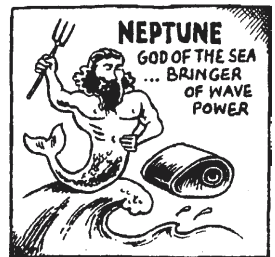




WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER WET BEHIND THE EARS

SchNEWS

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WATER DISGRACE!

"The wars of the next century will be about water."

Ismail Serageldin, vice-president of the World Bank

There are mounting pressures on that liquid we all take for granted (no, not beer). The stress on the Earth's water supply is increasing, as the global consumption of water rises dramatically every year, the supply goes down and climate change causes shifts in weather patterns.

Already 1.4 billion people lack access to clean fresh water and disputes are erupting around the world. For example Malaysia supplies half of Singapore's water, but in 1997 threatened to cut off supply after Singapore criticised its policies; Namibia has upset its neighbour Botswana by plans to construct a pipeline to divert the shared Okavango River to eastern Namibia; and the late King Hussein of Jordan once said the only thing he would go to war over with Israel was water. Around the world, the political answer to increased water demand has been to build more environmentally destructive dams resulting in the displacement of local people (see SchNEWS 259).

So what should be done about these problems - why sell water resources off to private companies? We're sure SchNEWS readers will be stunned to hear that the future of the Earth's most vital resource is being determined by those who profit from its overuse and abuse. Welcome to the "Water 2000 Conference: Competition, Internationalisation & Strategies For Change" (15/16 June 2000, The Dorchester Hotel, London), with top level Water Industry speakers discussing topics such as "New market openings and gaining competitive advantage" and "Opportunities for growth in international water markets." The agenda is clear: Water should be traded like any other commodity, with its use determined by market principles.

So let's have a look at these market principles in action. Bolivia is South America's poorest country - where only a third of rural areas have access to a water supply. The government, which is tied to a crippling structural adjustment programme, has no money available to invest in public services and so have instead turned to private operators. In Cochabamba, the country's third largest city, the water industry was handed over at a knock down price (some say for nothing) to Aguas del Tuman.

They are a consortium of British, Italian and US Companies, and of course their only interest is in making a quick buck. Their contract guaranteed at least a 16% annual profit, and a share in the proposed Misticuni dam. The government agreed to go ahead with the dam even though alternative water sources for the region could be secured at a fraction of the cost. On taking over in January they announced a 35% increase in water prices, leaving many families having to fork out 20 % of their monthly earnings on water. Not surprisingly, all across the country people took to the streets to protest about these price rises and the proposed introduction of a tax on extracting water from natural springs. The situation became so severe the Bolivian government declared a state of martial law (see SchNEWS 255). This was lifted a fortnight later with the government backing down and apparently withdrawing the contract. Aguas del Tuman have now allegedly left the country, but are demanding \$12 million in compensation from the Bolivian people.

Over in Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, the region's first privatized consortium raised prices, cut 7,500 jobs, whereupon the system deteriorated from lack of maintenance!

* More than five million people, most of them children, die every year from illnesses caused by drinking poor quality water.

* Poor residents in Lima, Peru, pay private vendors as much as \$3 per cubic meter for buckets of often-contaminated water while the more affluent pay 30 cents per cubic meter for treated municipal tap water.

* During a drought crisis in northern Mexico in 1995, the government cut water supplies to local farmers while ensuring emergency supplies to the mostly foreign-controlled industries in the region.

* Eighty percent of China's major rivers are so degraded they no longer support fish.

* Available fresh water actually amounts to less than one-half of one percent of all water on the earth. The vast majority is sea water or locked up in glacial and polar ice.

Meanwhile the Global Water Corporation, a Canadian company, is seeking to export 18 billion gallons per year of Alaskan glacier water to China, where it will be bottled in one of China's 'free trade' zones, no doubt to take advantage of the China's cheap labour market.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For being run over...a cyclist in a critical mass protest in Bristol was arrested for obstructing traffic after an irate driver had knocked him to the ground. A prosecution is set to go ahead. Is cycling a crime, or only if you are knocked off your bike?

So the next time you take a bath consider people in the state of Gurjarat, India, who have been in the grip of a drought blamed by some on global warming caused by the West. Indian political leaders place the blame of severe water shortage on the non-completion of the Narmada Dam (see SchNEWS 244), which in reality is only of benefit to industries. What they also fail to mention is that the dam project has taken 85% of the irrigation budget, causing a lack of long term investment in small scale water conservation schemes.

Compare Gurjarat to the UK, where the water companies estimate each person uses 160 litres per day. One third of clean drinking quality water is flushed down the bog, while up to a third of treated water never even reaches your house as it is lost in mains leaks. The companies and government have half hearted campaigns to get us to turn off the tap while cleaning our teeth, without getting to the root cause of the problem, such as toilets which use 6 litres per flush and people expecting their lawns to be green in the middle of summer. This waste is matched by the profits of the privatised water utilities: Depending on where you live 10-25% of your water bill goes to shareholders. This rises to 30% in the Severn-Trent Region and a staggering 42% for North West Water! We bet those shareholders are feeling flushed.

* WaterWatch is a network concerned with all water issues, the website has good links: 259 South Street, Rotherham S61 2NW Tel: 01709 558561 www.waterwatch.org.uk

* World Oceans Day is on Thurs. 8th June. Events are planned around the UK. Marine Conservation Society 01989 566017 www.mcsuk.org

* Christian Aid have produced a booklet called 'Unnatural Disasters', which lays the blame for climate-related disasters in poor countries on northern countries' dubious industrial practices. P.O. Box 100, London SE1 7RT Tel 020 7620 4444 www.christian-aid.org.uk/

OPPORTUNITY ROCKS

It's official! After years of riot police, road-blocks and barbed wire, people will be "allowed" to celebrate at Stonehenge during this year's summer solstice.

Under English Heritage terms and conditions the Stones will be open to everyone from midnight to 7am. The change of heart from English Heritage comes on the fifteenth anniversary of the infamous Battle of the Beanfield when the authorities put a stop to the Stonehenge People's Free Festival with tactics described by one ITN news reporter as "break(ing) new grounds in the scale and the intensity of its violence." (see SchNEWS 172/3) The cost of the police operation over the years has run into millions, and last year the European Court made a ruling that the 'right to gather' laws in the Criminal Justice Act were in fact illegal. Years of meetings between the authorities and Stonehenge campaigners also seem to have finally paid off. Andy from Festival Eye magazine told SchNEWS "It's our best opportunity since 1984. I'm looking forward to going without fear of any trouble or arrest."

It should be a self-policing event, but there will be no dogs, fires, camping or climbing the stones in the centre circle. And one of the London to Stonehenge walkers told us "The big crunch will come at 7 am. If people don't leave then it could be back to square one with the Stones once again being heavily policed and only those with tickets allowed in."

* The annual walk to Stonehenge has already begun. If you want to join them call 07947 787628

* Festival Eye *should* be out at Strawberry Fayre this Saturday, but if you can't make it and want a copy contact them at BCM 2002, London, WC1N 3XX www.prowse.demon.co.uk/festeye/fe-index.htm

* For a copy of the Stonehenge Campaign newsletter send SAE to c/o 99 Torriano Avenue, London, NW5 2RX. www.geocities.com/soho/9000/stonecam.htm

GLOBAL SchNEWS

A new protest camp has been set up in the **Aspe Valley** in southern France, part of an ongoing 12 year campaign to stop the E7 motorway being built through the Pyrenees. The camp is 1 km south of Pau. Contact La Goutte D' Eau, Cette Eygun Pyrinee, France Tel 0033 (0) 672634905. If you can speak French, then check out <http://citweb.net/lagoutte> ** Meanwhile over in the **Basque country** two of the five former ruined medieval villages that have been squatted since 1995 face eviction. "We are all libertarian people from Europe's big cities who are fed up with urban alienation and sickness." Contact Artanga, Rala E-31430 Aoiz, Nafarroa E.H. or e-mail: artanga@gmx.net ** **A bio-tech exhibition** in Genua, Italy came under siege last week and was eventually abandoned. Around 10,000 people demonstrated with 1,000 of them coming dressed in white overalls, gas masks, shields and paddings. Despite vigorous police attacks, the protestors managed to block the entrance gate so that no-one could enter or exit. www.ainfos.ca/ ** **'The Widening Peoples' Choices: For a Just and Sustainable Future'** conference aims "to educate people on the World Petroleum Congress, their human rights and environmental abuses and sustainable alternatives." It's on 9-10th June in Calgary near Alberta, Canada - which is where the World Petroleum Congress will be meeting a few days later To register go to darlasimpson@hotmail.com www.nisto.com/activism/project/petrol.html

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SchNEWS in brief

A second **Showcase For Kosova** features music from Deep Mamboo and Space Goats, films, poetry, food, dance and children's theatre, as well as a Rebel Alliance space. At The Gloucester, corner of Gloucester Road, Brighton. Sunday 4 June, 5-10.30pm. Free food before 7pm! ** A belated Happy Birthday to **Food not Bombs** who on the 24th May celebrated 20 years of sharing free food. They are now active throughout the world, and the Food Not Bombs book is now in its third edition. Copies from Active Distribution, BM Active, WC1N 3XX £4.50 <http://home.earthlink.net/~foodnotbombs/> ** Check out the revamped **Campaign Against Silly Housing's** (CASH) new website www.angelfire.com/mt/GBH, for information on campaigning against our insane planning system, with useful contacts ** **'Justice Denied: can Public Interest be Served if Evidence is Withheld?'** Joint public meeting of M25 Justice campaign and Freedom and Justice for Samar and Jawad, Tuesday 6 June 2000, 7 P.M. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. More info from Miscarriages of Justice UK 0121-554-6947 www.freesaj.org.uk ** Edinburgh are having a **Reclaim the Streets** on Saturday 17th June. Bring along instruments, imagination and ideas for a creative street celebration. Assemble at Bristo Square, Edinburgh at 4pm ** **New Futures Association** is a new organisation run by travellers trying to tackle homeless problems and social exclusion. Contact c/o 6 Snednore, Well Green Lane, Kingston, nr.Lewes, E.Sussex, BN 7 3NL Tel 01273 479621 ** **World Development Movement Conference.** 'Regulating Globalisation and uncovering the real debt crisis. A fairer deal for the world's poor.' Sat 24 June, London School of Economics. Free, yet bookings required. 0207 738 3311 www.wdm.org.uk ** **Leamington Peace Festival.** 17-18 June. Two stages, workshops, food by Anarchist Teapot and kids activities. Free. 01926 493214 www.digitalasylum.co.uk/lpf ** **Ideas for Freedom.** Two days of speakers and discussions covering Seattle, GM foods and much more. Tickets in advance £20/£10/£6. More info 020 7207 3997 office@workersliberty.org 17-18 June, Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19. ** Newham Monitoring Project has re-launched its **24 hour Racial Harassment Emergency Service** for people suffering racist abuse and attacks. 020 8555 8163, nmp@gn.apc.org ** There's a video and talk on the **Simon Jones Memorial Campaign** (SchNEWS 182) on Tue 6th June at 7.45pm. 42 Marine Parade (above Paiges bar) on Worthing sea front. Events@worthing.eco-action.org ** **'The Agitator'** is a booklet listing every imaginable organisation, campaign, radical bookshop and autonomous centre. For copies send £1 plus 40p SAE to Haringey Solidarity Group, P.O. Box 2474, London, N8 ** **SchWOOPS! Nestle** has *not* pulled out of the UK baby milk market - but it has pulled its Junior Range of baby foods for one to three year olds. Baby Milk Action 01223 464420 www.babymilkaction.org/ ** The phone number for the Welsh Socialist Alliance conference on fighting the **privatisation** of the welfare state is 02920 830029 ** And if you want to go to the talk on **Intellectual Property Rights and the Welfare of Indigenous Peoples** at Corpus Christi College, Oxford 7.30pm it's on the 5th June. ** For a weekly updated list of **party and protest** dates throughout the summer and beyond, check out the SchNEWS website.

JAILHOUSE ROCKED

"I used to be into hotels, but with prisons I can guarantee 100% occupancy every night" - Managing Director, Sodexo

Britain now sends more people to prison than any other country in Europe, with a population crunched up at 65,000. In 1997 the prison population rose at the rate of a small institution every month. As more refugees are locked up, and with the forthcoming Terrorism Bill (see SchNEWS 242/251) set to criminalise dissent and become law by Autumn, now is the time to stick up two fingers to the prison industry.

So on Tuesday, 25 CAGE activists entered the construction site of Onley Prison near Coventry, climbing the crane and occupying diggers, forcing a third of the workers to go home early as most construction was halted. Mischievous pixies cut off electricity to the site office, and tore down a part-built wall before everyone left with no arrests made.

So how can the gov't afford these new prisons? It turns out that building and running prisons has been privatised (under the Private Finance Initiative, SchNEWS' favourite barrel of laughs), with security companies and construction firms teaming up and being paid back by the gov't later, allowing no limits on the expansion of this industry. Just like in the U.S, where the prison population has reached 2 million and provides a cheap workforce for the corporations which run 'em.

CAGE are organising further actions, including a weekend occupation of a space relevant to the prison industry, on Bastille Day, July 14th. This was the day in 1789 when French revolutionaries stormed the Bastille prison - where political prisoners were kept - and then tore it down.

CAGE, c/o P.O. Box 68, Oxford OX3 1RH Tel: 07931 401962 www.veggies.org.uk/cage

* There's a benefit for CAGE featuring Rory McLeod and others on Weds. 7th June, 7pm at the Arsenal Tavern, Blackstock Rd (Finsbury Park tube), London N4 £5/2.50

* Did you witness any arrests on Mayday? Send details to Legal Defence and Monitoring Group, c/o BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX

STOP PRESS

The National Front are marching again in Margate this Saturday (3rd). There will be a counter-demonstration, meet 11 am at the Train Station. Free transport from Brighton meet outside the Corn Exchange 9.45am Phone 07818 027408

...and finally...

SchNEWS dutifully takes its vegetable peelings and old tea bags up the communal allotment compost bins every week, but has often wondered what would be the greenest way of disposal when one of us pops our clogs.

We think a Mr.D.Woodman of Kew in Surrey might have found the answer. In a letter to New Scientist magazine he writes "I am working with the pet food industry to introduce legislation to enable people, at the end of their lives, to donate their bodies to pet food manufacturers. The human flesh thereby recycled will release thousands of tonnes of grain, at present used in pet foods, for feeding less fortunate children elsewhere in the world. It is right that the British, with their love of animals, should set the rest of the world an example. If any of your readers would like to write to me, I will send them a draft clause for inclusion in their will, and a 'Pet-meat' donor card to carry in their wallet or handbag."

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all drinkers if you're drownin' in info, don't be a drip just pool yer resources and take a dive into the fast stream .Go with the flow with breast-stroke then you'll be feeling fishy. Honest