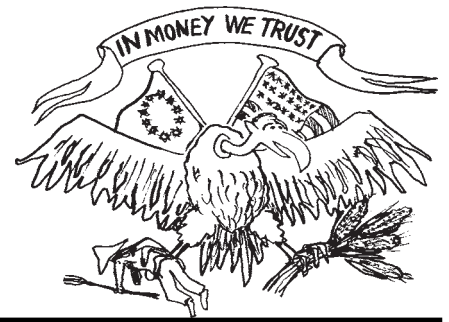




WAKE UP! IT'S YER TRIPS OFF THE TONGUE...

# SchNEWS

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## AGRI-VULTURES

**Battle lines being drawn, accusations flying, corporations spewing propaganda, humanity threatened— it seems all's going according to plan for the WTO Ministerial Meeting that begins in less than two weeks in Cancun, Mexico.**

With the arrival of angry peasants, slimey fat cats and disillusioned Majority World leaders, the meeting seems destined to fail to achieve anything. So what's new? Well, while Western governments seem drunk with corporate-sponsored ideas of investment 'agreements' and trade liberalisation, thousands of activists, peasants, workers and even Majority World governments can be heard shouting 'biocolonialism', 'food sovereignty' and 'piss off with your subsidies'. 66 out of the WTO's 112 Majority World member countries are now defiantly opposed to discussing any new trade agreements with the West.

Agriculture and patents have emerged as major stumbling blocks for any negotiations in Cancun. A few decades ago, the US threatened to leave the General Agreements on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) if it couldn't protect its agriculture from foreign competition. But by the 1980s US big business had outgrown its markets and there was a crisis of overproduction so hey presto! – the US pushed for the Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) which would supposedly "correct and prevent restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets."

So what happened? The US and the EU kept subsidising their farmers and protecting their markets with tariffs while Majority World governments were forced to scrap any such protective measures. And in rolled all the cheap, subsidised Western agricultural imports, destroying thousands of Majority World farmers. In the US, Dubya pushed through the Farm Security Act of 2001 which gave \$170 billion over 10 years to mainly corporate farmers in the US while throughout the West prohibitive tariffs were raised against agricultural imports from the Majority World. Correcting distortions in the world agricultural market huh?

Thanks to subsidies EU sugar processors receive a guaranteed price three times that on the world market. The EU is the world's biggest exporter of white sugar as export prices are only a quarter of production costs. In 2001 the EU exported thousands of tonnes of white sugar to Algeria and Nigeria which are both natural export markets for African producers like Mozambique. The only problem is poor Mozambique can't compete with subsidised EU sugar. Similarly, in Mexico thousands of *campesinos* have failed to compete with floods of subsidised US corn and have been forced into poverty, sweatshops or dangerous US border-crossing in search of work. The distortion never ends.

### TRIPS DOWN MEMORY LANE

**"Americans taking out a patent on basmati rice is like Indians taking out a patent on fat Bon Jovi fans with mullets"**

— comedian Rob Newman

Patents are another favourite Western tool to distort world trade. They thought they'd trip up the Majority World with some more confusing initials: TRIPS, the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, a protectionist WTO agreement fiercely contested by Majority World governments. TRIPS was aggressively campaigned for by the US - it guarantees protection of patents for a minimum of 20 years and according to watchdog writer Aziz Choudry it's the "ideal means to make all WTO member countries comply with a standard set of laws which legally protect the technological monopoly of transnational corporations... which own most patents."

TRIPS goes hand in hand with WTO attempts to liberalise agricultural trade and expand multinational corporations' control over food and biodiversity. In order to enforce this, the US throws its weight around saying that countries that fail to adopt patent protecting laws are engaging in 'unfair trading practice' and may be subject to trade sanctions. Funnily enough, Western corporations plundering the biodiversity and indigenous knowledge of the Majority World doesn't qualify as unfair in the WTO dictionary. In a new twist of 'biocolonialism', seedy seed corporations like Monsanto are nicking the innovations of small farmers and indigenous peoples, patenting the seeds and forcing those same small farmers to buy back the seeds.

Asia produces over 90 per cent of the world's rice and these rice sales make up to half of Asia's farm incomes. There are more than 140,000 different varieties of rice that small farmers in Asia have collectively cultivated over generations without needing to perform any patent-theft. The continent consumes a third of the world's agricultural seed but accounts for less than a quarter of the \$30 billion annual commercial seed market. So corporate fat cats rub their grubby hands – Asia is a 'potential market'! The seedy corporations aim is simple: most seed patents are owned by just six seed corporations which coincidentally also happen to be the world's largest pesticide corporations. Through patents, seed companies can stop farmers from sharing or saving seed, control what pesticides they use and can even claim ownership over the harvest. Bloody marvellous! Land custodians become slaves and corporations become the new colonial masters.

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

**For spitting a plum stone onto a road**

Yiannis Tassos, a Greek farmer, was driving near the northern city of Serres, happily munching on some plums that he grew. After spitting a plum stone out of his window he was stopped by an over zealous traffic cop (over zealous cops in Greece – never.) Even after apologising three times for this 'offence' the cop fined him £55, deducted three points from his license and he has to go to court in October charged with littering. Sounds plum stupid to us!

In India, basmati rice exports were worth over \$400 million in 1998-99. Then RiceTec Inc, a Texas-based corporation, waltzes in and wins a US patent on basmati rice. This corporate theft seriously endangers the livelihoods of thousands of Asian farmers. "The US is complaining about bootleg music cassettes in Thailand while simultaneously robbing our farmers' knowledge and heritage," said one irate Thai farmer.

So is the WTO meeting gonna put an end to Western protectionism and patents on life? Course not. The EU recently muttered something about major reform of its agricultural policy and then proceeded to pump millions more into agricultural subsidies. Obviously the corporate farming and agri-business lobby is too powerful for our 'leaders' to overcome. But then distant leaders aren't gonna change things, people at the grassroots are, with ideas and action. Ideas such as 'food sovereignty' and 'sustainable agriculture' are growing in a world of profit-driven, corporate controlled agriculture. This is what floods of Thai and Indian protesters have been demanding in the streets of South Asia. This is what 100 000 *campesinos* screamed for when they marched through Mexico City in January. These ideas are also being planted in soils all over the world.

One example is MASIPAG, a community-managed rice and veggie project in the Philippines. Nearly 600 farmer-bred lines and 75 varieties of rice are grown and are further improved by more than 10 000 small scale farmers. Another example is the 'New Agriculture' Movement in Bangladesh where farmers cultivate hundreds of different rice varieties using innovative indigenous methods and succeed in getting bumper harvests. In a world of industrial agriculture, sustainable agriculture is both a real possibility and a vital alternative: local farmers empower themselves by controlling land and decision-making power; small scale, indigenous practices are privileged; crop rotation encouraged and fertiliser and pesticides avoided.

But in order for local, sustainable agriculture to be empowered we need a sustained growth of people power to fight institutions like the WTO which are drunk with myths of environment-destroying, corporate controlled agriculture. Cancun anyone?

See [www.zmag.org/WTO.pdf](http://www.zmag.org/WTO.pdf)

## Positive SchNEWS

Everyone except the flat earth society knows climate change is happening, so instead of more doom and gloom facts and figures we thought we'd include a few positive stories of people getting off their backsides and making a difference...

Two wind turbines are to be installed at the University of East Anglia (UEA), which will generate more than enough power for the whole campus, with the surplus being sold back to the National Grid. This is part of a broader project, Cred, (The Community Carbon Reduction Project) set up at UEA to reach the government's target of reducing carbon emissions by 60% by 2050, but in half the time.

The UEA is running courses and meetings open to the whole community offering support and advice about DIY low impact energy - such as how to make solar cells that you strap to your roof to provide hot water. Cred 01603 592836 [www.cred-uk.org](http://www.cred-uk.org)

Meanwhile, Nidderdale High School and Community College in Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire is the third and largest school in the UK to install its own wind turbine. The turbine generates enough clean, sustainable energy to provide 15-20% of the school's needs - as well as dropping the fuel bill.

A turbine at Cassop Primary School in County Durham has been in operation since 1999 and provides twice the school's electricity, with surplus going back to the Grid, and the school is also setting

up an environment centre. Furthermore, Catchgate School in County Durham powers itself completely with its own turbine. If a few schools can do it - what about the rest of us! These projects show that climate change can be tackled in a grass-roots, community way, and that these systems need to become commonplace.

Climate change campaigners Rising Tide have just launched a CD ROM manual on how to turn your home into a low energy ecohouse. It contains a virtual tour of their own low energy showhouse, articles, briefings on all aspects of eco-design. Some of this material is already on the web at [www.theyellowhouse.info](http://www.theyellowhouse.info). The CD costs £12.50 (cheques payable to the Climate Outreach and Information Network) from 16 B Cherwell St., Oxford OX4 4BL.

To receive Rising Tide's informative monthly newsletter send a blank email to: [news-subscribe@risingtide.org.uk](mailto:news-subscribe@risingtide.org.uk)

\* Last Thursday Daniel Blackburn became the first person to drive from Land's End to John O'Groats fuelled by vegetable oil [www.vegoilmotoring.com](http://www.vegoilmotoring.com)

\* This Saturday (30th) MERCi Manchester's only Centre for Sustainable Living is having an Open Day. 12-3pm, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats. Solar powered DJ workshop, gardeners corner, scrap art workshop, bike maintenance workshops & nature walk, and stuff for kids. 0161 273 1736 or [www.bridge-5.org/](http://www.bridge-5.org/)

## Refuse Council

Asylum seekers have been camped outside Refugee Council HQ in London since the beginning of the month protesting against Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act which says if you don't claim asylum as soon as you arrive in Britain you won't receive any help whatsoever from the state.

The refugees from such 'safe' places as the Congo, Liberia, Palestine and Sudan, were evicted from their rooms because they didn't apply for asylum in a "reasonable and practical time" even though many applied within one or two days of arriving. "We stayed together and slept outside the Refugee Council. They told us it was illegal for them to help us, even though Refugee Council's duty is to represent and care for refugees. We were left with no food, no mats or blankets, no information about our cases, and no medical care. We got cardboard to sleep on. Local people urged Social Services to give temporary housing to some of us who were sick. Local Mosques and churches particularly helped with emergency floor space."

The Refugee Council hasn't been as accommodating, with security staff hassling refugees and asking the local council to remove gifts given by well-wishers! Not surprising really as the Refugee Council has received £60 million to implement Section 55! "We are denied all we need to rebuild

our lives. We are fleeing persecution, war, genocide, torture, ill treatment, and discrimination. We are stamped like animals, labelled, treated with mistrust so that no one believes anything we say. You are not treated as a person, but as a number. When we go to Refugee Council they don't ask our names but say, "Are you Section 55?"

Other refugees and sympathisers can join the protests 6-8pm every day Bellefields Rd, behind Refugee Council in Brixton, SW9.

\* In late July judges ruled that applying Section 55 is "inhumane and degrading treatment and violates the Human Rights Convention". On Wednesday the government lost its appeal against the decision although the judges said they could see no reason why the new regulations could not work effectively once a few changes had been made.

\* Help scrap the inhuman "Section 55" [desituteasylumseekers@hotmail.com](mailto:desituteasylumseekers@hotmail.com)  
Legal Action for Women 020 7482 2496

\* Four asylum seekers inside after the Yarlwood trails (see last weeks SchNEWS) would love to receive letters of support. They are Henry Momadou KW6755, Behar Limani EM9849 and Aliane Ahmed HE5354 all at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, PO Box 757, Du Cane Road, Acton, London, W12 0AE and Naseem Mostaffa HF5951, HMP Lindholme, Bawtry Road, Hatfield, Woodhouse, Doncaster, DN7 6EE.

## A Bit DSEI

London is preparing for Europe's largest arms fair, Defence Systems Equipment international (DSEI) - with British tax payers financing the protection of arms dealers who'll be busy shopping for weapons, fighter aircraft, bombs and landmines.

Police have confirmed that 1,600 uniformed officers will be protecting the arms dealers every day from 6-12 September. Policing will cost £1m and at no cost to the exhibitors.

The government already subsidises the arms business with a generous £763m a year, allowing the export of weapons to countries with records of sustained human rights abuses, such as Turkey and Indonesia, and often encourages arms supplies to both sides in areas of conflict, such as India and Pakistan.

\* For more information on transport or if you are organising transport yourself and need to fill some empty seats contact [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org) or call 07817 652029

\* There's a picket outside Spearhead Exhibitions, the organisers of DSEI, next Wednesday (3) 12 noon at their HQ in Apex Tower, New Malden, Surrey near New Malden train station 020 7607 3616 [london\\_yscnd@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:london_yscnd@yahoo.co.uk)

\* CND are having a free festive peace party on 14 September with everything from the Wango's music stage to the Big Sexy Festy Party - and, of course, SchNEWS. It's at Victoria Park, London noon till 7.30pm 0207 700 2393 [www.cnduk.org](http://www.cnduk.org)

SchNEWS Annual 2003 'Peace de Resistance' is now in bookshops all round the country. To find a shop in your area go to [www.schnews.co.uk/peaceederesistance/distrolist.htm](http://www.schnews.co.uk/peaceederesistance/distrolist.htm) or order one from us for £10 incl p&p cheque payable to 'Justice' at address below

## SchNEWS in brief

The **Bilston Glen Anti Bypass Site** outside **Edinburgh** needs more visitors. To entice you they've organised a Budefest for 6-8th Sept promising 3 days of riotous punk and on 27-28 September there's a work/action weekend. The planned road will destroy a local wood and is a private project backed by companies such as Biotech, famous for cloning sheep. For directions call 07986 632 429 [bilston.glen@dhmail.net](mailto:bilston.glen@dhmail.net) \*\*

The legal battle continues against £38 million **Barnstaple Western Bypass** and Downstream Bridge scheme funded by Devon County Council. The road will wreck a wildlife-rich area made famous in Tarka the Otter and is in contravention of European legislation on nature conservation, specifically the Birds Directive. To keep up to date with developments 01769 550909, [otter@pixeyweek.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:otter@pixeyweek.freeserve.co.uk) \*\* Yesterday morning people from **Rising Tide** occupied the offices of the **Export Credits Guarantee Department Offices** to protest against their likely funding of the **Baku-Ceyhan Pipeline**.

For more about the project get a copy of 'Oil be Damned'. Just send a VHS-sized SAE to London Rising Tide, c/o 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES [london@risingtide.org.uk](mailto:london@risingtide.org.uk) \*\* Schwoops - the new squatted social centre we mentioned last week is in Newtown, New South Wales Australia and not...er Wales. <http://sydney.indymedia.org/> \*\* The **Greenpeace flagship Rainbow Warrior** is due to arrive in Iceland in two weeks to join local groups in protest against resumed whale hunting which the Icelandic government tries to justify on "scientific" grounds. Tel. 0207 8658100 [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org) \*\* Donations of radical books, fanzines, videos etc in any language are wanted for a **new social centre** being set up in **Prilep, Macedonia**. Send stuff to Goran, Tocila 2, E1 2/6, 7500 Prilep, Macedonia or email [subverzija@mail.com](mailto:subverzija@mail.com) for more info \*\* **Is Small Beautiful?** A one-day conference is held next Wednesday (3) with discussions on everything from bio and nano technology, corporate power to 'can globalization be good for you?' It's at Regent's College Conference Centre, Regent's Park, London (Baker Street tube) 9.30am - 5pm Tickets are £30 to book call 0800 389 1624 \*\*

Twenty demonstrators were injured in **Tegucigalpa, Honduras** on Tuesday when protests escalated against the government's efforts to secure a £637m loan from the **International Monetary Fund**. The loan comes with demands for the privatisation of drinking water facilities and wage-freezes for doctors and teachers.

## ...and finally...

The BBC Radio 4's infamous Today programme has signed up the former Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short to report on the coming World Trade Organisation talks in Mexico. Short is no friend of the protester declaring at the failed WTO talks in Seattle, four years ago: "[They are] misguided, white, middle-class activists". At Genoa she reckoned that "the money people spend coming from the rich world to protest on behalf of the poor could be directed into doing more in the developing world." And at Doha she came out with the corker that "the demonstrators' demands are very similar to those of Bin Laden's al-Qaida network." SchNEWS can't wait to hear what short snappy sound bites she'll come up with to call the hundreds of thousands of poor peasant and urban protesters who are planning to demonstrate against the WTO. No doubt it'll be traditionally unbiased.

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers not to take any bad trips. Honest!

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