



# ARMLESS FUN

**"It is like any other trade exhibition. It is like the motor show in Birmingham or exhibitions at Earls Court. This happens to be for the defence industry."**

**- Paul Beaver, spokesperson for DSEi organisers Spearhead.**

Now - while SchNEWS knows that cars can kill and aren't too good for the environment we reckon that Apache fighter helicopters, landmines and cluster bombs are just a tad more harmful to civilians. This is the sort of euphemistic blather coming from the suits this week at Europe's biggest arms fair - Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi pronounced 'dicey') at the ExCel centre in east London - the place where state terrorism is labelled 'defence', cluster bombs become 'cargo ammunition' and bombs are creatively called 'air delivered weapons'. At DSEi 'terrorist' regimes are welcomed alongside the 'good guys' alike as 'clients', side by side, queuing up for weaponry. Luckily there were over 2,000 tooled up coppers to hold back the persistent direct action and blockades against the 'fair with the scariest rides in town'.

To get an idea of what gets sold at the arms fair take cluster bombs: they've got a bad name because they contain many bomblets which often don't explode in the initial attack - just like unexploded landmines. Already over 1,000 Iraqi kids have been injured by cluster bomblets since the 'end' of the war on Iraq. Doing a roaring trade in these is Israel Military Industries Ltd who are still licking their lips after flogging loads of cluster bombs to Britain before the war on Iraq. Britain's largest arms company, BAE Systems, bought over 20,000 rounds of Israeli cluster weapons just before the Iraqi war. Then the British army went on to fire over 2,000 of these Israeli cluster bombs during the battle for Basra. DSEi welcomed another sketchy Israeli weapons producer, Rafael, who develop missile systems by testing them on Palestinian civilians. Their most infamous missile test was its Gill Spike missile test, which they first tested on a civilian home in Beit Jala in 2000.

Despite all the deceptive words and oppressive security a few thousand protestors took part in a flood of guerrilla actions and demonstrations over the four day arms fair. The police spokesperson, Greg Pig Trotters, said their operation was "very patient, very sensitive and very low key" - but this came as news to the people of

Newham - the borough where the ExCel exhibition centre is based - who witnessed the biggest ever police operation in the area. As one of the poorest boroughs in London, Newham locals called for the arms fair to be cancelled and would prefer the £1+ million spent on policing it to be channelled into regenerating their neighbourhoods.

## Rowed Block

In the run-up to DSEi the death fair's organisers Spearhead had their offices occupied while at the same time people in rubber dinghys blocked DSEi warships. On Saturday morning DSEi attempted to sail 4 warships along the Thames to the ExCel Centre but, alas, 30 water-tight activists were there blocking the lock gates and the swing bridge with good ol' D-locks. There was a four hour window in which the tide allowed entry into the docks so the last 2 ships had to abort their mission. During the week protesters posing as arms dealers joined the hundreds of other dealers and buyers on the trains to the ExCel Centre. Three suited protesters couldn't wait for the fair and started selling their wares on the train: Announcing they had arms for sale they opened their brief cases revealing dismembered Barbie dolls' arms.

Tuesday was declared a 'day of non-violent direct action' against DSEi with a Campaign Against the Arms Trade march attracting about 2,000 protesters. This culminated in the 'Fluffy DSEi' action, with the aim of blockading DSEi, where a crowd of about 1,000 protesters blocked the Connaught Bridge entrance to the fair. For the next few hours it was a game of cat 'n' mouse between agile glittery protesters and stropo cops as protesters blockaded roundabout after roundabout, occupying a different main road every time the cops threatened arrests.

Wednesday, the 'no rules direct action day', started with an uncontrollable critical mass outside ExCel, and a protest at the London office of Israeli weapons maker Rafael by Palestinian Solidarity group ISM. Meanwhile the suits streamed into the centre, many using the Docklands Light Rail (DLR), which was just asking for some direct action to blockade it. Over the course of the day the transport police had their work cut out removing locked-on protesters from the DLR carriages as loadspeakers at the stations apologised for delays saying it was due to - wait for it - 'passenger action'.

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

Plenty to choose from during the week of protests at DSEi. The crappiest include: For swimming in the Royal Docks; For paddling a dinghy in the docks; For stealing your own bike... \* The Legal Defence & Monitoring Group urgently need to contact any witnesses to arrests during the protests (including those with photos & video). If you saw anything email [ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk)

While entry to the conference by train was being derailed, another sorted crew pushed a car out onto the road to block the eastern entrance of the centre, which was the beginning of a several hour blockade of the entrance. Meanwhile the road outside the centre was blocked at several points during the day.

Taking another approach, six cunning activists had formed their own 'arms company' - the Affinity Group - with their own official website and business cards, and then applied for invitations to the death fair. They waltzed in, suited and accredited, and went on to occupy two tanks, daubing them in 'Stop Death' banners before they were chucked out by security.

Later in the day there was excitement at the Canning Town roundabout when the flyover above was shut down with a banner as a crowd stormed the roundabout until the robocops - tooled up and outnumbering protesters - pushed the line back. Then minutes later like the cavalry coming over the hill, the sound of samba drums and a flash of pink and silver saw the samba block take the roundabout again, though again the sheer number of coppers stopped anything lasting very long. Meanwhile local rudeboys from the nearby estate tucked in, egging on protesters and throwing eggs at coppers. Other locals took part in the actions while many sat on balconies shouting stuff like "Those coppers are denying you your rights, mate!"

While some of the actions were inspirational and we caused serious disruption at times, we didn't shut down DSEi. We needed more people - what ever happened to the one million plus who marched against the war on Iraq in February? With 10,000 people in the Docklands on Wednesday instead of 1,000 we could have kicked the arms dealers out of London for good. We need to take the opportunity to kick the war-profiteering scumbags where it hurts, and the weapon should be mass direct action. At the next DSEi arms fair in two years, it's up to us to make sure that the death fair bites the bullet. \* To see what really happened check out Indymedia, who'd run a media centre near ExCel the whole way through the week. [www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk), [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org)

## HEARING VOICES

The Occupying Forces in Iraq got a good kick in the propaganda department last Saturday, when eight activists from Voices in the Wilderness gate crashed the weekly press conference held by US Commander Lieutenant-General Ricardo Sanchez. Things turned nasty for the General when one person asked why it is that when US soldiers die in Iraq they get a full investigation, but when Iraqi civilians get killed by US soldiers they get ignored. After listening to him spout 'we take every civilian death very seriously' shite for as long as she could, another woman from Voices grabbed the mic' and listed the names of the Iraqi civilians killed or injured on August 7 when US soldiers sprayed three cars with bullets in North Baghdad. A third woman unfurled a banner including a photograph of one family who lost a father, two sons and an 8-year-old daughter in the attack. As she finished her list the woman on stage said "[these people were] all killed by US troops from the 1st Brigade, 1st Armoured Division. And there has been no response, no comment, no apology, and no accountability from US troops." It took five soldiers to drag the two women from the building.

After they had been ejected 'General Ricky' tried to regain control of the briefing, getting back on stage and offering to take more questions from the floor. The first questioner he picked out was Kathy Kelly – co-founder of Voices in the Wilderness. Another brilliant strategic manoeuvre from the US army.

There's nothing unique about the civilian deaths highlighted at the press conference by Voices. Civilians are regularly shot by jumpy soldiers at checkpoints, at demos, or during house-to-house searches and night time raids (SchNEWS 416). The International Committee for the Red Cross has repeatedly complained that the Occupation Forces will give them neither information nor figures on civilians killed during raids. Sometimes troops don't even bother to report the people they kill.

It seems that the US military is less than grateful to Voices for their attempts to get the records up to date. One of the women ejected from the press conference reported this week that "activists on the ground [in Iraq] are receiving mounting intimidation from Occupation authorities". She said that one friend had a gun pushed into his chest at a demo, and was told that 'accidents happen'. Activists have had their phones tapped. After the press conference action she and her mate had their photos taken by US soldiers, and published in their newspaper *The Liberator* (!). According to one Lieutenant Pete Reaker, this was "so they would be easily recognisable at any military base or checkpoint in Iraq." [www.occupationwatch.org](http://www.occupationwatch.org)

\* **We Interrupt this Empire** is a video about the American radical resistance to the illegal war in Iraq. With filmmakers from the San Francisco Video Activists' Network. 7.30pm Thursday 18th, The Side Cinema, 5/9 Side, Newcastle upon Tyne £3 [www.SideCinema.com](http://www.SideCinema.com)

## Inside SchNEWS

September 21<sup>st</sup> is an international day of action for the Thessaloniki prisoners arrested at the EU summit in Greece earlier this year. [thessalonikiprisoners@yahoo.com](mailto:thessalonikiprisoners@yahoo.com).

\* If you live in London, the Prisoners Solidarity group meet each Wednesday from 7.30pm at Freedom Bookshop, Angel Alley, 84B Whitechapel High Street, E1.

\* Matt McDonald was arrested at February's anti-war demo and has been given six weeks (which means he may be out in three), for using "threatening words or behaviour". Please send a letter or postcard ASAP to Matt McDonald, HMP Feltham, Bedfont Road, Middx TW13 4ND.

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## SchNEWS in brief

**The Peace Party** that was to take place this Sunday in Victoria Park, London has been cancelled, thanks to the local council imposing massive costs on the organisers, CND \*\* Find out what really happened at the **World Trade Organisation** in Mexico. Meeting next Thursday (18) organised by the World Development Movement at Friends' House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Event is free but booking is necessary. 0800 328 2153 [www.wdm.org.uk](http://www.wdm.org.uk) \*\* Worthing Council is stifling debate on their plans to build housing on **Titnore Woods** but since there are to be no public meetings about the proposal, local campaigners will be holding their own this Saturday (13<sup>th</sup>) noon, outside Durrington Community Centre, Tesco complex, New Road, Durrington, Worthing. For a full report read this month's as usual excellent **Porkbolter**, by sending an SAE to PO Box 4144, Worthing BN14 7NZ [www.eco-action.org/porkbolter](http://www.eco-action.org/porkbolter) \*\* **Working Links**, the company that has been running Employment Zones (where long term unemployed get harassed) for the last three years has no grievance procedure despite them being legally obliged to do so. Read more in the **Missing Links Newsletter** available from AwoL, c/o BHUWC, 4 Crestway Parade, Brighton BN1 7BL. [stopdoleprivatisation@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stopdoleprivatisation@yahoo.co.uk) Protest against Working Links in Brighton next Tuesday (16) noon outside Deep Pan Pizza, North Street. \*\* **Children's rights Under Occupation**. A photo and video exhibition looking at the suffering of Palestinian children Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> 12:30-7:30pm. Mitchell Library, Kent Road, Glasgow. Free [www.prc.org.uk](http://www.prc.org.uk) \*\* **Radio 4A** is hitting the airwaves again in Brighton this weekend hear it from Friday at 101.4 FM or online at [www.radio4a.org.uk](http://www.radio4a.org.uk) \*\* A new **Corporate Watch** briefing looking into corporations behind the commercialisation of GM crops is now available online at [www.corporatewatch.org.uk/genetics/commercialisation/commercialisation.htm](http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/genetics/commercialisation/commercialisation.htm) \*\* **Radical film nite** this Saturday at the Mad Hatter Bar, Western Road, Brighton. With the latest Undercurrents Film and a documentary about the recent shooting and deaths of international people within the West bank and Gaza. All proceeds to the Palestinian International Solidarity Movement. £5/3. 8-11pm. \*\* Demonstrations are planned for the **Labour Party** Conference happening at the end of the month. Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> September is the main day of action to co-incide with Prime Minister Blair's speech. Fun starts from 8.45am outside the Bournemouth International Centre and goes on all day. 01300 345109 [www.dorsetstopwar.org.uk](http://www.dorsetstopwar.org.uk) \*\* The campaign against **Dublin County Council's bin tax** stepped up a gear this week with residents blockading refuse trucks after the council said it would stop collecting non payers' rubbish. For a number of years there has been a campaign of mass non-payment of the tax which people say is the step towards privatisation of the service. [www.stopthebintax.com](http://www.stopthebintax.com) \*\* A thousand strong demo rocked the **Dungavel asylum seeker detention prison** in South Lanarkshire, Scotland last Saturday. Meanwhile people are urged to attend Dungavel detainees' court cases and offer to let refugees stay in their home, so more can be freed on bail. [www.scotland.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.scotland.indymedia.org.uk)

## Positive SchNEWS

This Sunday (14) is Stanmer Organics Open Day. There will be displays from 15 different groups doing their own bit for sustainability including the Earthship project, an edible flower garden, tree nurseries etc. Open 11am till 4pm at Stanmer Park, Brighton. 01273-620486 [www.stanmerorganics.org.uk](http://www.stanmerorganics.org.uk)

## ID 'N' SEEK

This month Neo Labour is brewing up a whole cauldron of new privacy-intruding measures to keep us safe and well. Compulsory ID cards are looking more likely and proposals for all children to be given a number and monitored are being seriously considered (why don't they just get on with it and barcode us at birth?).

Successive governments have tried to introduce ID cards, but failed from opposition across the political spectrum – in a recent consultation 70% of people were against the idea, but the Home Secretary seems deaf to this. The ID cards will contain biometric information such as iris scans and finger prints to determine identity, and are supposed to reduce terrorism and benefit fraud. But ID cards won't stop suicide bombers and most Benefit fraud is due to people lying about their situation rather than their identity. ID cards will be a massive boon for forgers, thus creating a huge new opportunity for organised crime. The cards have also been found to increase racial tension in other European countries, with minorities being disproportionately targeted for ID checks.

Blunkett cannot trial ID cards without new legislation, but he's managed to sneak through this by proposing a trial of credit-card sized biometric passports (difference, anyone?) in a market town in Britain soon. Legislation to introduce the cards is timetable for October. Once the public are sufficiently softened up to these cards it would be a very simple matter for an RFID chip (see SchNEWS 415) to be placed in their head, oops sorry, card, which would allow the police to scan a card from metres away and pull up any information on the individual from a central database.

On Tuesday the government announced plans to produce a database containing information on every one of Britain's 11m children and indirectly their parents and carers. Government documents describe this as "improving information sharing between agencies to ensure all local authorities have a list of children in their area, the services each child has had contact with, and the contact details of the relevant professionals who work with them." If these files were retained, or even added to after a person's childhood, in a generation the government would have a very detailed file on every single British citizen, which a large number of government departments could access. More info: [www.privacyinternational.org/](http://www.privacyinternational.org/)

\* Now everyone's a suspect! This week police chiefs will call for the creation of a massive database containing the DNA of every person in Britain to aid crime detection.

## ...and finally...

Coppers apparently can't tell the difference between those big furry recycling junkies the Wombles and the anarchist group of the same name. Last Friday at a benefit gig for the DSEI protests coppers used the Terrorism Act to stop and search two men seen leaving in a van. During the hour long search one cop came over all excited when he spotted a tape by the Wombles and hurriedly began scribbling down the song titles. Apparently such classics as "Wombing Free" and "Remember You're A Womble" are now a terrorist musical threat set to trashing the British state instead of 'Keeping Britain Tidy.' \* If you've been stopped under section 44 of the Terrorism Act get in touch with Liberty who are seeking a judicial review of the Mets Police decision to use anti-terrorist legislation on protestors. 020 7403 3888 [www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk](http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk)

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers we try to ExCel ourselves with armless fun. Honest!