopher Davies was convicted.

Recommended reading: 'Some Mother's Daughter' from Crossroads Womens Centre, P.O. Box 287, London NW6 5QU Tel 0171 482 2496

KEEP IT UP

Last Friday a Laing building site in Surrey was occupied in solidarity with protestors who are fighting eviction at the Gorsewood road protest camp in Essex. Grateful workers enjoyed a break from building a massive complex for Pfizer - the makers of viagra. Maybe that's why people found it so easy to get up a massive crane to unfurl a banner saying 'more roads? Don't even try it!' Laing were targeted as they are part of the consortium that is building the six lane motorway through the Essex countryside. 20 days into the eviction and 5 people are still down the tunnels. Gorse Wood 07957 915977

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SchNEWS in brief

You can always rely on the Tories to come up with the **odd gem**, and David Shaw, the prospective parliamentary candidate for Kingston and Surbiton doesn't disappoint: "I think it's no coincidence that Mo Mowlam had a brain tumour and smoked cannabis in her youth"! ** SchNEWS would never gloat, but felt we should share the **Evening Anus'** apology to demonstrators who went to Shamrock Monkey Farm the other week and were branded, amongst other things, "terrorists". The Anus grovelled "...we let you down with our lopsided and half-hearted reporting of the protest and the ugly clashes with police.. Equally we condemn police brutality against anyone in the same way we condemn extremists... We strive for fair play. Yes, we let readers down this once, but don't leap to the conclusion it was because we are biased. Quite simply, we slipped from our normal standards." ** Next **Shamrock Demo**: Noon, 12th March. Tel 07020 936956 e-mail shamrockmonkeys@yahoo.com ** Join satirist Mark Thomas for the real "**Star Wars**" on Saturday 4th March at the U.S-run Menwith Hill Spy Base, near Harrogate, Yorkshire. Noon-4pm www.gn.apc.org/endyorks/m4 ** Think Bacardi's Cuban cool? Find out the truth at a **Boycott Bacardi**, Smash the Cuban Blockade Dayschool on Sat 11th March 11am - 5 pm at Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1 £5/£2. Contact FRFI BCM, Box 5909, London, WC1N 3XX Tel 0171 837 1688 ** Housing benefit privatised. **Refuse collectors** next? On Tuesday 7th March there's a demonstration against the privatisation of Sheffield's public services, meet 12.30 pm outside the town hall. ** The **Socialist Alliance** are holding a National Campaigns and Activists Conference on Sat. 25th March in Leicester. The aim? "How to link direct action more closely with socialist and green campaigning. 0116 244 0956 leicesterradical@hotmail.com" ** The **Nestle 16**, who were arrested last November on charges of 'conspiracy to commit burglary' after dropping a banner outside the Nestle factory in Halifax (SchNEWS 242), have funnily enough had their charges dropped! ** Campaigners will be protesting outside 30 UCI cinemas this Saturday (26th) to highlight the company's destruction of **Crystal Palace park**. Meanwhile, Bromley Council, not content with giving planning permission to UCI to carve up the Grade II listed park with a planned 20 screen multiplex cinema and huge roof-top carpark, now want to cut down another 200 trees. The Council want to clear 'historically inaccurate trees' that don't look primeval enough to make way for a dinosaur area! www.crystal.dircon.co.uk

JOLLY HOCKLEY STICKS

The campaign against housing development is hotting-up in Essex. At Hockley, protesters are awaiting the results of a court case brought by the developers to quash the protesters' injunction which is stopping the company from entering the land which remains sectioned off. Campaigners are trying to stop 66 luxury homes being built. The site is still under siege by the developers' hired security using violent intimidation tactics, protesters are imprisoned on site with only a trickle of supplies being allowed in. Last Saturday locals stormed the barricades and a few managed to get through the fence to join the protesters. A new camp has been established at Ashingdon on Golden Cross road - 20 mins from the Hockley camp - on 5 acres of the 7 acre site that is due to be developed by Wilcon Homes. Residents have registered the site as a public open space. More people are desperately needed. Tel 0831 717815-Hockley or 07833 191951-Ashingdon. www.thisissex.com.uk

Inside SchNEWS

Saturday 4th March is an international day of solidarity with death row prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal. Ex-Black Panther member and award winning journalist Mumia has been on death row for the past 16 years after he was found guilty of killing a policeman in a rigged trial that violated 4 human rights conventions. For a full list of events taking place all over the U.K contact mumia@callnetuk.com

U'wa Update

The peaceful occupation by 450 U'wa people protecting their tribal lands from oil exploration (SchNEWS 244) has been attacked by the Colombian Police and Army resulting in the deaths of three children and the disappearance of 11 others. Rural workers throughout the region began a three day general strike on February 15th in response to the police brutality. The children apparently drowned after the soldiers and anti-riot police used tear gas, bulldozers and riot sticks to charge the blockade, forcing the U'wa to jump into the fast flowing Cubujón River. There will be another Global Day of Action for the U'wa on March 9th, details www.ran.org, e-mail organize@ran.org

Glen Sent Down

13 Glen of the Downs campaigners were imprisoned last Friday after refusing to promise the High Court not to interfere with Wicklow County Council. The Council are constructing a £20 million dual-carriageway through the Glen, a beautiful broad leaf forest which unfortunately just happens to be in the way of the European Union's grand scheme to expand the road network. Mr Justice Barr said that if the protestors wanted to be "made martyrs of and carted off to prison" he would oblige them! The unlucky 13 were taken off to Mountjoy Prison where they will remain until they comply with the High Court. Those jailed were due in the High Court today, but as SchNEWS went to press we're still waiting for the outcome. www.emc23.tp/glen/news.htm or Dublin FoE 0035 31497 3773.

CASUAL KILLERS

Simon Jones was killed in 1998 on his first day at work at Shoreham Harbour. He was doing one of the most dangerous jobs in the country with no health and safety training, and was killed when his head was crushed by the grab of a crane (SchNEWS 182). There will be a judicial review into the failure of the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute those responsible for Simon's death at 10am, 16th March at the High Court in the Strand, London. An overnight vigil will take place starting at 8pm, 15th March. There's also a benefit featuring comedians Mark Thomes, Jo Brand and Rob Newman and a short video about the campaign on 10th March at Hove Town Hall. Get yer tickets fast! c/o the SchNEWS www.simonjones.org.uk

...and finally...

SchNEWS congratulates the Labour Party on one hundred glorious years. Jorg Haider, the leader of Austria's far right Freedom Party, got the congratulations in first claiming that him and Blair share "amazing similarities" except that Blair's immigration laws are "more extreme". Like Tory Blair he is committed to finding a "new sense of community", and "both parties stand up for the weak and underprivileged". Mr Haider also draws parallels between both parties' employment policies. Perhaps they should change their name to Neo-Labour.

nano-disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all actors with small parts not to make a drama out of a crisis. (That's about the size of it!).