

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER DEGREE OF UNCERTAINTY...



SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 5th March 2010

Free/Donation

Issue 712



Sussex University students demanding a higher education

SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

AS SUSSEX STUDENTS TAKE ON UNIVERSITY CUT BACKS.....

Students at Sussex University came into violent conflict with riot cops on Wednesday (3rd) as they occupied the executive nerve centre of their university. Several weeks in the planning by Stop the Cuts campaign in association with the Anarchist Society, around 80 students rushed the 'fortified' Sussex House building with a supporting demo outside of around 300 people, all in protest against the proposed cuts to university funding. The occupation was part of a national day of action, called against £950m of government cuts to higher education announced on February 1st. There were also actions in Norwich, Leeds and London.

The day started at 12pm with an anti-cuts carnival in the main square of the campus, with demonstrators togged up in animal masks – a



nod to the last occupation of Sussex House after which senior management branded students as behaving like 'animals' (an occupation which also led to Sussex House being made 'occupation proof' with a multitude of complex security systems). Students then rushed the building, managing to occupy the floor that had all of the Vice Chancellor Executive Group offices.

Cops arrived on the scene within 15 minutes, complete with dogs, riot gear and an Evidence Gathering unit. Cue a mad rush of bodies, and police ended up being kept at bay with critical mass. "In the words of one participant, "F*cking hell – it's all batons and dogs here".

Inside, most staff left of their own accord, although the Head of Security, Roger Morgan (named by our source as a 'complete c**t') and another uni bigwig locked themselves in an office and refused to leave without a police escort as they were 'too intimidated' to leave (as opposed to administrators and secretaries who seemed fully able to muster the courage to walk down a flight of stairs).

While this was going on protesters man-

aged to find some very juicy documents including some dodgy expense records (like a £75 dinner and holiday flights for execs' wives and an £1800 hotel bill), and a letter from Peter Mandelson to the Vice Chancellor about the rise of 'domestic extremism' in the university. Copies have been taken and should be released into the public domain soon.

Halfway through the occupation activists attempted to rush the building and break through the lines of police – an action that resulted in batons being pulled out and things turning nasty – two arrests were made on suspicion of assaulting a police officer and both are still custody.

After the failed rush, a vote was held inside the building about whether the occupiers should

continue or leave voluntarily, resulting in a majority ballot to go whilst still having the upper hand. The SWP opened the doors and the students left.

The demo was held in solidarity with ATL (Teachers' and Lecturers' Union) that had voted 75% in favour of strike action the same day. One source called the action he had seen "the most effective bit of direct action seen on campus."

UNIVERSITY CHALLENGED

Current plans by University senior management include massive job losses and entire areas are facing the axe, despite committing themselves to spending £112 million on new buildings (not to mention pay hikes for the senior management). The university found itself with a £3 million shortfall, which it is trying to rectify by wildly slashing any area of the university that doesn't fit with its 'New Strategic Vision.'

Respected academics are facing forced

redundancies and successful degree courses are due to be arbitrarily cancelled if management gets its way. The history department is being 'made more popular' - as the process has been euphemistically described by management blurb. This means cutting all European history pre-1900, and all British history pre-1700. Meanwhile degrees in Human Sciences are set to go, and modern languages, engineering, and linguistics are all under threat. Nearly half the informatics dept is set to go, with 14 redundancies in the pipeline. Also at risk is the children's crèche, recently rated in an Ofsted inspection as 'outstanding' and currently serves the needs of 62 kids. The university reckons it can save £5million with this act of kiddie (service) snatching. The sexual health centre UNISEX is also set to go too.

The university, which went on an unsustainable, reckless spending binge during the boom times when rich foreign students were flocking to Blighty to study and government subsidies to higher education seemed unending, has found itself shackled with PFI deals. Rather than respond rationally, it appears that the management has just taken a look at any courses that have been perceived to be un-profitable and taken the knife to them. It's worth noting that neighbouring Brighton University (hardly a hotbed of firebrand radicalism) has traditionally underspent and not been quite so keen on the latest corporate faddishness - and isn't planning any job losses or major cuts.

* **As well as action in Sussex**, students from the University of Westminster stormed the boardroom of their uni on Monday (1st) and confronted their Vice Chancellor, Geoffrey Pett, about the proposed 10% cuts in jobs. After receiving unsatisfactory answers, they occupied the Vice Chancellor's office to protest against the increasing fees

and hefty management salaries, while teaching time decreases and class size grows by the term. See: <http://london.indymedia.org.uk/articles/439> for more info on the Westminster occupation.

* To show solidarity with the teachers

and lecturers currently facing hefty job cuts, join the March for Jobs this Saturday (6th) in Brighton. Meet at The Level at 12pm.



PARTY & PROTEST
For events listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

INFORMATION FOR ACTION Copyleft
Published in Brighton since 1994

HONDURAS: FNR-I-P

In the latest attack on the civil resistance movement in Honduras, a 36-year-old member of the National Popular Resistance Front (FNRP) was shot dead at her home by unidentified gunmen last week. Claudia was prominent in the San Pedro Sula municipal workers union, and daughter of Pedro Brizuela, a Communist party member, union organizer, political strategist, radio host and journalist who has been one of the most visible faces of the FNRP in the north of the country. Since the coup last June (See SchNEWS 682).

Claudia was not the first activist to be murdered since the new president Porfirio Lopez took power on January 27, promising unity and stability. On February 15, unionist and FNRP activist JÚnez Benítez was shot dead by assassins on a motorbike. Earlier in the month FRNP activist and union leader Vanessa Yamileth Zepeda was abducted killed.

Despite the brutal suppression of the resistance movement, (See SchNEWS 708), elements in the trade union movement and the FNRP have continued deposed president Zelaya's struggle for a new constitution. Edgar Martínez and his family, all active members of the FNRP, were kidnapped and tortured for two days last month. Two cameramen, Manuel de Jesús Murillo and Ricardo Antonio Rodríguez, who covered opposition protests, were also recently abducted and tortured.

From Lobo's inauguration to February 23, the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras recorded 53 illegal detentions, 2 sexual assaults, 2 murders, 8 cases of torture, 2 kidnappings, 14 raids and 23 neighbourhoods profiled by security forces as "Resisters", which were searched after hours. They also recorded that 150 people have left the country as political refugees.

The day after Claudia's murder, 10,000 people marched on the presidential palace demanding constitutional reform, teacher back pay and demanding an end to the attacks on activists. The FNRP issued a statement saying, "We will not rest until the successful reform of the state through the installation of a National Constitutional Assembly".

HEADLESS MORSE-MAN

Hunt monitor Bryan Griffiths is looking at a manslaughter conviction following huntsman Trevor Morse's death by gyrocopter (See SchNEWS 669). Griffiths, who was tracking from above, had landed his 'copter to refuel when Morse looked at the gyrocopter straight in the blades and "thought I can win this..." He purposely strode across the field and valiantly stood in its path where at a breakneck speed of 200mph the propellers went right through his head.

As a result of Morse's idiocy Bryan Griffiths, is on trial in Birmingham Crown Court accused of manslaughter by gross negligence. The sentence carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Bryan Griffiths's future dangles uncertainly as Mr. Morse's choice brought things to a head. The trial perseveres...

MIGRANT STRIKES

A grassroots movement of migrant protests have sprung up all over Europe in response to discriminatory immigrant laws and systemic xenophobia. Declaring the 1st March 'a day without immigrants, 24 hours without us', foreign workers united in solidarity against their criminalisation and lack of political rights.

The strike - which many felt unable to join in for fear of losing their jobs - was only part of the protest as migrants also organised mass marches, concerts and meetings from Paris to Rome.

EDO: SITTING ON DEFENCE

Good news for the EDO decommissioners (See SchNEWS 663) as the judge agreed to allow the factory-smashing defendants a prevention of war crimes defence. Judge Kemp took little more than a morning to decide in their favour (the hearing had been scheduled for 3 days in Lewes Crown Court), refusing to listen to the prosecution's attempt to prevent the war-crimes argument.

This was just as well for the six modern day Luddites who went into the factory to smash it with hammers (having videoed themselves explaining why they were going to smash it up). Without a 'preventing the killing of civilians by war crimes' defence, it would be a very short trial indeed.

Obviously this somewhat unusual even handedness from a British judge has left the prosecution seeing red. Determined to prevent the defendants from justifying their actions in front of a jury, the prosecution is taking their argument to the court of High Court to overturn the decision.

Chloe Marsh, Smash EDO's press spokesperson said, "This was an attempt by the authorities to shut down a fair trial for the defendants. There are important questions to be answered about this company's complicity in war crimes. We welcome the judge's decision and condemn these underhand attempts to prevent a jury from hearing the full facts of the case."

*** To mark the seventh anniversary of the start of the Iraq war**, join the Smash EDO picket outside our local Barclays Bank, on North Street, Brighton at 12pm on Wednesday March 17th. (Barclays have made a shed-load of money off the Iraq War and ITT-EDO, in case anyone needed the dots joining).

* Following this, from 3pm-6pm at the Home Farm Road Factory on the same day there's a 'Horrors of War' noise demo planned. Bring noise making equipment, bloody clothes, coffins.

Just because British troops have left and US troops are on their way out doesn't mean the Iraq war has ended. For the relatives of the 12 killed just today (a good day by Iraqi standards) in attacks directly attributable to the chaos caused by the invasion and occupation, things are a still a long way from OK.

* See www.smashedo.org.uk and <http://decommissioners.co.uk>

CALAIS: A SAFE HARBOUR?

A hangar set up to provide a gathering space for migrants in Calais (See SchNEWS 709) remains closed after a judicial decision. The hangar (really a small warehouse) was set up as a gathering space for No Borders activists and migrants. It was rapidly shut down by France's riot cops, the CRS. The hangar is now locked up with a police van permanently on station outside. Meanwhile the town's Afghan Pashtun population is camping out on the steps of the BCMO cold-weather shelter, which only opens when the weather drops to a brass monkey's minus five. Other migrant groups hang on in squats and makeshift encampments around town.

No Borders activists are still on the ground though, improvising both humanitarian and political actions. One just back told SchNEWS "There's loads to do here - you don't need any special skills, just being here with the migrants helps to deter random police attacks, but any paramedics with fluent Arabic would be most welcome."

* To get involved with Calais migrant solidarity check out <http://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com> or phone 0033 699 746 155

UKBA'STARDS

Over 200 demonstrators descended on offices in Cardiff last Friday (27th) in the largest protest to date directed at the UK Border Agency. Consisting mainly of refugees, the demo lasted three hours and saw speeches, chanting and dancing. Organised by Refugee Voice Wales, there was a strong presence from Zimbabwean, Congolese and Kurdish community groups - plus a range of anarcho and left groups including No Borders, South Wales Anarchists, the Wales Green Party, the Socialist Party and others.

Meanwhile the Yarl's Wood hunger strike continues. On Wednesday activists gathered to protest against the continuing incarceration of five of the hunger strikers in Holloway.

* See <http://noborderswales.org.uk>

A DIFFERENT BAIL GAME

The six activists who shut down H&K's UK depot two weeks ago (See SchNEWS 710) have had their bail applications turned down at their first hearing at the magistrate's court. Their bail conditions (meted out by over-enthusiastic cops after the action) includes the condition of non-association (no meeting up, communicating, preparing a defence together) - pretty harsh treatment for peaceniks up on aggravated trespass charges.

As yet no pleas have been entered. Their case has been adjourned until March 17th.

* See www.shutdownhk.org.uk and www.notsantimilitarism.wordpress.com

SchNEWS is updating its contacts list, into a new database system. A mass email has been sent to all groups who are in the current list requesting they update their entries. And if you're not in it, now would be a good time to submit your group - email it to contacts@schnews.org.uk or even better submit it directly at www.schnews.org.uk/links/submitcontact.php

...and finally...

If you're going to San Francisco be sure not to wear flowers in your hair. Haight Ashbury may have been the place to tune in and freak out on Kesey's acid test back in '67, but long-haired free-spirited drifters no longer need apply.

The original flower-power, bell-bottomed crowd dropped straight back in, became the baby boom generation and settled down to work for the Man in Alice's Restaurant in return for a comfortable Californian lifestyle and a smarter car than a hemp-powered VW camper van.

So locals no longer want to see draft-dodging bohemians and psychedelic visionaries strumming guitars on the pavement, clogging up vital thoroughfares with their chilled vibes and relaxed attitude to life.

The Man is bringing down some bad karma as the squares from 'Haight Ashbury Improvement Association' have gotten off on a real paranoid trip and are hassling for like, more CCTV cameras 'n shit. The city mayor is now pushing for a 'far out' law to ban, er all lying or even sitting on pavements.

Version one of the draconian sit-lie bill would like totally bust all stationary pavement lack-of-activity in 20 key commercial corridors whilst version two would ban it, well, everywhere. Like, what a bummer man - time for some sit-down protests while you still can, dude...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS advises all readers, go to university and get a proper occupation. Honest.

Subscribe!

Get SchNEWS free every week by email in pdf or text file - visit our site, or send us stamps and we'll post it to you. Copy and distribute! Keep SchNEWS free with donations (via website or cheques payable to Justice?). Posted free to all prisoners.

SchNEWS, c/o Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email mail@schnews.org.uk Web www.schnews.org.uk