



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER CONVERGENCE CRITERIA

SchNEWS

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STOP PRESS
Hot news from our Dole mole - Project
Work suspended on Thursday
afternoon - looks as though it's totally
kicked the bucket. Shame!

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EUROVISION - Making your mind up!

As Eurocrats quaff Bucks Flizz, it's time to kick them in the Waterloos...

Next month, Europe's leaders will come together in Amsterdam for "Son of Maastricht", to agree on the 'convergence criteria' for a single European currency. The aim of the meeting is to make Europe the third global trade force to compete with the US-led American and the Japanese-led Pacific regions. But to hit the criteria targets each nation that signs up has to reduce it's debts - and that means slashing welfare and stifling wages rises.

And *this* is the spark for the continuing strife raging all over the continent for the past couple of years: a general strike in Greece; protests throughout France, such as French lorrie drivers paralysing the country and winning all of their demands including retirement at 55; thousands of German miners occupying Bonn in protest at the threat to slash industry subsidies... the list goes on...

Of course the whole "Europe" issue is, for most Brits, one big yawn and seems quite irrelevant. But, as SchNEWS investigated, we discovered that if big businesses get their wicked way, we could see any gains over the past 50 years go down the plughole...

A LITTLE HISTORY

Long before most of us had ever heard of Maastricht, Britain's multinationals were holding meetings in their boardrooms to talk about greater integration with Europe. Since then, the multinationals have fought a long campaign to get Britain into Europe, and when they see things are not going their way, they turn up the heat and put the pressure on.

When John Major made a concession to his Euro-sceptic backbenchers on a single currency, the Financial Times published a letter of protest from Britain's

top multinationals, including BAT, British Aerospace, BP, Glaxo Wellcome, Guinness, Shell and Unilever.

European companies want to change to a single currency to avoid the cost of currency-exchange. A united Europe, it is hoped, will do for European corporations what the North American Free Trade Agreement has done for US business. Pooling resources will help create a new "strong" currency that can compete with the dollar on the world markets, and at the same time being able to dominate and exploit poorer counties in eastern Europe and the third world.

However, all this can only be achieved by a massive attack on public spending...

The Maastricht Treaty requires governments wishing to join the new currency to reduce their deficit (the gap between income and expenditure) to three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP); and their debt (the amount they borrow to reduce the deficit) to 60 per cent of GDP.

The poorest 10% of the British population are now getting £13 a week less than 20 years ago whilst the top 1% get an extra £900 thanks to tax cuts. **The Economist**

According to the European Union 50 million people in Europe are already living in poverty.

To give you an idea of the scale of cut-backs required to meet these targets, Italy's deficit in 1995 was 7.4 of GDP and government debt was 125%. Belgium was close to target on its deficit - 3.2% - but could only manage this by running up a government debt of 134%. Last year the French government needed to cut £7-8 billion in just 18 months to meet the criteria.

To see what's in store for the rest of Europe, you only have to look at England. 18

years of Conservative rule has meant massive cuts in social provision, the breaking of any effective trade union movement and the introduction of a low-paid "flexible" workforce. But even that isn't enough. As the day for a single currency draws nearer, all over Europe governments are embarked on a new austerity drive. As Andy from Revolution told SchNEWS, "In a Britain already ravaged by years of cutbacks, a further £18-£25 billion could be cut from spending in pursuit of the Maastricht convergence criteria." Or as one sacked Liverpool docker said, "The Maastricht Treaty is a Thatcher treaty."

Already, workfare has been introduced in Holland and Belgium. Italy, Portugal and Spain have *increased* the retirement age or plan to do so. Family allowances in Belgium and Germany are now means-tested, as is the pension in Norway, Holland and Spain. In Denmark, income support is now taxed. The German government, under pressure from the costs of unification, is planning to cut unemployment benefit, sick pay, health-care, child benefits and holiday pay; to raise the age of retirement; to freeze public sector pay for two years; and to withdraw legal protection for workers in companies with 10 or less employees. And this is only just the beginning...

As one anti European activist told SchNEWS "Who will win this particular round in a struggle that is only just beginning remains unclear. Governments face major difficulties meeting the Maastricht criteria and popular protest is only making it harder, but if the voice of ordinary people is to be heard a way must be found of uniting and breaking the stranglehold of the official opposition, otherwise, we will all be made to pay the price of the system's endless search for profits."

Don't worry - SchNEWS isn't getting all xenophobic - we all like a bottle of French red-wine, Spanish strawberries and the odd German (soya) sausage. As Richard from Revolution put it, "We don't want a little England mentally just as much as we don't want a Europe controlled by the Bundesbank - but a Europe under the control of ordinary people." We'll drink a case of yer finest Bordeaux to that!

MAKE SOME NOISE! "We are witnessing the rebirth of European internationalism" Tony Benn MP

● Euromarch! People on 30 different marches from 17 different countries are making their way towards Amsterdam, arriving for a massive rally in the city on 14th June. They are marching against mass unemployment, poverty and job insecurity in Europe. This is apparently the first time there's ever been an all European demo. More info: <http://www.gn.apc.org/labourmet> email 101326.41@compuserve.com

* Moroccans on the Euromarch have been refused entry to Spain thanks to the Spanish anti-immigration laws.

● LegalizE StreetParty 15/16/17 June SchNEWS has heard that rather a large number of soundsystems are gonna party and protest against "European drugs policy and other shit they've planned for us...."

Maastricht Treaty - nil points

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Manchester update

* More than £6 million has so far been spent on the evictions, which will probably take another 2 1/2 weeks.

* Liz, was locked on by her hands and feet with a noose around her neck, was taken out from a tunnel on Wednesday from the "Sir Cliff Richard OBE Vegan Revolution Camp". There is also the tale of the geezer who nailed his ear to a tree. There are Tactical Assault Group Police on site who are snatching people at every opportunity, especially at night. Bailiffs pulled a woman out of a tree by her ankles on Wednesday.

* Sharyn Lock, (BE4262) is currently on hunger strike in HMP Risley demanding that her prison diet is free from genetically modified food.

* Bailiffs have built an illegal dam across the river Bollin in order to prevent further "SAS Style Armada invasions" by protestors like what happened on Monday.

* The Zion Tree, Wild Garlic and Jimi Hendrix camps have now gone, but at least three remain, including the biggest - Flywood.

* Tr(ue) romance blossomed this week at Wild Garlic when Russ, a 26 year old self employed window fitter, proposed to Tangle, a student at John Moores University. The couple are also planning to call their first child Ashley after the Ash tree they were living in, and are pleading to the Under Sheriff to allow them to take a clipping before all the trees are destroyed.

Campaign Against Runway 2: 0161 834 8221. Mobile 0956 394121. Campaign Prisoner support: 0161 224 4846.

*** Expansion of Heathrow's Terminal 5 (T5), Stansted & Gatwick could all become major projects in the not so distant future. The Heathrow inquiry is in it's third year and is not expected to finish until late 1998. If it goes ahead, T5 will be the largest green belt development in UK history, destroying 625 acres of protected London green belt - and the planned M25 link road another 50 acres. 4 rivers - the Colne, Crane, Duke of Northumberland and Longford - will be either culverted or filled with de-icing and aviation fuel run-off (just above a SSSI and the point where London extracts its drinking water). T5 will, in its own right, become the third biggest airport in Europe, behind Frankfurt and the rest of Heathrow (already on 3000 acres of greenbelt!). The development will include a terminal building, offices, hotels, shopping malls and 21,000 car parking spaces. If you want to know more contact FoE on 0171 566 1678.

SchNEWS In brief

*** Villagers in Bjorke, Norway chained a telephone booth to four boulders and guard it in shifts, after the state TeleNor company said it was unprofitable and would be removed. *** **SoundKlash @ The Event**, Brighton on Monday 2nd June. Live set from Advent & all your favourite local soundsystems for £3. Cash goes to K-Rig *** At Brixton Academy, June 7th, 9pm-6am, Release are celebrating 30 years of providing class A advice on drugs and the law. Performers include Beamish, Choci, Liberator and so much more!!! £15/£12 con Info 0171 729 5255 *** A nice little victory: LETS (Local Exchange Trading Scheme) units have been accepted for the first time as earnings in a claim for Family Credit by Helen Frances of Frome LETS. She's happy to provide advice to anyone making a similar claim. 01373 451386 *** Not just a labour victory on

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May 1st: Holtsfield Chalet Community, near Swansea, who were living under threat of eviction from property scumbag Tim Jones, won their case in the House of Lords. This is the most significant land rights decision for a decade as it questions the age old feudal law giving the land owner absolute right to the land beneath tenants' homes - which could have positive results for travellers, gypsies and others *** This week the first disciplinary charges are to be brought against a cop for over-zealous use of CS gas. Details are scanty, but it seems a Cambridgeshire rozzter is on a charge of "abusing his authority" in respect of an incident during 6-month trials in Peterborough in March '96 *** **Pressmennan Woods**: 25 miles from Edinburgh lies this 13,000 year old oak woodland - which considerate landowner John Kinnaird wants to substantially thin "for the enjoyment of future generations". What John forgets to admit is that this thinning, which would severely damage the woodland ecosystem, enables the felled trees to be flogged to BMW for car dashboards. A camp's already set up, so come and defend the wood. The owner is likely to back down if enough people oppose. Tel. 0131 2282193 or 01368 850630 *** Between 17-19 Apr. 8 people were nicked at Pressmennan and charged under the **1865 Trespass (Scotland) Act** - a law brought in to stop displaced crofters reoccupying their crofts after the Highland Clearances! The cops claimed to be acting on behalf of the landowner, though the Bughts camp (where the arrests took place) is widely believed to be common land, and there is no record of ownership in the last 300 years. The eight want people to write to the Prosecutor Fiscal (like the CPS): tel 0131 657 4392 *** **Head State Support Group** is being set up to provide legal and letter-writing help for folk who feel mentally unstable from too much direct action. If you want or can offer help, have been sectioned or know someone who has, contact: "Witches Green", 54 Mill Rd, North Lancing, West Sussex, BN15 0PZ. Email: jim@radicalfluff.demon.uk *** **Townstall Valley**, Dartmouth, Devon: one of Britain's largest badger colonies and acres of woodland could be destroyed if road building plans go ahead. Camps being set up. Contact 01803 832410.

Vicar with attitude

Remember John Papworth, the London vicar who rapidly lost his job when he suggested that shoplifting in supermarkets was not a sin? Well, the church won't be any happier with his latest wheeze, for our man has bypassed god to draw up a "new" 10 commandments! Sticking to the general carin', sharin' themes as revealed to Moses first time around, John encompasses 20th century concerns with, amongst others, no.4: "Thou shalt enjoy the gift of sex as thou wiltst..." and no. 10: "Thou shalt not heed commercial notices nor become enslaved to cars, computers, TV and like technologies." Jesus, we feel, would have approved...

South Downs Alert!

The South has lost up to 80% of it's Downsland in the last 50 years, putting wildlife at risk and spoiling the beauty we all take for granted. And no single, co-ordinated organisation have any responsibility for looking after it. Friends of the Earth is calling on the National Trust to take over so at least "development" will be prevented. To support this desire there's to be a **Fun Day**, on the 1st June starting at 12 noon @ Stanmer Park with stalls, entertainment & walks on the downs. Take picnic, suitable clothes and happy vibes. Info: 0171 566 1698.

The + files

Henry Doubleday Research Association: Preserving backgarden biodiversity! Non-conformity in the world of veg has been stamped on for years-unregistered varieties fall foul of legislation decreeing which types can be sold in the EU; the HDRA realises that security and safety from epidemics is possible only with biodiversity, as well as freedom of choice- and to this end have set up a seed bank to preserve, propagate and share a full range of 'outlawed' organic veg varieties. They also offer a full range of organic advice, courses and research into organic techniques. A must in such genetically-uncertain times!! Contact: HDRA, Ryton Organic Gardens, Coventry, CV8 3LG.

Crap arrest of (last) week

For criminal damage to a shirt button. Around twenty activists took part in an anti-genetics action inside Marks and Spencers, Brighton. The store security guard leapt into action grabbing one protestor. In the resulting melee someone else grabbed the guard, popping a few buttons in the process. 5 (five!) van loads of police then arrived a few minutes later to make the arrest ...

83-yr-old attacks police!

83 year old Reg Weston, on his way home from an anti-Project Work demo in January at Gravesend Sally Army (where the unemployed must iron clothes for charity shops) saw a protestor chatting with policemen, and told him he ought not to fraternise with the 'scum'. One of the 'scum' asked Reg to repeat what he had said. Reg did as he was asked. The policeman said if Reg repeated the words again, he would arrest him under the Public Order Act. Reg did...and was arrested. Another protestor who criticised Reg's arrest is also charged with obstructing the police. **Reg's three day trial is in Gravesend Magistrates Court, North Kent on June 6th, 9th and 10th.**

* Oxford Claimants publish an excellent range of leaflets on Project Work, JSA, Restart interviews, Incapacity Benefit and signing on and studying. Send an SAE to: Oxford Claimants, c/o OUWCU, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes St., Oxford, OX4 1HU.

...and finally...

Under New Labour everything has changed - no one gets hangovers any more, dropped toast lands butter side up, and condoms never split. However, some things have remained the same. The wallets of the few are growing fatter, and the fat cats are lapping up ever richer cream. Directors of Camelot, administrators of the National Mockery, have just given themselves a 90% pay increase. Peter Jarvis, the Chief Exec of Whitbread, who scrapes by on £521 **an hour**, has been put forward as the person to look after the Low Pay Comission which will decide the minimum wage! What next - Genghis Khan as Minister of Human Rights? Tony Blair asking Margaret Thatcher for advice?

That's not all. The Head of BP has become Minister for European Competition, and Martin Taylor, man of notes at Barclays has become head of the task force on welfare reform. Nice to see someone appointed with empathy for the people affected by the changes; who knows what it's like to save coppers in a whiskey bottle. There's more - Lord Hollick, responsible for sacking hundreds of people from Anglia TV and the Express, is a special advisor to Dept of Industry. New Labour, New Forceps: Looks like the delivery is going to be difficult. More drugs please nurse!

disclaimer

The SchNEWS warns all readers not to be blinded by Maastricht's Eurovision. Always be Shaw that you're not a Puppet on a String. Never let them hit you in the Waterloos, or you may fall foul of the Brotherhood of Man. Then you will be EMUed. Honest.