



WAKE UP! IT'S YER OUT OF YER TREES

SchNEWS

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"WE CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT WE FLY EVERYWHERE SIGNING POINTLESS TREATIES."

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FUEL BE SORRY

"Last week the World Health Organisation calculated that climate change is causing 150,000 deaths a year. This figure excludes deaths caused by drought and famine, pests and plant diseases and conflicts over natural resources, all of which appear to be exacerbated by global warming. Flying is our most effective means of wrecking the planet: every passenger on a return journey from Britain to Florida produces more carbon dioxide than the average motorist does in a year. Every time we fly, we help to kill someone." - George Monbiot, journalist.

Neo-Labour celebrated one hundred years of flying this week by giving the green light to an unprecedented programme of aviation expansion. 20 airports were given the chance to expand; with Heathrow getting the nod for a third runway and a sixth terminal while Stansted, Edinburgh and Birmingham all get new runways. What was even more impressive was the timing of the white paper, announced just a few days after the latest anti-climactic Climate Change talks in Milan.

Transport Minister Alistair Darling told MPs that air travel was crucial to the economy, that half the population flies every year and that the aviation industry supports 800,000 jobs. While the white paper says in principle that aviation should pay for its environmental and social impact, there are no plans for the industry to pay fuel tax or VAT. Ever wondered why you can fly to places like Prague for fourteen and a half pence? These tax breaks amount to £9 billion a year being lost which could be spent on more environmentally-friendly means of transport. Even the governments own research says that making the air industry pay these taxes would remove the need for new airports or runways for twenty-five years. For example around 45 per cent of air journeys that take place between European countries are currently 500 kilometres or less in length: ideal for high speed rail.

What Darling also forgot to mention was that air travel is the UK's fastest growing contribution to greenhouse gases, releasing not only carbon dioxide but also nitrous oxide, an even more powerful greenhouse gas, into the atmosphere. Encouraging more air traffic won't exactly help the government reach even its own pathetic targets for tackling climate change.

Still, the government has promised to insulate nearby householders affected by noise, especially helpful to those who will have their houses demolished by new

runways, as well as helping people to invest in "really good earplugs." They also propose to pay for "school trips away from the noisy environment", especially "where the loss of amenity outdoors may be severe." People whose houses go under water thanks to all the extra climate change causing planes will no doubt receive snorkels in the post.

Even the Carbon Sink

Like we said, the latest meeting of the Convention on Climate Change ended in Milan last Friday with the decision by 120 countries to, er, reaffirm their commitment to the Kyoto Protocol. The US politicians were in Milan of course, doing their best to derail everything, even though they won't even sign up to Kyoto, despite accounting for around a quarter of global emissions. But then we've seen what they'll do for oil. Still, the Kyoto Protocol will become legally binding when it receives the backing of nations whose combined carbon dioxide emissions come to 55 percent. To reach that figure Russia needs to sign on the dotted line.

The problem is that Kyoto calls for a measly 5.2% reduction in emissions – and that's without the loopholes such as air traffic being excluded from the targets – when in reality the rich world is gonna have to cut emissions by 60-90% just to stabilise atmospheric concentrations.

These loopholes include ones where rich countries will be able to plant forests in the developing world and count the amount of greenhouses gases absorbed by them against their own greenhouse emissions, helping them to meet their Kyoto targets. Unfortunately the vast majority of such plantations are environmentally and socially destructive, some using genetically-modified or other invasive species – and all funded through the Protocol's so-called Clean Development Mechanism.

This idea, dubbed 'carbon sinks' should, according to a new report published by Sinkswatch, be washed down the plughole. It reckons EU governments should blacklist carbon sinks projects, as they do nothing to help global warming and they provide subsidies for unsustainable and unwanted plantation projects. The report "Forest Fraud. Say no to fake carbon credits" focuses on the Plantar project in Brazil, a 23,000 hectare eucalyptus plantation project that is aiming to sell carbon credits despite widespread opposition. You've got to hand it to some capitalists though. Creating a market out of hot air, now that's impressive!

Its taken 15 years of climate change talks

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For not using a shopping basket!
In a new low in supermarket fascism a man was arrested and then fined £95 for not using a basket when he went into his local Eddah store to buy one item. When Carst Kijlstra, from Holland, went to pay for it the shop assistant refused to serve him saying he must have a basket. "Don't be ridiculous" said Mr Kijlstra who then left the money on the counter and went home. At home while cooking his dinner a cop car arrived at his house to arrest him. After being held for an hour Mr Kijlstra was allowed to go home if he agreed to pay the £95 fine and stay out of the shop for 12 months.

to get this far and time is running out - especially for the Alliance of Small Island States who managed to block attempts to delay the next round of talks. Made up of 40 small islands, some might have disappeared beneath the waves by then. They desperately need the £30 million relief fund agreed in Milan to help them adapt to environmental changes. But even this small amount was in jeopardy because oil rich nations like Saudi Arabia argued that they should get help to diversify if renewable energies like wind or solar power dent demand for fossil fuels. Ever helpful Russian President Vladimir Putin used Russia's role on Kyoto as a bargaining chip to gain entry into the World Trade Organisation, with its standard 'everyone for themselves' politics. But the onset of climate chaos should be reminding us that we're all in the same boat. As direct action group Rising Tide put it "While it's crucial that you cut your own emissions as much as possible, it's also up to communities the world over to both challenge the power structures that are playing havoc with our climate, and to create new structures built on local, diverse, ecological and socially just foundations." The problem is that the boat is already taking on water and could soon be holed below the waterline, unless the world comes together to stem the tide.

* Want to **get involved in climate change campaigning**? Then call 01865 241097 www.risingtide.org.uk

* Check out the **'carbon sinks' report** www.sinkswatch.org

* **Cornerhouse** also have some good briefings, see www.thecornerhouse.org.uk

* **London Earth First!** open discussion on the plans for a new runway in the South East and how we can fight it with a speaker from the Heathrow Terminal 5 Campaign. Monday 5th January 7pm at the Autonomy Club, Freedom Bookshop, 84B Whitechapel High Street, London.

IRAQI TRADE UNION REPRESSION

Trade unionists from the Iraqi Southern Oil Company have declared their workplaces a no-go zone for Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR), part of multinational Halliburton, formerly headed by US Vice President Dick Cheney. The American government gave KBR the contract to reconstruct oil refineries and installations in Iraq. The oil workers union however, representing over 10,000 Iraqi workers, has now banned all KBR representatives and foreign workers from their sites.

Occupation Watch visited oil installations and discovered that workers had been carrying out reconstruction work independently of KBR, using their own tools, spare parts from old equipment, and parts purchased from the local market. In Majnoon two weeks ago, workers rebuilt a damaged refinery independently, using KBR materials but refusing any KBR personnel involvement.

The mirage of the 'West Knows Best' multibillion dollar reconstruction project falls apart when faced with the truth of ordinary Iraqi workers rebuilding their own country using the inventiveness and ingenuity they learned during 13 years of UN-US-UK enforced sanctions.

The US government is not happy with this, so have been harassing Iraqi trade unions. According to a union spokesperson, on Dec. 6th the office of the Iraqi Workers Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) was stormed by twenty US soldiers who tore down posters (which condemned terrorism!) and arrested eight members of the Federation's executive board. The soldiers also painted over the name of the federation on the front of the building. "They gave no reason at all, despite being asked over and over," says IFTU spokesperson Abdullah Muhsin. Although the eight were released the following day, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) (US occupation government) gave no explanation for the detentions. This followed the detention of two other trade union leaders on November 23, Qasim Hadi, general secretary of the Union of the Unemployed, and Adil Salih, another Union leader. Hadi had been arrested twice before, for leading dem-

onstrations of unemployed workers demanding benefits and jobs.

US military control and "reconstruction" is making the country attractive to foreign investors, who can buy up state companies and promptly transfer profits outside the country. Iraqi workers fear privatization will bring massive layoffs. "I'll have to fire 1,500 (of the refinery's 3,000) workers," says Dathar Al-Kashab, manager of the Al Daura oil refinery. "In America, when a company lays people off, there's unemployment insurance and they won't die from hunger. If I dismiss employees now, I'm killing them and their families." Iraq can find no country willing to fund plans for even a minimal system of unemployment benefits. At the refinery, those with jobs work 11-13 hour shifts. They earn \$60 a month and have no safety equipment. The IFTU and the Workers Unions and Councils group have helped workers organize unions and elect leaders around the country.

When these new unions talk with the plant managers, however, they're told that a 1987 law forbids workers in state-owned enterprises (where the majority of Iraqis work) from forming unions. The CPA still enforces this Saddam-era law. Another order issued by the CPA on June 6 threatens that anyone who "incites civil disorder" will be detained as a prisoner of war under the Geneva Convention.

While unions are suppressed, international conferences in Washington and London take place every week, at which Iraqi assets are put on sale to private buyers. At one recent conference, ExxonMobil, Delta Airlines and the American Hospital Group all expressed interest in various Iraqi enterprises. Muhsen Mull Ali, an IFTU leader who spent two long stints in prison for organizing unions, both before and during Saddam's reign, says US actions against unions won't deter him. "Our responsibility is to oppose privatization as much as possible, and fight for the welfare of our workers."

www.occupationwatch.org

SchNEWS in Brief

Schwoops – last week we said the six people arrested under the Terrorism Act for having "terrorist property" such as magazines and badges were still in prison when they are in fact out on bail awaiting trial next year. ** Meanwhile Hundreds of mosques in the UK have launched a protest **campaign against the treatment of British Muslims arrested** as part of the "war on terror". Aafreen Khan, a spokeswoman for the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, added: "Out of 500 arrests since September 11, only 77 have been charged and two convicted." Home Office figures for 2002-03 revealed that 32,100 people had been searched under the Terrorism Act with just 380 of those arrested. ** The costs of the proposed **primate lab in Cambridge** (SchNEWS 432) have soared by 25% putting the project in jeopardy. One of the reasons for the increase is the expected protests, so why not join in on the 10th January? For details nearer the time contact 0845 3307985 www.primateland.com ** **Four anti-GM activists** have been ordered to pay **up to £1000 court costs** each for aggravated trespass when they attempted to prevent planting of GM field trial. The High Court overturned an earlier ruling by a judge who found them not guilty saying "I can see you all have huge knowledge of GM crops and were acting to protect the land and animals." Some of the activists are planning to refuse to pay costs and may go to prison, others will pay costs but will accept any financial offers of help! info@geneticsaction.org.uk ** **In a massive victory for anti-GM campaigners** Bayer CropScience who are the principle

company pushing for the commercialisation of GM crops in the UK has withdrawn six of its nine UK GM crop varieties from the UK national seed listing, meaning they can't be commercialised in the UK. The campaign against the other three continues with Bail out of GM Actions on 5th January in support of those arrested on previous actions. www.stopbayergm.org ** Nominate your least favorite pirate for a "**Captain Hook Award for Outstanding Achievements in Biopiracy - 2004**." www.captainhookawards.org ** The mother of 16-year-old **Chris Kesterton** who was killed while working on a construction site in Leicester has asked people to protest outside the court where the company will hear if it is to be fined, 5th Jan 9.30 am, Leicester Crown Court, 90 Wellington St. ** **Come and protest and party** with the Brighton & Hove Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Meet at 1pm on Saturday 20 December outside Churchill Square. Bring cameras and make some noise! 07768 815472 www.brightonpalestinecampaign.org ** Check out **Cardiff Alternative News** a weekly radical e-mail newsletter <http://uk.geocities.com/cardiffalternativenews/> ** **Annual Christmas Ride**, meet 11am Christmas Day, Cutty Sark Gardens for a gentle ride through deserted central London, then late lunch with veggie/vegan options 07905 889005 ** Radical performance arts group **Clean Air Turbulance** are available for benefit gigs, actions etc. romanyromany@hotmail.com ** **An Iraqi arrested at the DSEi protests** will be in Snaresbrook Crown Court in the weeks to come, using his court appearance to challenge the legality of cluster bombs in front of a jury.

Positive SchNEWS

Everyday from our vantage point at SchNEWS towers we watch the tides coming and going and wonder if this could be harnessed to help sort out the mess we're all making of the planet.

Well this is to become a reality off the coast of Swansea where an offshore tidal lagoon is being built that will give the power of half a nuclear power station – without any of the radioactive waste. This works by harnessing the power of the tides by having gates that are opened and closed with the tides. After the tide rises, the gates are opened and water rushes through the turbines and fills the lagoon. At low tide the water runs out of the lagoon, turning the turbine blades the other way, thus generating electricity in both directions.

Offshore tidal lagoons have advantages over other forms of renewable energy, unlike solar or wind energy, tides are regular and predictable, and there isn't the destruction caused by large dams in hydroelectric schemes or coastal tidal schemes. Tidal lagoons have a potential to contribute 8% of the UK's energy needs at a cost that is similar to coal or gas fire stations, without all the extra pollution.

www.tidalelectric.com

...and finally...

Here's a Christmas carol for our times...

SPEND, SPEND, SPEND!

"DON'T hold back on your seasonal spending. Worthing's Business Community needs your generous support!

DON'T worry about the cost. Just bung it on your plastic. You know that's the sensible approach in the long term.

DON'T ever stop to think whether what you are about to buy is useless, unnecessary or unwanted. Just get your wallet out. Now.

DON'T worry about rampant consumerism spoiling the planet for your children or grandchildren. There's plenty more planets in the universe. And, frankly, who cares about a bunch of stupid kids?

DON'T ever think of repairing anything. It's just not the modern way. Go out and buy a new one. Go on, it's Christmas!

DON'T ever borrow things from friends or lend stuff to others so they don't have to buy their own. Where would that sort of thinking lead us? Eh?

DON'T forget the true meaning of Xmas! Let's make sure trading figures in town are the highest ever! It's what Baby Jesus would have wanted!

DON'T forget either that shopping defeats Terrorism. The more you spend, the more tax money the Government gets and the more bombs it can buy to blow up people who don't share our superior Christian values."

This public information announcement was brought to you by the Worthing Braindead Consumer Campaign Supported by sussexplc and The Institute of Greed.

Shamelessly stolen from Worthing's excellent 'Porkbolter' (which is well worth reading even if you don't live there) www.eco-action.org/porkbolter

...it's goodbye from us...

That's it for this year – we're off to the pub, and shall re-emerge to produce the next SchNEWS for 9th January 2004 (unless global capitalism has been overthrown over Christmas when we shall instead be planting broad beans on collectively owned farms).

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers we'll be back with some crackers and a sack full of goodies next year. Honest.

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