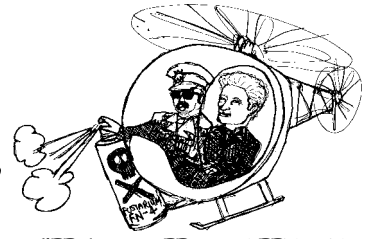




WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER FUMING

SchNEWS

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"EET'S OK MEESTA CLEENTON-YOU NEVER INHALE ANYWAY"

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MARCHING ORDERS

"US aid has doubled every year recently, and coke production has doubled correspondingly. All they're doing is destroying the environment and making the campesinos more dependant than ever on coca for survival. This a counter insurgency war - a war against anyone who is against the multinationals, the environmentalists, human rights workers and trade unionists are considered enemies of the State because the state represents the multinationals." Liam Craig-Best (human rights worker)

On Tuesday 15th August, 60 school kids were on a trip in the countryside when, without warning, soldiers opened fire and threw grenades at them. Six were killed and others seriously injured. You didn't hear about this outrage on the news because it happens all the time in Columbia.

On Wednesday, President Clinton was in Cartagena, Columbia to promote the US Plan Columbia, \$1.3 billion in military aid to finance the 'war on drugs'. Human rights workers fear this will result in, "A war financed by the richest nation on Earth in which some of the poorest citizens on Earth will be the victims". Or as the Latin American Solidarity Collective (LASC) put it, "Plan Columbia is a plan for war."

Ruthless

Columbia is a ruthless place. There are 12 political murders a day. 35,000 people have died in the last decade. There's a civil war on. After 36 years of armed conflict, the 17,000 strong Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), control 40% of the country, and, it would seem, the hearts of the campesinos (Columbian peasants). The Guerilla territory is officially known as the "laboratory of peace", the Colombians call it Farclandia. Their banners read, "No more massacres", and "no more corruption". They believe there are two kinds of peace on offer in Columbia, FARC peace, a People's peace of social justice, democracy, dignity and land for peasants or government and US aided peace where the guerillas would be politically powerless, no strikes, no protests and the rich and powerful, the rulers and corporate bosses would thrive at their expense.

By law, US overseas military aid cannot be given to army units that have a known record of human rights violations. However, Congress agreed to a waiver which means there are no human rights conditions attached to the Plan Columbia. When you hear massacres such as that of the school children in Antioquia this week, they are

usually blamed on right wing paramilitary groups who campesinos call 'The Death Squads'. There is well documented evidence of collaboration between the Columbian government-run army brigades and the Paramilitary death squads, including a 1999 report from a US State department of "credible allegations of cooperation with paramilitary groups". So funding for the Columbian Government becomes, in effect, funding for the death squads. Alberto Garcia of the LASC said, "We know that many Colombian officers were trained in the US, and over half of these are known human rights offenders. Now, thanks to Clinton, their units will get new equipment, training and intelligence information."

In 1999, paramilitaries were considered responsible for nearly 80% of Colombia's human rights abuses. The paramilitaries kill those suspected of supporting guerrillas, then deliver the corpses to the army. In a process known as "legalization," the army then claim the dead as guerrillas killed in combat while paramilitaries receive their pay in army weapons. All nice and above board.

Spray Planes

Under Plan B Clinton insists, "We have no military objective.", yet most of the money will be spent on military equipment with \$900 million going straight into the pockets of US corporations. So, two thirds of this financial aid will never even reach Columbia, and the poverty stricken campesinos will only feel the effects of this oh so generous offer of financial help when they get blown to bits by the weapons it has paid for. Another opportunity for Colombians to directly experience Plan Columbia, is through the fumigation project. America's brave attempt to save Columbia from the ravages of the drug trade. Spray-planes poison the coca crops from the air, spreading herbicide over the entire area, including legitimate crops and villagers. The results are truly devastating. The legitimate crops are killed, the land is ruined, often the campesinos suffer health problems and the women miscarry. They're forced to leave their ruined land, destitute, to start again by slashing and burning their way further into the rainforest. As coca is resilient, grows fastest and sells well, the farmer is forced to go back to growing the illicit crop. A new poison which the Yanks have lined up for Columbia is called Fusarium EN-4, a derivative of the chemicals that were used in Vietnam, where, even 30 years after the war ended, thousands of children are born with genetic malforma-

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For being too young...

A woman was arrested by police in Prince Albert, Canada after they discovered that she had been barred from a birthday party for being underage. It turns out that the party was for those celebrating their 100th birthdays, and unfortunately the woman in question was only 98!

tions. Way to go, Uncle Sam. Spraying in Columbia will not solve the problems of poverty and deforestation that force campesinos to grow coca but will contaminate the Amazon region for many years.

So why are the Yanks so keen to quash insurgency and intervene in Columbia's civil war? At \$300 million in 1999, US military aid to Colombia was already more than the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean put together. Most of the push behind this 'aid' package has come from defense contractors and oil companies, backed by other companies with stakes in Columbia. Columbia's oils reserves are a key strategic concern for the US. The 480-mile Limon Covenas pipeline was bombed by guerrillas 79 times in 1999. Columbia needs the money invested in oil exploration, the US badly needs Columbia, one of its largest suppliers of oil. Both of the main candidates in the forthcoming US presidential election have personal interests in oil multinationals that will profit from Plan Columbia. And Barry McCaffrey, the former US General in charge of the plan, is accused of criminal massacre in Iraq. As Andy Higginbottom of LASC said, "All the big players in US politics are effectively front-men for the oil multi-nationals." And, just in case you're thinking it's all down to the yanks, our very own British Government has recently agreed to provide £150 million to finance the Plan.

This is the thin end of the wedge, if the US get away with it, then they will have paved the way to move in on the rest of Latin America. They want to control this area so rich in natural resources. This is not a war on drugs, it is a counter-insurgency war. As Alberto Garcia from LASC points out, "Clinton is using the drugs issue as a smokescreen for direct military intervention in Colombia."

For more information, a newsletter is available for £1 from PO Box 8446, London, N17 6NZ 07950 923 448 lasocollective@hotmail.com

FOR PEAT'S SAKE

It may seem obvious that ripping up a unique environment so that we can use peat in our gardens, whilst at the same time digging large holes in the ground to dump our organic 'waste' is an absurd waste of resources. But unfortunately peat has become an essential soil accessory for Britain's not so green 15 million amateur gardeners. The result of this is that whilst we are struggling to find ways to get rid of our waste there is now only 6 percent of our original peatlands left in a near natural state. Peatlands have been described as the UK's equivalent of tropical rainforests, because of the wide variety of species they support which include nightjars, and five thousand varieties of insects and rare plants.

A glimmer of hope was offered last week when the government proposed that the four main peatlands suffering from extraction (Thorne Moor, and Hatfield Moor in Yorkshire and Wedholme Flow, and Bolton Fell in Cumbria) will become Special Areas of Conservation Interest under the EC Habitats Directive. Changing their classification will give Local Authorities the power to review and possibly remove the extraction licences for these areas. The bad news however is that this process could take as long as a year, and in the meantime our peatlands could be mined to virtual extinction.

The Scotts Company, the US-based multinational who make Levington's branded compost, is the UK's biggest peat extractor. Although they claim that they take their responsibilities to the environment 'very seriously indeed', they know that peat makes them a lot of money, last year they made profits of nearly £500 million. A consortium of environmental and local groups are calling on Scotts to halt their extraction and help rejuvenate the peatlands because even if they pull out Scotts look set to receive compensation of up to £9 million. Unfortunately though there is evidence that they may be doing the opposite and increasing levels of extraction whilst they still can, and will still be entitled to compensation if they do so! Now is an urgent time to try and stop this as peat can only be extracted for a few more weeks before it gets too wet.

*More info from Friends of the Earth, 26-28 Underwood Street, London, N1 7JQ 0207 7490 1555, www.foe.co.uk/

*For information on composting contact the Composting Association www.compost.org.uk

*To find out lots of interesting facts about Scotts Company take a look at their website, www.scottscocompany.com

FOX OFF

A victory for free speech occurred in Tampa Bay, USA on 18th August as a jury awarded investigative journalist Jane Akre \$450,000 damages following her dismissal from Fox Television.

Akre claimed that she had been fired following their threat to complain to the Federal Communications Commission regarding Fox's attempt to get them to 'air' a slanted, biased report on GM giant Monsanto's bovine growth hormone. After a trial which lasted five weeks, the jury ruled in Akre's favour over her claim that her contract was terminated because of her intention to go the FCC and awarded her the damages relating to lost earnings.

For more on this story look at www.videonetwork.org/stuff/foxtv.html

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SchNEWS in brief

Last Wednesday the UK's only test crop of genetically **modified wheat** at Sacrewell Lodge Farm in Cambridgeshire was completely destroyed ** Last Saturday the **National Front** managed to muster all of 25 people for a march in Nottingham. The "Nazi 25" were protected by no less than 300 cops, many in riot gear. There was a counter demo of anti fascists in town that day numbering 100. The cops let the fascists march for about 50 yards, then decided it was too dangerous for them and while keeping the counter demo back, dispersed the bigoted scum. ** Lots of events happening on Saturday 9th September : There's a **Hardcore/punk** benefit show for SAFE (Saving Animals From Exploitation) at the Three Horseshoes Barn at Scottow near Norwich. £5 **A demo in Leicester town centre against **HARLAN UK** who are the biggest supplier of animals in Europe. Meet at the clock tower, 12 noon. www.lough-borough-animal-concern.org.uk Tel:0700 900 1853. ** Workshops on setting up your own business, housing co-ops, or **credit union** at the Hangleton Community Centre, Harmsworth Crescent, Hove. 10am - 4pm Free lunch - Free creche. 01273 556843 www.gn.apc.org/ss/upstart/tc ** And two events for **Mark Barnsley** (see SchNEWS 252) who was fitted up and wrongly imprisoned after he was attacked by drunken students. On the morning there will an info stall on Fargate, Sheffield opposite Virgin Megastore, and in the evening there will be a public meeting at Broomspring Community Centre, Broomspring Lane Sheffield. Mark has just been moved for the 5th time this year to HMP Dartmoor. This process, known as ghosting, is designed to isolate prisoners from their family and freinds. 07944-522001 www.appleline.net/justiceuk/eddie/mark.html ** And during the whole weekend it's **Nottingham Pride** 0115 8419096 www.nottinghampride.org ** On the Monday (11) **Trash Trident Trail**, Manchester Crown Court. Come and support the two women charged with causing £25,000 damage to Britain's Trident nuclear submarine, HMS Vengeance. Tel 07808 553778 www.gn.apc.org/tp2000 ** On the 15 there's a **Benefit for People's Global Action**, with comedian Rob Newman, music from Earth Tribe, Nomadix Roots and Head Jam, films, stalls cheap beer and veggie food, at the West Indian Cultural Centre, 9 Clarendon Road, London N8. £5/£3.50 concessions ** **Cornwall Convergence**, 26 September - 1st October. A gathering for all those in Cornwall involved in direct action, environmental and social campaigning, education, permaculture, organics and anything else you can think of. They need help with arranging site crew, wood burners, performers, playwrighters etc. Cornwall Convergence, c/o PO Box 19, Penzance, TR18 2XY. ** For **more dates** check out the SchNEWS website

Heavy Petting

Focus Do-It-All are one of Britain's largest DIY chains. A few years ago they had a dream of creating a 'leisure experience for all the family'. With this in mind they purchased Petworld, an American style chain of Pet warehouses. An investigation by Animal Aid however has criticised the chain for keeping animals in poor conditions, giving misleading advice, encouraging impulse buying and supporting an export trade in exotic species that has been described as barbaric. There will be a weekend of action against Focus Do-it-All stores around the country on 8 & 9 September. Contact Animal Aid 01732 364546 www.animalaid.org.uk. You may also like to contact Focus Do-it-All on their customer helpline and let them know what you think, 0800 436436

Positive SchNEWS

Last year saw 22 million people dump their cars for the European Car Free Day. In Paris forty miles of road were closed and 44 percent of participants said they would like a car free day every week. This years event is supported by all but two of the European Union Governments. And guess what? One of those governments is the UK, who according a spokesperson "entirely support the underlying aims of the 'Car Free Day' campaign. However, we have some doubts about whether car-free days might be the best approach"- perhaps they're worried that we'll all realise how shit cars really are!. Despite this there will be 10 councils celebrating the day, they are the London boroughs of Camden, Lambeth, Merton, Southwark, Sutton and the towns of Bath, Stoke-on-Trent, Winchester, and Swale and Deal in Kent. For more info on these events or information on how to get your council to organise an event next year contact the Environment Transport Association at 10 Church Street, Weybridge KT13 8RS, 0193 282 8882, www.eta.co.uk.

But why wait till next year?. Activists from around the world are organising their own imaginative actions for World Car Free Day on 21 September. So why don't you... Contact Carbusters at Kratka 26, 100 00 Praha 10, Czech Republic Tel: +(420) 2-781-08-49 www.carbusters.ecn.cz

* Freewheelers is a new free service on the internet that links drivers and passengers so they can share lifts. Although still not common in the UK, in Germany the network of car sharing organisations sorts out over 1.5 million shared lifts a year. www.freewheelers.co.uk

* If anybody has any experiences of formal car-sharing that they'd like to share then contact adrian@sweetbriar.demon.co.uk

* For a copy of the excellent A27 Action Group newsletter send an SAE to 10 Highdown Rd., Lewes.

...and finally...

The Naked Truth... Vincent Bethel and the Freedom to be Yourself campaign have been swinging into action as their campaign to uphold the rod of truth and justice continues. Vincent, as you may remember has been getting an all-over tan (and probably a few goosebumps) since August 13th when he vowed to remain in his birthday suit until non-sexual nakedness is legalised. Well, the powers that be are not playing fair, and won't tackle the very serious issues involved, in fact they just keep arresting Vincent. He appeared in court the first time au naturel, and was promptly nicked as he left. After being released Vincent continued his mission of nudity, was arrested again, appeared in court naked, left and was grabbed again! After a series of actions, doing his shopping that kind of thing, the total number of arrests has now reached ten. The offences have been lumped together and Vincent is up for a single charge of public nuisance. He is on remand in Brixton Prison and is not allowed visits as the lock-up crew reckon his ongoing nakedness will offend people. Even his brief has been unable to see Vincent (and perhaps perform a cover-up?), which is of course illegal. Vincent will appear in court on the 26th September. www.geocities.com/thehumanmind

* Meanwhile, a tourist, Renate Schwanking-Ben-Hanza has been put on a plane back to Germany after spending four nights locked up in a North Carolina jail for nude hitch-hiking.

disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers not to get snorting mad even though stuff gets up yer nose-just take the right line. Honest.