



wake up! It's yer outpost of resistance

SchNEWS

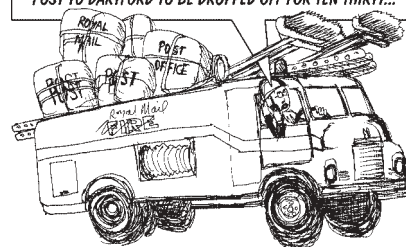
www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 7th November 2003

Free/Donation

Issue 340

OK SARGE... SO THAT'S A FIRE IN BROMLEY, A CAT UP A TREE IN HAWLEY, LEAVES ON THE TRACK AT SWANLEY, AND THE SECOND POST TO DARTFORD TO BE DROPPED OFF FOR TEN THIRTY...



POSTIE MORTEM

"There's no room for strong unions nowadays. They want to break up the postal service. They want to fragment the business. They want to de-unionise, they want an end to collective bargaining. They want a low wage, low skill, temporary contract, part time, downtrodden and malleable workforce. This is what they want for the workers." - Anonymous postal worker.

Wildcat strikes by thousands of post office workers across the country ended in victory this week – a victory that everyone who has to go out and earn a living should be celebrating.

The problem, we are told, is that posties are 'dinosaurs' and that their union is part of the awkward squad and needs a good injection of 'modernisation' and 'flexible working'. As one postie explained "We have got a reputation for standing up for ourselves and they don't like that." Post Office Chief Executive Adam Crozier certainly looks after himself. As the highest paid public servant in Britain, raking in £500,000 a year, Crozier is paid to complain that failure to 'modernise' could destroy the Royal Mail. Meanwhile, posties who get up at silly o'clock get basic pay of just £260 a week.

Before the recent national ballot over pay, Royal Mail's chairman Allan Leighton carried on the scare tactics, writing a stream of letters to workers using the stick of thirty thousand redundancies to keep them in line, and warning that striking would "begin the process of commercial suicide". It paid off, and when the ballot was narrowly lost management went on the offensive across the country telling the union "your world is about to be turned upside down." Up and down the country postal workers gave examples of bullying and provocation by management busy trying to impose change and suspending local agreements on wages and conditions. This was a step too far and the wildcat strikes and solidarity action began.

As the strikes spread, leaked memos from the Royal Mail told managers to spy on strikers and staff who threatened to join the wildcat walkouts. One communiqué for a group of strikers said: "Look at the evidence gathering procedures document. It didn't come out of nowhere. The 'industrial relations team', to which the information is being sent, didn't set up its computerised facilities for collecting all of this information on the spur of the moment." With just 50 major companies and government agencies accounting for 40 percent of Royal Mail revenue these firms are terrified when the post stops. What it all adds up to, as one postie put it, is "a management-orchestrated campaign to break the union."

Royal Mail has been selling off its profitable bits for the last 20 years and for the past couple of years has been busy closing down post offices. They spent half a million pounds re-branding itself as Consignia before deciding that, duh, the Royal Mail was not such a bad name after all. Meanwhile the European Union bowed to the interests of the major communication corporations and issued a new directive that opens up the post office to even greater privatisation by 2006. Post Office bosses believe that to compete against these private firms they must savage jobs and conditions.

But while the Royal Mail bosses tell their workers losses of £611 million inevitably mean job cuts and a change in working conditions the profit-obsessed Financial Times pointed out last week that "Royal Mail expects to make an operating profit of £100 million this year and £320 million next".

POSTMAN KNOCKED

The wildcat strikes have given Royal Mail management a bloody nose and shown them and the posties' national union leadership that staff are willing and able to enforce local and national agreements at shop floor level. The rank and file rose up against the threat of job losses, speed-ups and stagnant, crap pay. Bosses were trying to force new delivery, overtime and holiday 'deals' down the throats of workers at three post offices and then impose them nationally. This would've weakened workers and the union. The strike crushed this. The strike also stopped the Royal Mail bosses' policy of targeting 'trouble-makers' who were vocal about their rights in the workplace. Importantly, the wildcat strike saw the rank and file posties stamp their willingness to strike against casualisation while the centralised Communication Workers' Union fumbled, hindered by detached 'representatives' and repressive anti-union laws. The posties lit a wildfire of solidarity actions around the country while the CWU fuffed about, unable to condone the strike because of their fears of fines and compensation claims. Now these representatives are entering into negotiations with Royal Mail and the posties at the bottom aren't ready to be betrayed.

As the Movement for a Socialist Future put it "Postal workers are going through an

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For sending an email....

On Monday New Zealand peace activist Bruce Hubbard was remanded on bail on a charge of 'misusing a telephone'. The 38-year-old is accused of sending an offensive email to the US Embassy which said that the US has dropped napalmed civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq and have invaded 72 other nations since WWII to install US-backed military dictatorships. Now he isn't allowed to go within 250 metres of the US Consulate General's office and could get up to three months in jail or a \$2000 fine...his next court appearance is 10th December.

experience which fire-fighters endured earlier this year. Do the interests of the community come before balance sheets and privatisation? The Fire Brigades Union leaders concocted a half-baked deal which opened the door to cuts. Now they are being provoked back into action by employers who are holding back on an agreed pay rise. The break-up of the National Health Service through the imposition of 'foundation' hospitals will soon confront Unison and other unions. What are they going to do about it, other than make angry speeches?"

So stop moaning if you had letters stuck in the post People fighting for decent working conditions is good for everyone who goes to work. As one angry postie put it "Is it so that a 'nationalised' industry and its workforce are smashed bit by tiny bit? And as an added bonus we get transferred to these new companies who will ignore and demolish all of the hard fought for rights and wages and conditions. And will you benefit? Will you fuck! Just like the British public benefited from the railways being handed over to a multitude of robbing, profiteers? British Rail wasn't perfect but look at the mess that replaced it! And amazingly, even though a bunch of rich bastards got richer by being given what was rightfully all of ours, we still pay them hundreds of millions of tax-payers pounds a year just to keep a third world service going. And that is why postal workers are on strike, because believe it or not, we know this is the best postal company in the world and we don't want to have a bunch of villains and profit grabbing scumrats come and steal what is all of ours. It's our Post Office, let's keep it that way!"

* Firefighters across the country are taking unofficial industrial action in a row over the pay deal that was intended to end the recent 10-month fire service dispute. One Union leader said "Our members are incandescent with rage as the employers are treating us with contempt. The pay agreement came after a long and bitter dispute which took a lot of time to resolve. Now the employers appear to be renegeing on it."

SchNEWS
9th Birthday Party
At The Freebutt - downstairs punk inc. Fish Brothers and Anal Beard, upstairs cinema and DJs.
Sunday 16th, 7.30-10.30pm

CHENEY LINK FENCE

A coprophiliac is someone who is turned on by shit. Dick Cheney is someone who gets turned on by oil. Much the same thing really. Cheney's wet dreams are manifesting themselves globally, most notably in Iraq, but two massive pipelines are coiling their way over natural landscape elsewhere.

The World Bank and European Development Bank have both approved a £300m contribution each for the \$4bn central Asian Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, stretching from the Caspian through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey to the Med. This means easy access for Western oil tankers without having to deal with the Middle East, which is a trifle unstable at the moment. The project's consortium, BTC is BP-led but needless to say incorporates Halliburton subsidiaries, a corporation which pays Cheney \$500,000 a year.

The UK's development minister, Hilary Benn, has already approved the UK's payment – obviously not put off by the World Bank's own report admitting that the pipeline will cause a "significant" amount of environmental damage, thousands will be displaced, and it will be militarized and exempt from local domestic laws. BTC even boast that it had 'created laws' in Azerbaijan, and bullied the Georgian government into accepting the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Meanwhile, in Peru, the \$1-2bn trans-Andean gas pipeline - what Amazon Watch calls "currently the most damaging project in the Amazon Basin" - is causing unrest which mirrors that caused by a similar gas export plan in neighbouring Bo-

livia in October. The Peruvian president, Alejandro Toledo, citing "narco-terrorism", declared an emergency zone around the Camisea Gas Project and suspended constitutional guarantees following clashes between 10,000 local campesinos and police. This area is one of the world's most biodiverse and untouched hotspots – but forget that: first the pipeline goes in, which brings in roads, which invites illegal logging, and every over conceivable knock-on effect to contaminate the area including the indigenous people being decimated by diseases caught from loggers.

Earlier this year the US Export-Import Bank rather unsportingly turned down a \$213 million loan guarantee for the Camisea project, citing "concerns about environmental impacts and the rights of indigenous peoples in the zone". But don't worry, shareholders, it's still gonna go ahead. It looks like the Inter-American Development Bank are going to step in with \$135 million meaning Kellogg Brown & Root (part of Cheney's Halliburton family) can get on with the job of building it.

See: www.amazonwatch.org

*For an inside look at how foreign capital creates refugees get yer hands on *Listen to the Refugee's Story: How UK Foreign Investment Creates Refugees and Asylum Seekers* produced by the Ilisu Dam Refugee Project. Includes stories, poems and drawings from refugees and asylum seekers about why they've been forced to flee their countries.

ORE OR NOTHING

The Jabiluka uranium mine in the world heritage listed Kakadu National Park in Northern Territory, Australia has been stopped! This is a huge victory for the indigenous Mirrar people, and the thousands of people worldwide who supported them in one of the longest running environmental and indigenous land rights battles in Australia's history.

The culprits behind the mine, Rio Tinto, announced in August this year that they would be putting the thousands of tons of uranium ore they dug up in 1999 back where it belongs - in the ground - and letting the site be rehabilitated and reincorporated back into Kakadu park. But

why are they walking away from one of the world's richest uranium ore deposits? They've been trying to flog it off for years, such is the adverse public opinion, direct action and legal opposition to the mine led by the Mirrar people, and not forgetting currently depressed prices for uranium worldwide.

Kakadu was the scene of an eight month blockade in 1998 which saw 600 arrested and thousands come to the remote spot - which some claim ushered in the beginning of a new generation of direct action in the country.

A national day of celebration was held on 31st October. www.mirrar.net

SchNEWS in brief

Last week 114 "independent" scientists wrote a letter to Tony Blair about the "misleading" reports in the press about the potentially damaging effects of **genetically modified crops**. It just so happens that most of these scientists come from research institutions which receive massive funding from GM companies or work for consultants for the GM companies, so no conflict of interest then. www.gmwatch.org ** **Big Noise Demo** against Britain's number one GM company - **Bayer** - next Thursday (13), 10am onwards outside their Newbury office, details and transport 07092-036576 www.stopbayergm.org ** **ETC Group** have just released a report on the large scale release of untested nanotechnology into the environment, focusing particularly on huge quantities of particles dumped to allegedly stop soil erosion in the US. Like GM, this is happening with no real testing or regulation. www.etcgroup.org ** In a response to the US administration's Orwellian 'Total Information Awareness' scheme, boffins at MIT have turned the tables with their 'Government Information Awareness' site. This cavernous resource automatically monitors thousands of politicians and business activities and the links between them, and lets people add their own information. See opengov.media.mit.edu/ ** **The 'Health and Safety' Executive** announced this week that the average fine for a conviction on a health and safety offence has dropped by 21 percent over the last

year. So bosses are still getting away with killing their workers and receiving a measly punishment: www.lhc.org.uk or www.simonjones.org.uk ** As SchNEWS was going to press, women made homeless and destitute under the government's disgusting asylum laws were holding an action outside Parliament as part of the national "**Sleep Out in Solidarity**" called by the Liverpool Committee Against Destitution to protest against Section 55 and other anti-asylum seeker measures: womenstrike8m@server101.com ** The SchNEWS Birthday Lecture with **Arab-American peace activist Ramzi Kysia**. Ramzi has spent the last two years in Iraq and was involved in setting up the Iraq Indymedia site and an independent newspaper. Sallis Benney Theatre, Brighton University, Grand Parade, Nov 17th 6:30pm. Also at Sussex University, 3pm the same day and will be touring around the country – list of dates see www.voicesuk.org ** Question of priorities: The headlines blazed the past week about **the fires in California**. So far 20 people have died and 3,400 homes destroyed, with the new Governor agreeing to demands from health conscious residents, that fire crews would use filtered and mineral water to put out the fires (ok, maybe we made that last bit up.) Meanwhile, at a five day conference in Nairobi, which attracted slightly less publicity, delegates heard that **523million Africans** will be without access to clean drinking water by 2005. ** **A New American Empire** – a meeting to look at the consequences of current US foreign policy. With speaker Steve Burman. Nov 12th 8pm, St Joseph's Church Hall, Brighton.

Subscribe!

Keep SchNEWS FREE! Send 1st Class stamps (e.g. 10 for next 9 issues) or donations (payable to Justice?) Ask for "Originals" if you can make copies. Post free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o on-the-fiddle, P.O. Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 0EF.

Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email schnews@brighton.co.uk Download a PDF of this issue or subscribe at www.schnews.org.uk

TERROR-TWISTS

Last week High Court judges threw out Liberty's case against the Met Police for their use of the section 44 Stop and Search provision (Terrorism Act 2000) against protestors at the DSEi Arms Fair in London last month. The lawyers representing two of 50 demonstrators who were searched, claimed that citizens have a legitimate right to peacefully protest and that being stopped and searched while doing so is a violation of human rights.

When Blunkett introduced this draconian piece of legislation, he promised parliament that use of section 44 would be strictly limited to cases where there was good reason to suspect terrorism - you know, like when people are concealing guns, tanks, hawk jets etc. about their persons - or inside buildings like the ExCel Centre in the Docklands. Liberty will appeal the decision.

Continuing its fine record of human rights violations dressed up as "anti-terror", the government is also in trouble with Amnesty this week because of those pesky foreigners it banged up in Belmarsh prison nearly two years ago without charge or trial. On October 29th a Special Immigration Appeal Commission (SIAC) found that the Home Secretary could continue to keep the 8 men imprisoned indefinitely as he had "reasonable grounds" to believe they are terrorists. In what it calls a "perversion of justice", Amnesty says the burden of proof is "shockingly low" and that much of the "evidence" against the men was extracted under torture in the US and is therefore inadmissible under International Law. Problem is that the government's decided to keep all this "evidence" secret - even from the accused themselves, who therefore are unable to challenge it or defend themselves.

Did someone say "the presumption of innocence is fundamental to fair criminal trials"? Not in Britain, mate.

Inside SchNEWS

There is a picket of the Greek Tourist Board this Saturday (8) in protest of the continued imprisonment of the Salonika 7, who were all arrested for protesting at the EU summit in late June under a blanket charge. They are currently all on hunger strike - 5 of them have not eaten for a month and have been refusing hospital treatment. 11am-1pm Conduit Street, London. Bring banners, placards, whistles, pots and pans. See www.freesimonchapman.org

There's also a benefit gig on the same day in Cardiff at Clwb Ifor Bach, 8pm.

...and finally...

Wax Off!

Fed up with Tony Blair for always waxing lyrical about war, a group calling themselves the Opposition Society decided to put their words into action and on Tuesday called for women to wax for peace on National Get Rid of That Bush Day. Posters around Brighton called for other women to join them in protest and to "Wax 'em off, put 'em in an envelope and send 'em to Tony Blair with a message stating 'I got rid of my Bush now you get rid of yours!'"

George Bush is coming to the UK from 19th to 21st November ... to find out more about direct actions and protests against the coming of the evil one check out our party and protest guide on www.schnews.org.uk To plan women's actions against bush send an email to God_shave_the_queen-s-subscribe@yahoo.com

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers ready to stamp on the letter of the law, not to worry if SchNEWS is a bit late this week - its in the post! Honest!