



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER RIGHT TO BE WRONG

SchNEWS

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'My company is so human - it's shit stinks!'

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The Right To Profit

"There has to be considerable concern in Scotland that... the application of the European Convention of Human Rights grants 'human rights' to a French multinational." Kevin Dunion, Director of Scotland Friends of the Earth.

It is the usual story - a large corporation wants to get its greedy mitts on a bit of 'under-developed' land. There were protests and a long public inquiry. The company loses patience and runs to the courts.

Except this time the company uses Article 6 of the European Convention complaining that because of the delay its human rights have been violated.

Come again? Since when did corporations have human rights? And what sort of a corporate can of worms are we opening now the Human Rights Act has become law in the UK?

Hold Up

The countryside in question is the Roineabhal Mountain of Harris in the Outer Hebrides. Despite it being part of a National Scenic Area, Lafarge Redland Aggregates Ltd. want to flatten the mountain and dig a super quarry to supply aggregate for roads in England and Europe, which is nice. They took the Scottish Environment Minister to court because of the time taken to reach a decision over its superquarry - and won. Kevin Dunion says of the decision, "The clear public perception is that the Act was brought in to protect the rights of individuals against powerful commercial interests. Given that companies already have rights not available to individuals or community organisations (e.g. their right to appeal planning decisions and that of 'commercial confidentiality') then it appears, by this decision, that far from levelling the playing field once again it is the powerful and rich who can play on both halves of that field".

Lafarge supplies about 10 per cent of the UK's demand of quarry stone, but reckon it's up with the best of them when it comes to environmental credentials. Well, they are corporate members of 17 County Wildlife Trusts. Hey, one of the World Wildlife Fund UK directors even used to work for them.

The public inquiry finished over five years ago, and while the decision has been a little long in coming, the goalposts have moved considerably. As Kevin Dunion, points out, "There is no need for this quarry, and Government policy has changed since the close of the inquiry." Coming in 2002 is the Aggregates Tax, which will tax quarrying operations accord-

ing to the environmental costs such as noise, dust, visual intrusion, loss of amenity and damage to biodiversity. Demand for aggregates across Europe has collapsed, and there is a lot more emphasis now on recycled rather than 'virgin' aggregate. However, by taking the case to court the company managed to get all these new arguments ignored.

Peace Take

By about the middle of the 18th Century companies had managed to get themselves treated as people under the law - which means they can have human rights.

In this country corporations have used this 'right' to apply SLAPP's (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation - see SchNEWS 184) to silence critics. But the most useful of all Rights to the corporations is 'the right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions', which is used for example to bully councils to gain planning permission. And it was this Right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions that the Court of Appeal referred to when judging that Monsanto's rights had been violated by people who peacefully decontaminated fields of GM crops.

Even more worrying is, as solicitor Daniel Bennett points out, the fact that Article 13 of the European Convention, by which people could have contested the corporations' control of resources has been deliberately excluded from our own Human Rights Act.

So will corporations be running to the courts to reclaim their 'freedom' to destroy, pollute and contaminate every time it is challenged? Perhaps as Freedom newspaper points out, (while lawyers might be rubbing their hands with glee,) campaigners shouldn't exactly be doing cartwheels over the new Act. "Rights are gains of

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For removing offensive material... sometimes you just can't make it up. Readers are used to outrageous arrests, but this one seriously takes the piss. John Curtis was nicked for criminal damage to a lamp post at the recent counter demo to the nazi protest in Margate. What he actually did was scrape off a nazi sticker with a front door key, surely an act beneficial to society. Not according to the cops, who after filming him "causing damage to lamp post CIT1013" promptly jumped on him shouting "We've got the agitator" excitedly into their radios. Dunno about you, but SchNEWS reckons that this has got to be contender for crap arrest of the year.

struggle not gifts of the state... When the state's interference with our right to organise is manifest in the Terrorism Act and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, it would be a fatal error to allow ourselves to be conned into seeing the courtroom as a prime site of struggle."

* To get involved in the campaign against Lafarge digging up Harris contact Scotland Friends of the Earth, 72 Newhaven Rd., Edinburgh, EH6 5QG Tel 0131 554 9977 www.foe-scotland.org.uk

* For a brief history of how corporations got human rights check out the new issue of the indispensable Corporate Watch. £4 inc. postage to 16 Cherwell St., Oxford, OX4 1BG Tel 01865 791391 www.corporatewatch.org

* The Environmental Law Centre is organising a conference on the 24th November which will focus on key issues of injustice in the UK legal system and whether the Human Rights Act will make any differences. It's at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London. (nearest tube Holborn) Bonafide law students/ NGOs free on first come basis/ Others £50 www.ele.org.uk

* 'Challenging corporate influence over our lives, our politicians and global trade.' Public meeting to launch the World Development Movement's campaign on the threat posed by the World Trade Organisation to public services worldwide. Thursday 9 November, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL 7-9pm (nearest tube Russell Square)

Let It Rip

This week the RIP (Regulation of Investigatory Powers) Bill (SchNEWS 269) kicked in. Companies can now legally read every personal email on their employees' computers, as long as they quite rightly suspect monkey business (that's the powerful Data Protection Act showing its teeth). The Human Right to Privacy? Well luckily decent citizens like your good selves have nothing to fear have you. By next year all internet providers (Yahoo etc) will have to have that 'black box' which makes all data available directly to MI5. A way around this is to choose a provider that's based overseas. And rather than saving dodgy info on your computer's hard drive, store it on the internet where you can retrieve it as and when necessary (e.g. www.freedrive.com; for more info on all this check out the Foundation for Information Policy Research: www.fipr.org/rip/).

We think that the Bill Of Human Rights should be extended to those without enough rights: corporations. Here's our proposed Bill Of Corporate Rights:

1. Nothing Should Get In The Way Of Making Money.
2. Corporations Are More Important Than Humans.
3. Corporations Are Humans If They Want To Be.
4. Business Is More Important Than The Environment.
5. It Is Everybody's Right To Deprive Their Children Of A Habitable Planet.
6. Governments Who Bring In The Bill Of Human Rights Are In No Way Obligated To Follow It.

Hot Air Conference

Next month (13th-24th November) will see negotiators from 180 countries get together for the Climate Change Summit 2000. Supposedly, their aim is to thrash out a solution to climate change. But, in reality, it's very unlikely that they'll get to grips with the problem. For the wealthy countries, the summit will be an exercise in trying to avoid changing their oil guzzling ways. The small, low-lying islands, at risk of being flooded out of existence, will struggle to make their voices heard. Meanwhile, the oil, coal and gas corporations will be lobbying feverishly to prevent any action reducing their profits and our reliance on fossil fuels.

* Actions will be taking place throughout the conference, and there will be a Counter Summit. www.aseed.net/climate/climate.htm

* A group interested in **Direct Action** will be going from Britain between the 17th and 25th. Some people are cycling over. If you are interested in going with this group, go to the preparation day in **Oxford** on the 11th - accommodation available. 01865 791391 or e-mail: info@risingtide.org.uk

* On Monday 13th in London **Reclaim The Streets** are putting on a public action at City Airport, to coincide with the last day of the fuel protest deadline and the first day of the climate conference.

* Two **Critical Mass** bike rides have been organised in **Sheffield** to coincide with the beginning and the end of the Conference. Monday 13th Meet 7.45am at Devonshire Green, and Saturday 25th meet 12 noon Devonshire Green. criticalsheffield@yahoo.com

* **People & Planet** are travelling together from Harwich Port in Essex, leaving on Friday 17th and returning on Monday 20th. All your travel from Harwich Port to The Hague and back, plus 3 nights' accommodation will cost you just £25. phone 01865-245678 www.peopleandplanet.org/climatechange/summit.asp

* Tony Blair this week made his first speech about the environment after three and a half years in power (obviously a top priority!). He promised a meagre £50 million of lottery cash for renewable energy. But what he didn't mention was his Government's support for the nuclear industry's efforts to promote itself as clean energy! While Europe has stopped building nuclear reactors, the only lifeline left for the failing nuclear industry is to pass off itself as a (fluorescent) green option for the developing world. The nuclear industry pretends it produces hardly any carbon dioxide emissions and therefore contribute to a cleaner environment. But massive amounts of energy are used in mining, transporting and processing uranium, not to mention building and decommissioning of nuclear reactors and dealing with all the nuclear waste produced. Unless we take action, the Climate Summit will result in nuclear energy being officially recognised as an environmentally friendly source of energy. WISE will launch it's Don't Nuke The Climate campaign to expose this scary development. www.antenna.nl/wise

* For in depth information about climate change check out Issue 11 of Corporate Watch, 01865-791391 www.corporatewatch.org, or for a brief outline see SchNEWS 263.

Positive SchNEWS

This week is Energy Efficiency Week. As part of the week the Energy Saving Trust have been promoting their "Energy Efficiency Recommended" label that appears on electrical equipment which reaches an efficient standard. According to a survey by the Trust only 3 percent of people buying new electrical appliances actually consider the impact it will have on the environment. For more info on this and other energy saving tips phone 0800 512012 who will put you in contact with your nearest Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, or visit www.saveenergy.co.uk

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Inside SchNEWS

Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera are the two founding members of the Organisation of Campesino Environmentalists in Mexico, who have been campaigning against excessive logging in Guerrero state. In May 1999 they were arrested and detained, and while in prison awaiting trial they were tortured in order to make them sign self-incriminating statements. Despite a statement in July by Mexico's National Committee on Human Rights (a government organisation), acknowledging they'd been illegally detained and tortured, they were found guilty in August, of drugs and firearms related crimes. Rodolfo was sentenced to 6 years and 10 months, and Teodoro to 10 years. Amnesty International recognises them as prisoners of conscience. Their treatment in prison has been appalling- both have had restrictions on visits, and there is now evidence that a prison director is hiring other inmates to beat them up. Rodolfo was a recipient of this years Goldman Environmental Prize for his campaigning. For more info contact Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW Tel: 020 7413 5566 www.amnesty.org

***Urgent appeal for witnesses:** If you were in the Strand between 7.50 and 8.05pm on Mayday, particularly if you have photos or video, contact Hugh Mullin at McCormacks solicitors 020 8372 1959

More dam lies

"I stand by my statement of last year, that if the height of the dam is raised an inch from its present height. I will sacrifice my life" Medha Patkar, leader of the NBA.

Last Wednesday saw the end of a six year long battle by the people of the Narmada Valley to halt further work on the Sardar Sarovar dam. This is one of the world's most controversial dam projects. It will forcibly displace more people than any other infrastructure project in the world except for China's notorious Three Gorges Dam. Work on the dam has been stalled since 1994 while opponents led by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) battled in court to stop its height being raised. Last weeks decision gave the go ahead for the height of the dam to be raised by five meters immediately and for further increases at a later date. This will lead to the submergence of hundreds of more villages, displacing 200,000 people. A condition of the courts approval was that the authorities draw up a resettlement plan, but the government has already admitted there is no land available for resettlement. Anti-dam activists throughout the Narmada Valley have vowed to drown themselves if their villages are submerged. Send a free fax opposing the dam to the President of India at www.tpc.int/sendfax For more info on the dam visit www.narmada.org

* There will be a demonstration at the Indian High Commission, after the rally against the Ilisu dam in Parliament Square this Tuesday (31st October) which starts at 12pm 01865 200550 www.ilisu.org.uk

* The Chinese have developed a serious dam fetish and have built more dams than the rest of the world combined. Their latest plan is to use nuclear explosions to blast a tunnel through the Himalayas, through which they will divert the Yarlung Zangbo river, in order to supply water to what will be the world's largest hydroelectric dam. Not only will this contravene the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, it will also put China in control of water supplies to Tibet and parts of northern India. Chinese dam projects have already infuriated its neighbours. Earlier this year Vietnam took the unprecedented step of issuing a public statement criticising the construction of 14 dams along the Chinese stretch of the Mekong River. It remains to be seen whether the World Bank will provide any backing for the new scheme.

SchNEWS in brief

Some dates for November... On the 1st **Fox Hunt Sabbing season begins** For details of your local sab group ring Hunt Sab Association 01273-622827 ****Nuclear Trains Day of Action**, 3rd. Day to make people aware that trains carrying spent nuclear fuel travel through their areas. Contact: West Midlands CND 0121-6434617 ****Benefit night for Peoples' Global Action** on Fri 3rd at the Arsenal Tavern, 175 Blackstock Road, London N4. (tube & BR Finsbury Park) Featuring Maroon Town, One Style and Tarantism, DJ Megabitch. Stalls, info, Prague videos. £4/3 8.30pm-2am, www.agp.org ****National Demo against Huntingdon Life Sciences**. Sat 4th. Meet at main gates 12 noon Woolley Road, Alconbury, Cambridgeshire. SHAC 0121-6326460. www.welcome.to/shac **Also on the 4th **Hands Around the Home Office**. Defend asylum seekers. 11am Embankment, London. **15th **'Grants not Fees' Demo** 11.30am outside ULU Malet St., London. Students are calling for outside support with a more *direct* approach. Campaign for Free Education PO Box 22615, London. N4 1WT 07958-556756 email cfe@gn.apc.org ****Oscar Olivera**, leader of the uprising against World Bank prescribed water privatisation in Bolivia has received a Human Rights Award. After months of public protest the government was forced by public demand to stop US-based Bechtel buying a city's water system. ****Seoul, South Korea, Oct. 20th:** unarmed protesters were 'avin it at a demonstration against a summit of Asian and European leaders, which had to be protected by about 1000 police. ****Worthing's cheeky troublemaking, whistleblowin' monthly news-sheet, The Porkbolter** has released a compilation book of the past 30 issues. Copies of the Whole Hog can be bought for £2 (cheque or stamps) to The Porkbolter, PO Box 4144, Worthing, BN14 7NZ www.worthing.eco-action.org/porkbolter

Squat's in a name?

An assorted group of Newcastle's residents have occupied a derelict city centre building in protest at what they see as the increasing corporate take-over of their city. The property, formerly a recycling centre, is set to be demolished to make way for Electric City, a large leisure complex housing a cinema, shops, car park and bowling alley. With the squatting of the building - renamed Eclectic City - the group are aiming to highlight issues such as homelessness, lack of cultural spaces and alienation of the city's residents. "We are increasingly living in a corporate city which means a lot of expensive sameness with more and more people being excluded and feeling they don't belong," said a group member. Another told SchNEWS "This is really exciting. This is the first political squat in Newcastle for years." If you want to check out the free café, library and environmental centre or hear music powered by bicycle generators, get down to 109 Pilgrim St. They're in the High Court today-to find out what happened call 04325 130529.

...and finally...

Those DNA juggling scientists who created Dolly the cloned sheep are now genetically messing with cows. These nutty professors are trying to genetically alter cows to produce 'humanised milk'. Apparently this milk is to be used for premature babies and has no commercial application. Yeah sure. Forgive us for being a bit cynical but this research was funded by none other than baby milk producers SMA, who of course have absolutely no vested interest in exploiting cows or women for profits. Maybe they'll start genetically modifying women to produce cows milk?

disclaimer

Don't worry readers - it'll be all rights on the night. Honest.