



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER LOVIN' IT, AVIN' IT

SchNEWS



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OLD MONEY

Making money out of caring for the elderly - The Lord Mayors' wife out on strike - A dodgy Labour Council that's been ruled by the same man for 16 years - Union officials who advise striking workers to cross picket lines!

Welcome to another British trade union dispute of the nineties.

Three and a half months ago 250 care workers from Tameside near Manchester went on strike- a few months later they were sacked. SchNEWS listened to their story.

"TELL US WHY YOU ARE ON STRIKE"

"In 1989, the Labour Council of Tameside decided to put 12 of its old peoples' homes into Trusts, promising staff better working conditions and refurbishment. They also promised if things didn't work out with the Trusts, then the homes would revert back to the Council. But in 1992/3, Tameside Care Group hit financial problems, resulting in the workforce having to take massive pay cuts- we lost 19 terms of conditions, all our weekend enhancements, some of our sick pay and some of our holidays. Five years along the line, and we've never had a pay rise. So in '97 our union approached the company to ask for a pay rise as the company was now making a profit. The company said 'Sorry- the Council have reduced the funding and we need to make further cuts.'

These 'cuts' were up to £2.04 an hour in some cases, a weeks' holiday and an end to the sick scheme. We said 'No, we're not accepting this' and voted for strike action. Since we've been on strike, we've found that we're not only fighting the company but also the Labour Council, who have a 'golden share' in the company, with one of the trustees a Labour MP and two others prominent Labour figures".

"WHY DID THE COMPANY HIT FINANCIAL CRISIS?"

"When we were first transferred to the Trust, all the Councillors who lost their seats in the local elections were given jobs within the Trust, and company cars. The bosses and ex-councillors were giving themselves massive pay awards while the workforce were taking cuts".

"HOW CAN YOU MAKE MONEY OUT OF LOOKING AFTER OLD PEOPLE?"

"Exactly- but last year Tameside Care Group made £750,000. During this dispute we've picketed agencies who've been recruiting scabs to do our old jobs. We've been training for years, training's ongoing, and you never stop learning, yet one scab agency said they would train people for four days- and charge them £86! After just four days training you would then be allowed to work in any home in Tameside!

"YOU SAID YOU WERE NOT JUST FIGHTING THE COUNCIL, BUT ALSO THE LOCAL LABOUR PARTY- CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT MORE?"

For the past 16 years the leader of Tameside has been Roy Oldham and he has got a finger in every pie. We had a public meeting last week and invited all the Labour Councillors but not one turned up. They put off sacking us until after the May local elections, where only one in five of Tameside voted, which I think tells you something about what people think of their local council!"

"WHAT ABOUT YOUR UNION?"

"If our union had spoken to the company earlier we could have avoided this dispute. Instead, after five weeks on strike we were instructed to cross picket lines, go back in and negotiate from the inside. But we just couldn't understand why a union was telling us to cross a picket line when the majority of us were out and we all believed in the same thing. We even had one union convenor, a Councillor, who actually turned up on our picket line with transport to take us to a meeting set up to persuade us to go back to work!"

"WHAT OTHER THINGS HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?"

"We've been storming every council meeting that's going- we are giving those councillors an absolute dogs' life. It's in today's Manchester Evening News that the council are stepping up security tomorrow night ready for us. They only allowed 15 of us in at the last meeting, this time they are saying that they will only allow 10 in- but we've got about 110 that are gonna go in there!"

"IS THIS DISPUTE JUST ABOUT TAMESIDE OR DOES IT HAVE WIDER IMPLICATIONS?"

"We realised in the first few weeks of the strike as we travelled round the country that this wasn't just happening to us, it's happening everywhere. It's unbelievable what's happening in this country, and it's about time people got up and fought back. Everywhere you go it's privatisation and slashing wages. We're not just fighting for Tameside workers, we're fighting for low pay workers everywhere.."

*Donations and solidarity messages to Tameside UNISON, 29 Booth St., Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7LB. Phone the strike committee on 0161 308 2452

*Messages of protest to Roy Oldham, Leader of the Council, Tameside MBC, Council Offices, Wellington Rd, Ashton Under Lyne, Lancs OL6 6DL

Crap Arrest of the Week

Red eyed cops ploughing through 500 hours of video spotted one of their own apparently trip up and fall down an embankment during a demonstration against Consort Beagles 14 months ago. Even though the red faced plod got up and sheepishly wandered off, the video voyeurs decided a nearby activist had assaulted him. So after spending months tracking him down two of West Mercia's finest raided the man's home and 6 am and arrested him. He is now due to appear in Hereford Court on July 31st even though the alleged victim has never made a complaint or ever been identified.

If you're unhappy at being forced into a crap-low-pay-New-Deal-job, spare a thought for those struggling to make ends meet elsewhere. The poor old executives at The Bank of England (who've been complaining that they had to recently raise interest rates because greedy workers are demanding inflationary pay rise) gave themselves pay increases of up 67%! Meanwhile poor 'ole Jan Leschly of SmithKline Beecham struggles on with £2.4 million a year, while those in charge of BP, ASDA, Rank, Alliance & Leicesters, only got pay rises of just 20% last year .

GANDALF UPDATE

The date for the Gandalf Three Appeal has been moved forward and is now set for next Tuesday and Wednesday 21st and 22nd of July. Three editors of Green Anarchist were sentenced to three years each for simply reporting on direct action, but in a surprise decision, were let out on bail (see SchNEWS 161). The appeal will decide whether they'll be put back into prison or get their charges dropped. One reason for them being let out before their appeal was public outrage (or semi-public, if you want) about the sentence. It's not over yet- so be there: Court 6 of The Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand, London at 10.30am

CRAP JOB OF THE WEEK

*Pet Shop Assistant - 'feeding and cleaning out cages and making sure animals are healthy, spot illness or other problems. Previous experience preferred. May be trained to serve and advice customers in shop.' £2 an hour

*Factory worker- full time, stitching shoes £1.88 an hour!

Both of these spotted in Blackburn Job Centres. *Or what about a job at the Keyhinge Toys Co. Factory in Vietnam, which makes Disney characters for McDonalds 'happy' meals. The women who work there get \$0.06 an hour! They work a 70 hour week and in February 200 fell ill, 25 collapsed and 3 were hospitalised as a result of chemical exposure. Another reason not to eat at McDogshits, if you really needed one.

HILLGROVE ARTICLE

"It was amazing to see such diverse people working together towards a common goal" said one activist. "There was a balaclava youth talking to 60-year old women from the RSPCA about the best way to break through the police lines".

Things are hotting up down at f'farm- Hillgrove Farm, that is, the cat breeders run by Farmer Brown in Witney, Oxon which has supplied the vivisection industry for 27 years- including, according to leaked info, the horrific military research establishment at Porton Down. Animal Rights campaigners have been keeping up the pressure on this misanthropic yokel with National Demos every six weeks, which have seen Mr Plod out in force and the farm turned into a barricaded war zone. Now things have taken an even more sinister turn: on 12th July, activists gathering in nearby Witney for speeches and a planned march on the farm discovered that the Home Secretary (who, incidentally, has a house just down the road from the farm...) had imposed a last-minute Stonehenge-style 5-mile 'Unlawful Assembly' exclusion zone around the farm under Section 14a of the Criminal Justice Act, thus preventing the demo taking place, and effectively denying the right to protest. Undeterred, activists regrouped and decided to march on the offices and labs of Colin Blakemore, vivisector extraordinaire, - the result? An impromptu Reclaim The Streets! Cops tried to set up roadblocks; activists broke through or dodged through sidestreets. Although the farm was unreachable, and only a few of the thousand or so present made it to Blakemore's, the horrendous costs to the cops of policing Hillgrove were pushed up once more,

Get involved! For more information on the Hillgrove campaign write to Save the Hillgrove Cats, Box CB, 111 Magdalen Rd., Oxford, OX4 1RQ, or Tel: 0121 632 6460. Ask to be put on the mailing list

SchNEWS Vocab Watch: misanthropic—people hater. Well, do YOU know the word for cat-hater??

Meanwhile, the campaign against Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) rolls on. The company is the UK's biggest contract testing company who torture and kill for profit. They have been the focus of attention ever since two undercover investigators exposed the companies cruelty with 'It's a Dogs Life' which led to the company shares to plummet.

At the last demo HLS cunningly let their staff go home early denying protestors the opportunity to chat. The demo saw 10 varied arrests, several of which were made by Thames Valley Police who came to the party to pick up Hillgrove activists! People then moved on to nearby breeders Interfauna, and then to the home of Dr Pamela Mullins - previously head of Rodent Toxicology - who apparently cowered behind closed curtains with an iron bar, while those attending enlightened the neighbourhood about her job, until police moved them on. Incidentally, one of the police Evidence Gatherer's cars crashed into an oncoming vehicle after taking a roundabout too fast! Tut!

HLS share prices are now just 17.5p (and they made a loss of over five million last year), so HLS can be closed down, keep up the pressure and support the activists outside the labs at Altringham Road, Wilmslow and Wooley Road, Alconbury. Next demo : Saturday 1st August, meet at noon, Wilmslow Railway Station, Cheshire.

Contact Huntingdon Death Sciences Campaign, PO Box 325, Cambridge, CB1 2UF

** On Saturday July 25th there is a national day of action against Sainsbury's - the last British supermarket continuing to stock viciously hunted kangaroo meat. Call Viva on 01273 777688 to find out what's happening in your area.

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SchNEWS in brief

The Observer pulled a swiftie on gene kings **Monsanto** on Sunday. A full page advert by the company, was followed by two pages devoted to those destroying genetically engineered sites around the country! Meanwhile George Monbiot was on Channel 4 news ripping apart a Biotechnology spokesperson last week. However, he told us, C4 originally intended to put him opposite a Monsanto man but the company said, "You are never getting us into a studio with him". So much for their open debate *** Hey you with dreadlocks - want to know what to do with all those unwanted headlice? Well, researchers at Middlesex University are seeking volunteers to donate head lice for a project that's looking to find a natural treatment *** **THE THIRD BATTLE OF NEWBURY** is alive and well at a new address: PO Box 5642, Newbury, RG14 5WG New phone: 07000 785 201 *** There is a new events listing available called the Networking Newsletter Project <networking.newsletter@dial.pipex.com>, most of the stuff takes place in Manchester but there are other actions listed check out: <http://www.poptel.org.uk/marc/members/Networking/calendar/dates.html> for latest additions *** **WEST COUNTRY ACTIVIST SUMMER GATHERING** Friday 7th- Sunday 9th August Location to be announced Further information: 01626 363844 -Email: WCA@conk.com. Subscribe to the West Country Activist Newsletter: 10, 2nd class stamps for 5 issues. Send name and address to: WCA, c/o PO Box 426, Bath. BA1 2ZD *** **The Big Green Gathering** is later this month from July 29th -August 2nd on the Wiltshire Downs near Warminster - more details tel 01747 870667. Admission advance ticket only. Ecotrip will be there with many talks over the three days including ten on the subject of genetic engineering issues. *** **Live Wild Or Die #7**—hot off the press. In defiance of expectations, sleep, and sanity. 40 newspaper-size pages full of anarchy, sabotage, direct action, militant labor, eco/animal liberation, primitivism/anti-tech, class war, Chumbawamba on veganism & ideology etc. LWOD, c/o POB 481, Tucson, AZ 85702, Amerika. *** "Liz loves Ace. Stingray takes speed, Liz takes Stingray, Ace is choked, so's the Earth. The bailiff gets them all", A cracking new play called 'Cars' by Jon Salway is being performed at the Harvest Forestry 1 New England St, Brighton 7:45 21st-26 July for tickets ring 01273 689

KEBELE

ARROOOGA at Kebele Kulture Project in Bristol. This top community space, squatted for 3 years and now facing imminent eviction, has been trying to buy the building from the bank that owns it They have got an ethical bank to promise a 70% loan on the £20,000 asking price which leaves Kebele just £6,000 to find. As well as the Cafe there is a book and video library, children's workshops, bike workshop, healing and Spanish lessons and the project is really making waves in trying to promote alternative ways of living. Kebele also managed to feed the working crews at Glastonbury this year with their mobile catering. They are so close to a secure future it would be mad for us to let this project fail- they DESPERATELY need your donations and maybe if you're a band or promoter, why not organise a benefit? Kebele is at: 14 Robertson Rd, Eastville, Bristol. 0117 939 9469. HELP 'EM!!

STOP PRESS: STOP PRESS: STOP PRESS

Detective Sgt (I'll smash every Party and every Demo) Keating, Brighton's very own 'Public Order Robocop' is leaving! send your cards of condolence to: Brighton Police St, John St, Brighton

MANCHESTER

The new camp set up urgently needs support. The Arthur's woods apparently obstructs the satellite and radar reception of the expanding Manchester Airports. The police are currently nicking the key players, then bailing them off site. Directions - find Styal on a road atlas. Ask any local in Styal where Arthur's Wood is. "They all love us here and loads of them are involved." Camp mobile 0777 5602954.

* Following on from last weeks story about Faslane peace camp outside the Trident nuclear base in Scotland : Argull & Bute Council have proposed a meeting with the camp at the beginning of August. This change of tactics might have something to do with the fact that evicting the camp could possibly cost the cash strapped Council up to £200,000. The Council recently closed a community centre to save just £50,000!

TUBEWAY ARMY

At 7:30am on Monday morning train surfing Reclaim The Streets (RTS) activists climbed onto the roof of a tube train at Bank Station and shut down the eastbound Central Line. The action was in support of the tubeworkers' strike against privatisation. They unfolded a carriage-length banner reading 'Private Profit at Public Expense', while others dressed as 'fat cats' offered to buy Bank station, handing out peanuts and explanatory leaflets to passengers, underground signs were subverted to read 'Laughing all the way to the Bank'. More supporters holding a huge "Stop Privatisation - Support the Tubeworkers" banner picketed the station entrance. A spokesperson for RTS said "...selling off the network, far from improving the service as the government claim, will bring only deteriorating conditions and higher prices for London's travellers while increasing car congestion and pollution on the streets. Three activists were arrested.

RTS have a history of supporting transport workers. During the 1996 tube strike activists organised a simultaneous Critical Mass bike blockade, while others occupied the office of the London Underground Manager

...Reclaim the Streets: 0171 281 4621; PO BOX 9656 London N4 4JY NOTE NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS! www.gn.apc.org/rts E-mail: rts@gn.apc.org

London meetings every Tuesday 7pm : At the moment we're at the Arsenal Tavern, Blackstock Rd, London N4. (Finsbury Park tube.) **Street parties coming up** : * **Sheffield** (acoustic - bring an instrument) August 1st; * **Bristol** August 15th. meet 12 noon Eastville Prk M32 junc 2 Tel 0117 939 093

* After the success of the Global Street Party **PRAGUE** is holding a FUN "in" ACTION Week, 26-30. September : starting with a five year birthday celebration of occupying 'Squatt Ladronka', 3 days festival of punk rock, ska and other bands from all over the world, followed by a street party on the 29th. Meet 2 p.m. Palackeho square

Thousands expected with thirty Czech DJs and bands, fire show, drums, street theatre. More info : Zeme predevsim! (Earth First! Prague - support grup) PO BOX 237160 41 Praha 6 CZECH REPUBLIC Email: zemepredevsim@czn.cz

...and finally...

So apparently agents from MI5 are being used to investigate 'benefit cheats'. Jeremy Corbyn Labour MP for Islington North said "This is desperation in the post-cold war era to find something for MI5 to do. MI5 would be better concentrating on pursuing large scale tax evasion by the wealthy in offshore tax havens". The DSS denied that the next James Bond film would be set in a DSS office.

(stolen from Of Some Benefit, the newsletter of the Independent Benefits Advice Service, 34 Saxon Place, Horton Kirby, Dartford, Kent, DA4 9JG 01322 865114)

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