



WAKE UP! IT'S YER NO-TIME-FOR-A-SIESTA

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MAI EYE!

It was hailed by the economists as the **Organisation that would bring about global prosperity (where have we heard that before). Where the weakest nations of the world would be put on the same footing as the most powerful. But the WTO's rulings have produced a 'race to the bottom' with every environmental, health or safety policy it has had to rule on deemed an illegal barrier to trade. Now with its fifth Ministerial meeting approaching next month in Cancun, Mexico, the World Trade Organization is in crisis and heading for deadlock.**

America continues to block an agreement for access to cheap medicines for developing countries, while a new agreement on agriculture is nowhere in sight as the US and the European Union defend their multibillion dollar subsidies. Brussels is on the verge of imposing sanctions on Washington for giving tax breaks to exporters, while Washington is threatening Europe with a trade war over their plans to label genetically modified foods.

Yet despite this the European Commission and Japan, egged on by massive corporate lobby groups such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the Transatlantic Business Dialogue and the European Services Forum, are pushing for a new Multilateral Agreement on Investment (or MAI – see SchNEWS 141). With backing from such big business free market fundamentalists alarm bells should start ringing, and most developing countries and NGOs are either opposed to, or remain highly suspicious of a new MAI.

The first MAI proposal was defeated in 1998 in what some have hailed as the first bloody nose dished out by the emerging new global protest movement. A year later massive protests led the WTO talks in Seattle to collapse (see SchNEWS 240). But, once the MAI had been rejected, Western governments simply went on to negotiate mini versions on a nation by nation basis - with a staggering 450 being signed. When the protestors get a victory, big business and governments simply shift the goalposts and carry on regardless. Some argue that it is better to have a WTO type body to keep an eye on than a corporate free-for-all, but that is no better than asking

people around the world if they would prefer to have their legs cut off or their arms.

Corporate Conquistadores

Together Walt Disney, Nike and McDonalds spend more on advertising each year than the poorest 18 countries spend on health and education. The top ten companies worldwide already make over £1000 billion a year - far more than the combined wealth of all the countries in Africa and South Asia. But that's not enough for the corporate fat cats. Behind the scenes multinationals are busy working together in their corporate clubs, lobbying and twisting the arms of governments to agree new trade rules that will give them even greater wealth and influence.

From the corporate perspective, the 'ideal' MAI would be one loaded with rights for the companies without any responsibilities. For example it would become an offence under WTO 'barrier to trade' rules for a country to protect local companies or show favour to those involved in ethical or sustainable

practices. In any case the power of multinationals makes a mockery of any so-called level playing field. Business conditions are loaded in their favour, technical development monopolised and when recession bites – they simply pull out.

Worse still, an MAI would make 'liberalisation' permanent – that is, once a public service has been sold to the lowest bidder, there'll be no turning back without breaking WTO rules. Public protest, change of government – tough – under the MAI privatisation is forever.

But what's the problem with foreign investment? A new report 'Unlimited Companies' by ActionAid shows how often big business is allowed to trample through the developing world, pissing on peoples' rights; evicting them from their homes, squeezing them out of business and refusing to allow workers to join unions or get a decent wage.

In July the United Nations Development Program released its annual Human Development Report. During the economically prosperous 1990s 54 countries ended the decade poorer than when they started.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For Firing A Water Pistol

A man in county Durham was CS sprayed and arrested after a policeman driving a vehicle was caught in the crossfire of a vicious water pistol fight. When the copper was squirted 'at close range from a pressurized water gun' into his car he thought he'd join in the fun – with a can of CS. A police spokesperson claimed the officer was 'temporarily blinded' by the water, justifying the charges of a Public Order offence, resisting arrest and causing danger to a road user!

In India, hundreds of 'untouchable' Dalit have been protesting outside a new Coca Cola bottling plant since April last year. The protestors say the factory is in breach of India's laws, has offered few local jobs and has contaminated water supplies. "Ever since the Coke factory came up, I cannot run the pump even for one hour due to depletion of water in the well. As a result, there was total crop failure during the past two to three years," says Shahul Hameed, a local farmer who used to grow rice, coconut, mango, and groundnut on land adjacent to the bottling plant.

In Brazil, thousands of local dairy farmers have gone bust or been squeezed out of the market after multinationals Nestles and Parmalat gained control of over 50% of the Brazilian dairy sector in the late 1990s. Prices fell by 50% for farmers in Minas Gerais state and 70,000 poor producers had to stop supplying the largest companies "Parmalat punished us for two years, paying lower and lower prices for our milk, so we had less and less to pay our bills," says Renat Hildt, a family farmer from Rio Grande do Sul.

The report concludes that a WTO investment agreement would make things even worse. As Luke Eric Peterson, a Canadian researcher, explains "The only MAI that these countries really need is a Massive Aid Influx - serious new flows of public monies from the West to support basic public goods in the developing world." But then that's the sort of do-good nonsense that's not gonna make anyone rich and powerful.

* Join the protests to derail the talks www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/cancun

* Check out Corporate Europe Observatory's essential www.investmentwatch.org for up to date news and analysis on the MAI and WTO.

* For copies of the ActionAid report - 020 7561 7561 www.actionaid.org

ANOTHER BRICK IN THE APARTHEID WALL

On Tuesday, more than 40 Palestinian, Israeli, and international human rights activists were detained while attempting to block the demolition of part of a Palestinian family's home, near the village of Mas'ha. The building was to be demolished by the Israeli Military because it lay in the path of the Apartheid Wall that Israel is constructing on occupied Palestinian land. Two internationals were beaten; one, a US citizen from Los Angeles, was repeatedly kicked in the stomach and may have sustained broken ribs. Bulldozers moved in immediately to demolish part of the family home.

This is the latest in a string of events relating to the construction of a separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank. The officially stated reason for building the 'security fence' (which is three times higher and longer than the Berlin wall) is to prevent the unauthorised passage of Palestinians out of the West Bank. However, the route of the wall does not follow the internationally recognised pre-1967 borders of the State of Israel, and the authorities refuse to publish the official path of their 'security fence'. However, research carried out by the Israeli

human rights group, B'Tselem, shows that the planned route for the fence will isolate a number of Palestinian villages and rob a great many more of their farmland, enabling the acquisition of even more Palestinian land. www.palsolidarity.org

* Next Saturday (16th) the Israeli army will be descending on Brighton! Checkpoints will be set up around the town centre by the International Solidarity Movement in protest at the continued occupation of Palestinian land. Call 07977204334 for more details or to join us on the day

* More anti-border action. Last month more than 100 activists peacefully invaded the "First Hospitality Centre" in Bari Palese, Italy, with some migrants managing to escape. This was preceded by a first demo on 24 July, followed by a 1000 strong demo on 26 July. See: www.noborder.org/news_index.php.

* In mid-October a Palestinian hip hop act called DAM are coming across to the UK for a short tour and are looking for sympathetic groups/collectives to help put them on. The tour is to raise awareness of current Palestinian issues. www.freesaj.org.uk or info@enlighten-palestine.org 07919134144.

SchNEWS In Brief

Cardiff Anarchist Network are holding a 'Disarm the Arms Trade' benefit next Tuesday (12th) at the Toucan club, St Mary St £/2, 8-late. www.geocities.com/bozavine/can ** For the latest on **DSEI - Europe's largest arms fair** coming to London next month check out www.dsei.org The next planning meeting is this Sunday (10th) 2pm at LARC, Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel. With a month to go, people are needed to make this day happen and to shut down the death fair. If you can't make meetings there is also a discussion list. To subscribe send a blank email to dsei_dasubscribe@yahoo.com ** **The Anarchist Trade Union Network Discussion Group** is a temporary resource set up to discuss the re-launching of the Network, hoping to reach practical and concrete ideas/proposals to take to a re-launch meeting at the **Anarchist Bookfair** in October. Join the discussion via the website: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/atundiscussiongroup> ** **Want to extract yourself from the evil grip of Microsoft?** Seeds for Change are running a workshop for activists this weekend in Lancaster for those who want to switch to **Linux, a free and easy-to-use alternative to Windows**, created through sharing and co-operation. All levels of skill are welcome. 01524 383 012 <http://seedsforchange.org.uk/aktivix> ** **Corporate Watch** have released an excellent set of extensively researched documents covering the GM industry and individual companies. Well worth checking out - www.corporatewatch.org ** **Variant**

magazine are investigating casualised immigrant labour and the UK companies that profit from it (fruit farms, sweatshops and so on). If you have any experience of this sort of casualised slavery let them know at cheaplour@bopenworld.com ** People in Cambridge are holding an information action this Saturday (9th) 10am at Tesco in Newmarket Road against the introduction of **RFID chips** (see SchNEWS 415) on trial in the supermarket. A chip triggers a camera to photograph anyone who picks up a packet of Gillette razors, which is then stored in a database. Gillette have already cancelled trials in the US after customer complaints. indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/cambridge ** **Statawatch** have just published a critical report into the new **UK-US Extradition Treaty** signed without any parliamentary debate. Under it, the allegations of the US government will be enough to secure the extradition of people from the UK. However, if the UK wants to extradite someone from the US, evidence to the standard of a "reasonable" demonstration of guilt will still be required. For a copy call 208 802 1882 or read it at www.statewatch.org/news/2003/jul/25ukus.htm ** **Sherwood Forest Camp** have organised a Beech party for this Saturday in support of their campaign to save ancient trees from developers. Meet under the Major Beech and bring beech clothes and beech balls, bucket and spades etc, and stay and camp if you can. Go to Mansfield Woodhouse train station and call Cookie on 07890165727 ** *For more events see Party & Protest on www.schnews.org.uk*

Inside SchNEWS

Sherman Austin, webmaster of RaisetheFist.com was sentenced to one year in federal prison, with three years of probation, for creating an anarchist web site with links to sites on how to build bombs. On top of his year inside, the stipulations of his probation read more like a fascist regime. Check this:

- (1) He cannot possess or access a computer of any kind without prior approval. (Whoa... don't point that mouse at me!!)
- (2) Any equipment he owns is subject to monitoring, search and seizure without notice.
- (3) He must surrender his phone, DSL, electric, and satellite bills.
- (4) He cannot associate with any person or group that seeks to change the government in any way (be that environmental, social

justice, political, economic, etc.)

(5) He must pay over \$2,000 in fines.

All this, mind you, for simply publishing some information that is probably available at your public library, and without otherwise committing any kind of violence.

Austin is in effect blindfolded and gagged while the US military are free to use explosives as they see fit, as they have done for years.

Judge Wilson also ruled that Austin can't associate with anyone from a group that "espouses physical force as a means of change"...as if Austin wanted to hang out with the US government anyway...

To send support to Sherman Austin e-mail: keepthefistraised@yahoo.com before Sept 3rd www.raisethefist.com

Positive SchNEWS

In case you were sleeping in a fridge, Wednesday was the hottest day of the year so far. Climate change experts are saying that global warming is happening quicker than forecast. The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) has come up with the Carbon Gym for kids. The Gym includes interactive theatre performances and science workshops to explain the tools and techniques being developed to reduce our carbon emissions e.g. eating local food, energy efficiency, renewable energy and green transport. Visit the Gym at CAT's visitor centre. Contact them at CAT, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 9AZ, Wales. 0845 330 8373 www.cat.org.uk

* Yesterday, Daniel Blackburn set out to drive from Land's End to John O' Groats - but instead of filling up his car with diesel at petrol stations, he'll be buying vegetable oil at ordinary shops and using that instead. Vegetable oil, taken from plants such as rape, sunflower, linseed and hemp, is carbon neutral. This means that the carbon dioxide released in combustion is re-absorbed from the atmosphere when the crop is grown again. Mr. Blackburn said: "Many people do not know that vegetable oil is a better fuel than diesel for car performance and it is perfectly legal if you pay duty on the cooking oil. Being from a farm I also know how farming needs new ideas to survive. If vegetable oil becomes a fuel for the future, farmers and rural economies could, for a change, benefit from the results of our nation's addiction to motoring." 07976903637 www.vegoilmotoring.com

* If you want to get involved in climate change campaigning contact Rising Tide 01865 241 097 www.risingtide.org.uk

* A new website has been launched by green groups campaigning to increase the amount of energy supplied by wind power in the UK. www.yes2wind.com

* Treesponsibility is a local climate action group, based in the Upper Calder Valley, West Yorkshire that's been busy reforesting steep, eroded hillsides as a natural means of flood defence. In the past two years they've planted 11 hectares of new woodland, which will absorb roughly 5,000 tonnes of CO2. But now all their work could be wiped out by plans for an open cast mine. Local councils have already rejected the proposal but the developers are appealing saying their project offers "the only hope" of repairing this badly damaged land. Treesponsibility beg to differ and have set up a fund to create a new community woodland. If you can help financially call 01422 843222 www.watershedappeal.org.uk

...and finally...

A South African hospital cleaner bit off more than she could chew when enjoying her employer's canteen goulash.

Sophie Matlala sat down to her lunch and ate a few spoonfuls before "tackling the meat". She found she couldn't cut it with her knife, so picked it up and tried to bite through it, but still failed. On closer inspection Ms Matlala and her colleagues noticed that it was a penis.

The hospital confirmed this, but said that - as it had been cooked - they couldn't identify whether it was human or animal. Following the incident Ms Matlala said she vomited all day, became a vegetarian, and sought psychiatric help. A judge recently ruled that she could not sue the hospital for this distress as the incident occurred 3 years ago.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - don't be caught napping during the corporate takeover. Honest.

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