

MASS DUST-RUCTION

"This war is a campaign of humanity."
- Donald Rumsfeld US Defence Secretary.
"The mother held one child after another. Her eight-year-old daughter had been killed. A small girl, half naked, was cradled in one of the woman's arms, emitting tearing screams whenever she was moved -- into the X-ray room, out again, into the treatment room. Her face was ripped by shrapnel. Another child was in a bed. The doctor lifted the blankets to reveal a bloody mess of open leg. She howled and screamed as they tried to clean it, called out to Allah while her mother and aunt held her. Her head was heavily banded and one eye closed and swollen. 'The skull is also open,' the doctor said."
- Jo Wilding, activist staying in Baghdad.

So let's get this straight. America and Britain are busy helping to save the Iraqi people by blowing them up (instead of liberate read eliminate), bombing them with weapons of mass destruction because we are told Iraq has, er, weapons of mass destruction. After last Friday, Iraqis have been treated to the 'mother of all bombings' - the most momentous display of firepower in the history of warfare. This has then been followed by 'smart bombs' so pinpoint accurate that they've hit everything from a Baghdad market to a Syrian bus carrying civilian passengers to their own planes! As Dr. Mohammad T. Al-Rasheed so aptly pointed out, "The logic of killing hundreds of thousands to get rid of one man is the logic of the megalomaniacs and the demented."

Many of the bombs being dropped on Iraq contain Depleted Uranium (DU), a radioactive by-product from nuclear reactors. So no need to worry, if the bombs don't get you then the uranium will. When a DU shell explodes, it sends out dust particles contaminated with uranium that are small enough to be inhaled - high doses kill, low levels can cause cancer. And the dust particles make no distinction between civilians and the military. The United Nations has passed two resolutions which include depleted uranium weapons among "weapons of mass or indiscriminate destruction", and have also found them incompatible with International humanitarian or human rights law. The uranium used has a half-life of 4.5 billion years (for all you non-scientists out there, that means it takes a bloody long time to decompose) and Professor Doug Rokke, a former US Army physicist, sees it as "a form of nuclear weapon that contaminates everything and everyone."

Since the last Gulf War, leukaemia and Hodgkins disease in Iraq have increased tenfold, as has the proportion of babies born with birth defects -without heads, brains, spines

and limbs. Cancer specialist Dr Jawad Al-Ali describes the dust as carrying "the seeds of our death" and estimates that in the southern Iraqi city of Basra almost half the population could develop cancer within ten years.

If the bombs and poisonous dust don't kill Iraqis, then how about the last twelve years of sanctions, the most draconian ever imposed by the United Nations (see SchNEWS 235). The sanctions block medicines, ambulances, food, and even pencils and crayons destined for primary schools (they might take out the graphite for use in nuclear power stations!). Denis Halliday, who was sent to Iraq as the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, described the sanctions' effects on Iraq as "nothing less than genocide." Similar words have been used by his successor, Hans Von Sponeck. Both resigned in disgust.

Before the sanctions, Iraq had the best national health service in the Arab Middle East. Now, according to UNICEF, up to six thousand children die each month as a direct result of the sanctions and not, as Blair assures us, because Saddam starves them. 32% of children under 5 are chronically malnourished and suffer and die from preventable and curable diseases due to a massive lack of medical supplies. A visiting child psychologist reported that some children no longer play games because the games remind them of dead friends they used to play with.

The sanctions have also made the catastrophic effects of depleted uranium in Iraq even worse. After the last Gulf war, southern Iraq is still littered with burnt-out tanks contaminated with the remains of a million depleted uranium shells. While in Kuwait millions were spent on environmental clean-up efforts, Iraq had only scarce funds for reconstruction, leaving radioactive waste to rot, untreated. The resultant epidemic of cancers is a catastrophe that Iraq's health care system can't cope with, thanks to sanctions which block medicines getting through and which make drugs too expensive for the vast majority of people.

But then this war was never about liberating the ordinary people of Iraq, but about oil and controlling the Middle East. As journalist Paul Routledge said, "The New World Order turns out to be the The World Ordered Around by the USA. The 21st century looks like being the century of unrelenting American imperialism. Its slogan: 'Agree with Washington - or you are dead.'"

For a different perspective on the war see: www.indymedia.org; www.zmag.org; www.aljazeera.info/

Recommend reading: John Pilger "The New Rulers of the World" (Verso 2002); Anthony Arnone "Iraq under siege" (Pluto Press 2003).

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For dressing up as a bunny!

Children in New York were distressed to see the Easter Bunny being taken away in handcuffs from outside the local K-Mart last week. The bunny was protesting about the shop replacing the traditional chocolate Easter bunny in their baskets with candy toy soldiers armed with machine guns and rifles. For her trouble, she was nicked for trespassing.

JO WILDING'S DIARY

Jo Wilding is a peace activist monitoring the situation in Baghdad. Here are a few excerpts from her diary: **March 25th:**

In the end, three people died yesterday in the farmhouse which was bombed at Dialla, including the young wife, Nahda, who was missing in the rubble. She, along with Zahra the eight year old daughter and her aunt, Hana, were buried this morning. People are taken for burial in coffins but are buried in shrouds. A pick-up truck returned to the remains of the house with the three caskets riding in the back, cobbled together out of small pieces of wood.

In fact, the couple had been married just one week, not three as I wrote yesterday, and a neighbour showed us a flouncy pink invitation to the wedding festival. Omar, the bridegroom, sat silently crying on the floor in the hospital corridor, leaning on the wall, body bent, head in his hands.

There was nothing which could explain the attack: nothing which even looked like a target that, perhaps, the pilot might have been aiming for. It made no sense. The villagers said the plane had been circling overhead. Its pilot must have seen what was there

March 26th: Saad Shalash Aday is another farmer from Al Mahmoodia in South Baghdad. He had a fractured leg and multiple shrapnel wounds including a ruptured spleen, perforated caecum, colon and small bowel, and abdominal and leg wounds. Two of his brothers, Mohammed and Mobden, were also injured and ten year old twin boys Ahmed and Daha Assan were killed in the same house when a bomb exploded two or three metres from the building. The doctor, Dr Ahmed Abdullah, said two other men were killed in the same attack around 6pm yesterday (Tuesday): Kherifa Mohammed Jebur, a 35 year old farmer, and another man whose name nobody present knew.

"Is this democracy?" the men demanded to know, gathered by Saad's bed. "Is this what America is bringing to Iraq?"

Dr Ahmed is Syrian but has lived and worked 27 years in Iraq. He wasn't working yesterday but estimated about 30 casualties came into Al Yarmouk hospital. That's just one hospital and yesterday was a fairly light day of bombing. It makes no sense for me to speculate about the plans and intentions of the US/UK military, because I don't know, but several incidents of attacks on farms have been reported to us.

Diary in full at: www.bristolfoe.org.uk/wild-fire/iraq/index.htm

ISLAND GRIDLOCK

Last Thursday people woke up and heard the bombs had started falling on Iraq. Thousands bunked off work and school and took to the streets from Dundee to Brighton, and all points in between...

In **Worthing** a few hundred blocked roads and occupied McDonalds. In Tory toy town **Saffron Walden**, once host to the Levellers rebellion, people re-discovered their roots and staged a protest in the town centre. In **Rochester**, protesters brought traffic on the A2 near Rochester Bridge to a standstill with a demonstration and sit down protest. In **Cambridge** 400 people sat down in the city centre bringing traffic to a halt for six hours. The nearby Army Recruitment Centre was shut down for the day following an occupation by 35 people. Aggressive Cambridge police (one had to be restrained by a colleague) arrested 22 people, some as young as 14. Schoolkids in **Lancaster** shut down the city for five hours and occupied the town hall. Thousands caused gridlock in **Bristol** and surged through police lines to close the M32. Many cities were closed down by thousands: Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Swansea, Cardiff, Barnsley, Little Nothington... the list goes on.

UNUSUAL BUSINESS

We all know about the 200,000 people who turned out to march through central London on Saturday, but what we're not told about are the numerous small groups, like the 300 protesters who gathered in Bangor, Wales, to mark the end of a 24 hour rally. At the US spy base at Menwith Hill, North Yorkshire, a thousand people took part in a 'Foil the Base' demonstration. Attempting to disrupt satellite signal receivers by having as much foil in the air as possible, people came dressed in glitter wigs and silver body paint while decorating police vans with tinfoil, fake blood and No War signs, then deflating the tyres for good measure. There were 11 arrests, but all but two were released without charge. One of the two, Christine Reid of CAAB, was charged with criminal damage for writing a peace message on a barrier at the main gate and adding the word War to a traffic Stop sign.

And this week the protests continued. On Monday, 7 people blocked

the runway at RAF Valley, Anglesey for four hours by chaining themselves to drag nets, preventing Hawk fighter jets from taking off and training pilots for the war. More people blockaded and chained shut the main gate. Fortunately, there were no arrests. At RAF Welford in Berkshire on Tuesday, 4 activists locked themselves to a car and then to each other, successfully preventing a convoy from transporting bombs to RAF Fairford. In the early hours of Wednesday morning, a man climbed to the top of Hulme Bridge in central Manchester and fixed a 'No War' banner to it. He stayed up there for around 8 hours, during which time the bridge, a busy road, had to remain closed. He eventually climbed down, leaving his banner behind, and was arrested for "placing items above a carriageway and causing danger to road users." For the latest on protests see: www.indymedia.org.uk

A few selected highlights of upcoming events and demonstrations planned for the coming weekend and onwards are: **Saturday (29) London** Various stop the city actions. Meet noon outside London School of Economics, Houghton St, off Kingsway, (Holborn tube) **Wandsworth Stop The War** will be meeting at 11.30am, Clapham South Tube Station & head for Brixton Ritzy for 1pm to join a South London protest. **Edinburgh**, 1pm, assemble Waterloo Place, **Manchester**, 1pm, meet Heywood St. Cheetham Hill or Platt Fields, Wilmslow Rd, **York**, Block & Awe disruption in city centre (blockandawe@hotmail.com), **Swansea**, noon, protest in Castle Square, **Chatham**, noon, Riverside to Rochester Castle** **Sunday (30) - London**, 1pm, picnic in Parliament Square, **Stourbridge**, 1.30pm, Balloons not Bombs, picnic area, Mary Stevens Park ** **Monday (31) Blackpool**, 6pm, assemble opposite Winter Gardens** **April 5-6 Reclaim the Bases** Lots of actions across the country. To find out where 07887-585721 www.reclaimthebases.gzzzt.net/listing.html.

To keep up to date with anti-war protests check out the SchNEWS party and protest section on our website.

We are also compiling a list of regular demos and vigils etc so please send details to stopwar@schnews.org.uk. Also check out our useful list of anti war resources and let us know of any we've missed out.

WORLD OPINION

"There may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion." - **New York Times, February 2003.** Actions against the war happened all over the globe as soon as America started dropping its humanitarian bombs. Here's a small selection of some of the highlights...

USA

* Since war started there have been almost continuous protests in **San Francisco**. The scale of the protests have been met by the scale of the policing operation and harassment, with over 2000 arrests, mostly for failure to disperse and highway obstruction. The punishment for this heinous offence was being pushed about, dragged around by your hair, and arrested by 12 riot cops at a time. The whole of SF was shut down for 16 hours last Thursday - rather than having one mass march there were many different mobile groups. The mobility of the protests was what proved most effective in shutting down the city - blocking intersections, occupying buildings and performing hit and run actions on corporate targets kept the cops out-maneuvred and overstretched all day. Police response was also hampered as many cop cars had windows smashed and tyres slashed to limit their movement. <http://sf.indymedia.org/>

* The award for the nicest protest award goes to a group of women who held a knit-in under the banner "Crafty Bitches, Knitting for Peace."

* Last Saturday a quarter million people marched through **New York** city centre, while in **Chicago** over 10,000 people gathered. There were over 800 arrests when the authorities refused to allow protesters to return to the convergence point and penned hundreds who wished to leave. Who were then arrested for not leaving! <http://chicago.indymedia.org/>

EUROPE

* In **Göteborg, Sweden**, over 40,000 people marched through the city on Saturday and on Sunday there was street theatre in the shopping centre. <http://sweden.indymedia.org>

* In **Spain** thousands took to the streets in opposition to Prime Minister Asnar's support of the war. In Madrid a breakaway protest went to demonstrate in front of the US Embassy - the police charged en-masse into the crowd to break it up.

* In the Slovenian capital of **Ljubljana**, protesters gathered at 2am in front of the US Embassy as soon as the bombing had started. A presence was maintained until the main demo at 4pm, when a crowd 1500 strong tried to storm the embassy but were driven back by riot cops.

* If you thought British or American cops were nasty, just be thankful that they don't carry mp5 submachine guns, AK47s or possess tanks, which is what greeted anti-war protesters in **Istanbul, Turkey**. Despite such massive police presence, protesters closed down the streets for a few hours, with no injuries or major arrests.

* The **Danish PM** was covered with red paint, just after he'd given a speech offering support for George W. Bush.

* In **Athens**, the up-for-it Greek Anarchists were joined by lots of unruly schoolkids. Together they "un-renovated" a recently restored posh hotel. The embassies of pro-war countries (Italy, Portugal, Britain) also got redecorated with stones and the Ministry of Internal Affairs was toasted with Molotov cocktails. Most anger was saved for the US embassy,

where there was a fierce battle with the Greek police using chemical weapons (tear gas) to disperse the crowd. One report said that the gas near the embassy was so suffocating that a pigeon flying above fell dead. Just yer typical Athens demo! www.geocities.com/anar_gr/english.htm

AFRICA

* In **South Africa**, schoolkids led the protests in **Cape Town** and were joined by workers from factories. The US consulate has seen a continuous picket outside it since the war started, with at least 50 people always maintaining a presence.

ASIA

* In **Pakistan, Karachi University** was occupied when students and teachers went on strike. Six protesters and 12 police were injured in **Calcutta, India**, when 1000 people tried to storm the US cultural centre. Thousands of workers took the day off work in **Delhi** to demand the government oppose the war.

* In **Yemen**, three protesters and a policeman were killed when a riot broke out after police tried to disperse an unauthorised demo which was approaching the US Embassy.

* In **Cairo, Egypt**, a group of 5000 was dispersed by the police spraying blue soapy water! In eleven other Egyptian cities there were large demos and strikes. *Five different demonstrations happened in **Lebanon** where protesters were repelled by water cannons when they charged the British Embassy.

* In **Jordan** there was a ban on pro-Iraq demonstrations and a gathering outside a Mosque was broken-up by a police baton charge. Journalists were also attacked and had cameras confiscated. The next day protesters attacked police with stones, who responded with tear gas.

* In the **Philippines**, spontaneous and organised protests have occurred before and after the war started. 10,000 people protested in front of the US Embassy in **Manila** on March 22. Two days before, the Embassy had been pelted with red paint bombs.

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

* In **Melbourne**, 30,000 people held an emergency demo, shutting down the city centre with a simulated air-raid siren reminding residents of the realities of what it must be like in Baghdad. Later, 500 people marched to the US Consulate which was pelted with paint bombs.

* In **Perth**, 2000 workers downed tools and walked off their construction sites to join the protests against the war. Schoolkids walked out and there was a sit-in in front of the US consulate where a rally was held before police got fed-up with the situation and dispersed everyone, arresting 11.

* In **Sydney**, 20,000 took to the streets in the pouring rain and the New South Wales premier had his car paint bombed. On Sunday, 50,000 took to the streets.

* The **Australian Prime Minister**, John Howard, had to leave his house by the back when Greenpeace activists chained themselves to his gates last Wednesday and blockaded a major road in the capital.

* In **New Zealand**, 600 marched to the US Consulate in **Wellington**, where ribbons and photos of Iraqis were laid at the gates. Some candles were lit and one accidentally lit the ribbons and photographs. Ooops! There were bigger protests with 4,000 on Saturday. One police photographer suffered cholesterol damage when he was hit by an egg.

CANNON FODDER

When two brutal regimes clash, they always need as much human cannon fodder as possible. Saddam's policy is to keep his loyal Republican Guards close to him, to protect him from the US/UK invaders. While he puts poorly-equipped conscripts as cannon fodder to face US/UK forces in the desert, and threatens them with torture of their families should they desert the frontlines. The US has a different arm-twisting technique – to dangle offers of skills training, free college education and health care in the faces of poor Americans in order to get them to sign up to whatever crazy cowboy scheme Bush comes up with. The sad result is a disproportionate number of 'people of colour' on the US frontlines in the Gulf. During the first Gulf War, over 50 percent of front-line troops were non-white, although people of colour only make up around 10 percent of the overall population. Over 30 percent of US troops are non-white but they make up only 12 percent of officers.

When recent studies showed a dip in young African-Americans' interest in becoming patriotic cannon fodder, the Pentagon schemed up a flashy new Spanish ad campaign targeting Latino youth. But all the promises of 'adventure', and 'career' are as empty as the thing between George Bush's ears. Most recruits never get any college funding from the military and only a small amount graduate. To top it all off, the skills you learn in the military are geared towards military jobs, not civilian careers; so when you finally leave after years of blind discipline, many employers may tell you to go back to school and get some proper training. As vice-president Dick Cheney smugly put it, "The reason to have a military is to be prepared to fight and win wars...it's not a jobs program." So the US military can't guarantee that you'll get educated or that you'll even be alive at the end of your eight-year commitment. They can't even promise you won't be desperately ill from one of many "mystery illnesses" like those of the Vietnam and Gulf wars. What they can promise is a series of absurd conflicts, all aimed at lining the White House's pockets and often placing the soldiers in extreme health risk. Whether it's atomic testing in the 1950s, Agent Orange during the war against Vietnam or exposure to depleted uranium in Gulf War I the US military excels in using its soldiers as guinea pigs and then covering up any supposed 'side effects'. The big hush hush at the moment is the disastrous effects of Gulf War Syndrome.

Gulf War II has proved to be not too dissimilar from the first Gulf War. The US frontlines are filled with stupendous amounts of 'cannon fodder of colour.' As coalition casualties pile up, the human faces of the US military machine are revealed. The dead US Marine, Kendall Waters-Bey, comes to mind. His irate father appeared on CNN berating George Bush and saying the only reason his son had joined the Marines was to escape the streets and be able to provide for his son. Kendall's sister Nakia also hit out "This war's all about oil and money. (Bush) ought to send his own daughters over there to fight."

See www.objector.org, www.afsc.org

War briefs

If you want some interesting new **anti-war posters** check out www.uhc-collective.org.uk/ ** **Media Storm Shelter** everyday at the London Action Resource Centre (LARC) with a café and open access radio - where the war media gets torn to pieces. Broadcast across London on Resonance 104.4 FM, online at <http://freeteam.nl:8000/uknowar> 11am-12pm. LARC is open daily 10:00am till 10:00pm, 62 Fieldgate St E1 (Whitechapel Tube) 020 73779088. ** **'Salt in the Wound' an anti-war single** featuring Jello Biafra and Conflict is out this week. If you fancy seeing Conflict on Top of the Pops, why not get yer hands on a copy. www.peace-not-war.org ** If you get arrested at a military base, you could use the defence that you are upholding **international law**. http://osstw.lautre.net/article.php3?id_article=30

SCARE FORCE

Before last Saturday, SchNEWS hacks thought that going for a peaceful walk in the Cotswolds was about as law-abiding as you could get. How wrong we were! Despite it being a day of brilliant sunshine, the long arm of the state hung a dark cloud over the national day of action at USAF Fairford in Gloucestershire.

From the minute they arrived in Fairford, the 4,000 strong crowd was surrounded by layers of riot cops on horses, men with dogs, RAF police, US security police and bog-standard military police - armed with guns, batons and other maiming weapons - plus razor wire all arranged to protect B-52 bombers being loaded with cruise missiles. Police snatch squads darted into the crowd, grabbing a few people who were wearing white overalls and arresting four people. Police evidence gatherers filmed peaceniks as they strolled down country lanes, while other coppers had a go at people for sitting on a town green and threatened them with arrest for 'deviating from the agreed march.' Some coppers even refused to let children put flowers by a fence.

Three coaches driving up from London were turned back before they even reached Fairford. A would-be peace protester explains, "The police called in 4 police forces specifically to stop us. There were about 200 officers involved. We were searched and filmed when we got to within 10 miles of Fairford. We were then escorted back to London by a helicopter, 3 police vans, and 6 motorcycles, an escort which changed in each county!" Police searched people and vehicles for "offensive weapons" under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice Act, but the only things they found worth confiscating were headscarves and body padding. Among the passengers was the 64-year old aunt of one of those killed in New York on September 11th. Over the past weeks hundreds of people have been stopped and searched in the Fairford area by police using powers under the 2000 Terrorism Act. For legal info see www.gwi.org.uk

* Sam Grafton and Joss Garman were arrested inside Fairford on Wednesday night "by a Texan with a machine gun." They're being held on remand under various conspiracy and criminal damage charges. They've been told that because deadly force has been authorised in the area, it is for their own protection that they are being held! Contact: 07773 1552657.

Inside SchNEWS

As so many people are being arrested for non-violent direct action and protests, it's as important as ever to write to prisoners and to support them in court. Here are a few people who'd love to hear from you...

Toby Olditch and Phillip Pritchard - caught on USAF Fairford property allegedly trying to damage war machinery: Toby - JT 5132, Phillip - JT 5131, both at HMP Gloucester, Barrack Square, Gloucester, GL1 2JN. ** **Angie Zelter** - Charged for trespassing onto a US air force base near nuclear capable F-15 Strike Eagle aircraft, contact David 01508-550446. ** **Karen Fallon** - charged with criminal damage to a hanger window at Shannon Airport - Limerick Prison c/o 210 Le Fanu Rd., Ballyfermot, Dublin 10, Ireland. ** **Barbara Smedema** - Disabled an American communications satellite at the military airport of Volkel, in the Netherlands. Contact: P.I. Ter Peel, Patersweg 4, 5977 NM Evertsoord, Netherlands. ** **Arthur Milling and Dr Margaret Jones** will be in court on 23 May for cutting their way into Fairford and causing £50,000 of damage to B52 support vehicles two weeks ago. Contact: media@tridentploughshares.org. ** **Other peace prisoner info**: www.peacenews.info. For Legal info check out www.gwi.org.uk/legal.htm

OIL EXCHANGE

A week before war started, twenty anti-war activists disrupted trading for 2 hours at London's International Petroleum Exchange (IPE), Europe's major centre for trading in futures contracts for crude oil. They highlighted the obvious links between war in Iraq and the west's compulsive oil habit. Sandra Reid, a member of the direct action group Infernal Petroleum Experience said: "Oil courses through the veins of the capitalist system, turbocharging its destructive impacts. We are taking direct action to stick a well placed spanner in the war machine."

Despite being set upon by traders, the protesters were able to unplug telephones and computers and bring trading to a standstill. Two people managed to barricade themselves into an office for 40 minutes until they were dragged out by police.

Repeated claims by politicians that the war in Iraq has nothing to do with oil are contradicted by the desperate volley of leaflets that continue to rain down on Iraq, reminding its citizens that: "If the oil industry is destroyed, your livelihood will be RUINED!", and by Bush's desperate pleas to the Iraqi people not to set fire to their oil wells.

Earlier this month, 60 anti-war student protesters, many of them dressed in tiger suits, invaded the grounds of ESSO's UK HQ. A 12 foot wooden model of an oil tanker bearing the slogan "ESSO's Going Down" was dumped in the company pond. This followed actions in February in which activists shut down the power to pumps and locked petrol nozzles together at 119 ESSO stations across the UK. Further info from www.stopesso.com 0870 010 9510

* A Methodist minister and two grannies dressed in mourning garb were arrested on Tuesday night during a 30-strong peace demonstration at an ESSO petrol station in Exmouth. One of the women, Mo Mooney, an ex-Wren said: "I served my country for many years and as far as I'm concerned I'm serving it now." They were bailed to return to Exmouth police station next month.

* **March to the End of the World** this Saturday (29), to mark the second anniversary of Bush's dumping of the Kyoto agreement on Climate Change. The 20 mile march starts at Esso HQ in Surrey and ends at the US Embassy in London, but you can join it along the way. Contact: www.campaignagainstclimatechange.net 020 8855-3327.

* **Behind the Propaganda – deconstructing BP**. Talk about BP's dirty tricks and human rights abuses around the world, speakers from West Papua and Colombia, 31st March, 7pm, Cowley Club, London Road, Brighton.

* On April 24th join the **Carnival Against Oil Wars & Climate Chaos** as they greet BP's annual general meeting at the Royal Festival Hall in London. 01865 241097 www.burningplanet.net

SchNEWS in brief

The Court of Appeal has upheld a High Court Ruling that **Section 55 of the Immigration and Asylum Act is illegal**. Section 55 was set to withdraw all financial support to asylum seekers who didn't immediately apply for asylum on arrival in the UK. Because of the finding, asylum seekers can now continue to look forward to a massive 70% of the dole, but this may be short-lived as David Blunkett has vowed to make changes to Section 55 in order to make it legal. www.refugeecouncil.org.uk ** While war hysteria continues, the state is continuing to further erode our rights. In the latest **Criminal Justice Bill** making it's way through Parliament are proposals to give police powers to take fingerprints and DNA from anyone who is arrested regardless of whether they're charged or not. ** **Stuff the War!** The SchNEWS mailout will bite the dust if we don't more help, if you've got a couple of hours spare on Friday afternoon to help out in the office then get in touch with us.

CLASS STRUGGLE

Striking school children, some as young as 11 and 12, brought Brighton City Centre to a halt last Thursday in protest over the British and American invasion of Iraq. Taking to the streets with chants of "No War," "One, two, three, four, Tony Blair is Bush's whore," and other brilliantly unprintable slogans, the students blocked roads in the city centre for nearly four hours, telling perturbed motorists to "Turn off your engines, you ain't goin' nowhere." Cynical, disillusioned Brighton activists were spotted in the area, wandering in a haze of shock, awe and respect, gobsmacked by people half their age with twice as much energy and imagination. "I was just about to trade in my Palestinian scarf and trendy body jewellery for a thankless call centre job," said one old, formerly disenchanted 23-year-old in a faded Che Guevara t-shirt. "But today has convinced me that the revolution may still be possible!"

Meanwhile, one group of school kids (pursued by rabid Socialist Worker's Party paper-sellers) broke off from the main march and paid a visit to the local American Express building. The pledge of allegiance was not said, the star spangled banner was not played, but nonetheless, the American flag became the centre of attention for much of the crowd, who decided the old stars and stripes were in need of a drastic makeover. An upstanding, tax-paying, Daily Mail-reading bystander who was later quoted in the Argus, described the event as sickening and depraved, but a nearby American reckoned it was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen.

Earlier in the day, in an important lesson on free speech, teachers and heads around the city locked many young pupils into their schools, desperate to keep them from expressing an opinion. Pupils at Blatchington Mill, Cardinal Newman, Dorothy Stringer, Vamdean, and Patcham were threatened with suspension, expulsion, and extra citizenship classes (to teach them the real meaning of democracy and blind obedience) if they left school to participate in protests. In some cases, pupils even faced locked gates and the harrowing spectre of future visits from local blood-thirsty pro-war MPs. But in a series of daring walk-outs and escapes, hundreds of locked-down school kids still managed to join the protests in the town centre.

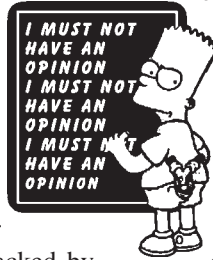
SchNEWS were on the scene at Blatchington Mill when, at 11am, a brave group of around 50 students walked out of school past barely-opened iron gates and a grimly frowning headmaster. (Readers may remember Blatch's open-minded head, one Mr. Neil Hunter, when he referred to pupils that had staged a spontaneous anti-war demo a few weeks ago as "mindless idiots." Since the spontaneous walk-out, six Blatch kids have been excluded and the "always wanting to show both sides of the argu-

ment" Mr. Hunter has invited the local pro-war MP, Ivor Caplin, to come and spew pro-war propaganda at the school.) After leaving Blatchington, the triumphant procession of Blatch kids met up with nearly 200 other excited and out-of-breath pupils who had just rushed out of Cardinal Newman. "We've just escaped, we've just escaped our school," they panted. "They tried to lock us in!" Teachers had tried to lock gates and chase anti-war escapees through the school grounds, but many kids still managed to find a way out. As SchNEWS rounded a corner near Cardinal Newman school, the sight that awaited was grand indeed - 20-30 blue and grey-jumpered Newman kids pouring over an exterior stone wall after teachers had blocked all other routes of exit from the school.

Eventually the whole group of anti-war pupils made it safely and soundly down to the Old Steine for a day of protest and road-blocking. Many of the kids were still around at 5:30 the same afternoon, when nearly 5,000 people (probably Brighton's biggest ever demo) converged on Churchill Square. Even in the evening, most of the chants and road sit-downs were led by school kids from all over the city. As one young protestor explained, "We did it because we wanted our voices to be heard. We were rebelling against the Government because we feel it is rebelling against us."

* Kids in Therfield school Leatherhead who bunked off to go to an anti war demo where given lines by the Headmaster "I will not walk out of school."

* Thousands of newly politicised school kids took part in anti-war demonstrations all across the UK last week. For more info from the school-uniformed frontlines in Manchester, London, and hundreds of other cities, check out www.indymedia.org.uk



BRIGHTON AGAINST THE WAR

Schoolkids Peace Demo, Saturday 29. Come show your support for the coolest kids ever!! Assemble Madeira Drive (by Sea Life Centre), 11am.

Hove Peace Demo, Saturday 29, 11.30am at Hove Peace Statue for march to Hove Town Hall at noon.

Anti-War Gathering, every day at the War memorial, Old Steine, 5.30-6.30pm.

Weekly Anti-War Demo, every Friday starting today. Assemble Churchill Sq, 5.30pm for a rally and peaceful protest.

Public Meeting, Wed 2 April "Where is the anti-war movement going?" BRIGHTHELM CENTRE, 7.30-9.30pm.

Protest At Northwood Military Hq, London, 6 April - Transport leaves St Peter's Church, Bton at 9am. £5. Tickets will be available from Community Base, Queen's Rd, Brighton
Sussex Action for Peace 01273 706820
www.safp.org.uk

RACHEL CORRIE RIP

Rachel Corrie, an American international peace observer in Palestine, was run down and reversed over by Israeli digger drivers while trying to stop them from bulldozing Palestinian houses in Rafah. Murdered on the 16th of March, she was the first international to be killed since the beginning of the Iraqi conflict. Rachel had been volunteering for the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), a Palestinian led organisation attempting to alleviate human rights abuses in the occupied territories. As such she was a part of an international collective, taking direct action to resist the brutality of Israel's 36 year military occupation. 600 homes have been destroyed in Rafah since the beginning of the most recent Intifada. On average, 3 Palestinians a day are killed in the occupied territories.

The ISM has been criticised for supporting and protecting those involved in Palestinian violence, such as suicide bombers. But as Rachel said in an email just before she was killed "If any of us had our lives and welfare completely strangled, lived with children in a shrinking place where we knew, from previous experience, that soldiers and tanks and bulldozers could come for us at any moment and destroy all the greenhouses that we had been cultivating for however long, and did this while some of us were being beaten and held captive- don't you think we might try and use violent means to protect whatever fragments remain ...The vast majority of people here, even if they had the economic means to escape, even if they wanted to give up resisting on their land and just leave, can't leave ... I think this qualifies as genocide"

Israel's occupation of the Gaza strip and the West Bank is totally illegal under international law (The Geneva Convention), but there is no suggestion that there's going to be any pre-emptive strikes by the US. Instead the US provides Israel with \$10bn a year in aid. This compares to a measly \$1.7 billion that they've set aside to help rebuild Iraq after they've totally obliterated it.

Following Rachel's death, protests took place in her honour across the world. In Palestine, these were attacked by the Israeli army.

Members of the ISM have vowed to continue their peace work in the region www.palsolidarity.org

SchNEWS Of The World

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...and finally...

Last Thursday in San Francisco, direct action found a new form of expression when a group tired of samey-samey protesters set up Pukers4Peace - inducing vomiting in the plaza outside the Federal Building in San Francisco to show how sick the war made them feel. One barfer said, "Militarism makes me sick. Puking is the most disgusting display of emotion that is still legal." "My puddle is the longest-lasting one," proudly declared one protester, as pools of chuck had people pegging their noses for the afternoon.

The pukers were part of a protesting marathon during which a San Francisco cop told the local paper, "After 16 hours of fighting communists and anarchists, a Red Bull can help us go another 16 hours. We're here as long as they are." Lovely product placement! Don't it make you want to puke?

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all pigs with wings not to take any bull.Honest!

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