



THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

"We are staring down the barrel of a national emergency."

Tony Blair, March 1998

Its January 31st 1999, the eve of the next millennium, you're at a party waiting for the clock to strike midnight. The countdown begins. Midnight and the sound system shuts down, the lights go out. Everyone pours onto the streets to total confusion. The roads are gridlocked, the traffic lights have shut down. No chance of getting a taxi so you walk home. It's freezing cold, the heating's packed up so you pick up the phone to complain. The line's dead. Welcome to 2000.

The 'millennium bug', or Y2K (year 2000) as it is now commonly called, is the failure of computer chips to digitally recognize the change of year from 1999 to 2000. At the turn of the century the computers' could think that time has returned to the year 1900. Many are speculating, but the truth is that no-one really knows what the consequences of this 'error of judgment' are going to be.

"Y2K is more than just a problem of computer failure. It is about legal dilemmas, insurance black spots, broken supply chains, public order and contingency planning. The bug has exposed the fragility of a just-in-time economy." **Simon Davies, (The Independent)** In a recent TV documentary the Head of the Royal Commission for the Effects of the Millennium Bug cited *"6 months of major destruction as the best case scenario."*

The Government is playing the situation down, pampering the public with the notion that the problem is merely a bug, and can therefore be swatted or squashed as such. Their recent toaster and video campaigns, (the latter alone cost them a ripe £8 million), only asks 'will your appliances survive?' Labour's latest scheme is to train 20,000 staff from small and medium sized businesses to create what Blair calls 'an army of bugsters'. And Gwyneth Flower, director of the Government body Action 2000, suggested that people at the most may stock up on a few extra candles.

So why is there this pre-occupation with the 'small' such as small businesses, toasters, and the stocking of candles? The supposedly 'independent' Bank of England has been silenced on the matter by the Government. One freelance journalist told SchNews that

he has received more than the one phone call from the Government concerning his Y2K scribbles, warning him of scaremongering the public. Why the concern? Maybe there's more at stake than just burnt toast and candle wax on the carpet. Could it be to do with the fact that punters may withdraw their shares in companies, withdraw their money from their accounts, or stock-pile a months worth of groceries...just in case? These sudden jolts in economic behavior would themselves cause widespread chaos.

A leaked Government memo last week admitted that troops may be needed to maintain emergency services. Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, expressed concern over the disbandment of units of the Territorial Army as they might be needed to help the regular army amidst fears that key areas like electricity and telecommunications will be affected by the millennium mayhem.

Aviation authorities are admitting that the bug may well paralyze air traffic. The chairman of the Aviation Insurance Offices Association stated "It is impossible to say where the failures may occur...If air companies are not entirely sure, they won't go."

DON'T FORGET
SchNEWS's
4TH BIRTHDAY
NEXT THURSDAY (19TH)
LIVE CABARET
*with guest performers from the direct
action frontline*
THE SCHLOOPER DOOPER
SCHLIVE
Beats from DJ'S
HELISH (INNERFIELD/F.A.F)
TING (LUNARCY/PLANET DUB)
MELOMANIAC

*9pm-2am Thurs 19th Nov £2:50 B411/conc
£3:50 after @ The NewMadeira Hotel
(just up from the Escape club)*

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For shouting 'burn the pope' Steve who runs 'The Hemp Corporation' shop in Brighton was nicked at the Lewes Bonfire night for his outburst - despite the fact that there was a giant effigy of the Pope heading for one of the fires! Finding 1kg of cannabis on him, and obviously a danger to the public he spent the next 16 hours in the cells before telling them it was a fair-cop guy but 1kg was nothing compared to the 2 1/2 tons of cannabis back at his shop. Six officers rushed over to Church St where they did find 2 1/2 tons of Hemp...unfortunately for them it was all in the form of clothing!

(Interesting to see that Sussex Police have started to treat the fireworks display like just another protest - going mob handed, blocking off streets unnecessarily and perching on top of cherry pickers filming everybody. Don't the cops just love crowds.)

CND are "deeply suspicious" of the whereabouts of the date sensitive chips in regards to the worlds nuclear arsenal. Will missiles confused by the date change decide to launch themselves?

'The Bug in the Bomb', a report out this week by Basic, the British American Security Information Council, cites a test at a radar centre where the clocks were put forward to the year 2000. The results? Total Systems blackout! In Dublin recently, the clocks were put forward again to test the workings of traffic lights. The results? Unless they have a contingency plan, there will be chaos on the streets. But don't panic the Government says your toaster will still work.

It's looking increasingly likely that the UK economy will be thrown into turmoil. Gwyneth Flower of Action 2000 believes that 200,000 businesses could likely go under with an estimated 2 million job losses.

And what about the water supply? Water companies have refused to give any guarantees, while stock piling bottled water. Doesn't bode well. With water treatment plants being controlled by computers any hiccups in the system could mean sewage being discharged into our water ways and dubiously coloured water coming out of our taps.

So why is the Government playing down the millennium bug? Robin Guenier of industry-backed Taskforce 2000 doesn't believe they're sounding enough alarm bells. *"I'm sure the Government is in agony over this. It doesn't want to be held responsible for any panic..."*

So don't worry. For goodness sake don't concern yourselves with banks, oil rigs, nuclear missiles, supermarkets, power stations or public utilities. It's alright. Everything's alright. Relax. Have a piece of warm toast.

It's OK. It's fine.

TOXIC SLUDGE IS GOOD FOR YOU

While the boss of British Energy pats himself on the back about recent 'interim profits' and the lack of greenhouse gases from the 'clean' nuclear industry (as for the waste products - 'safe as houses gov' the Big Boss tells us), SchNEWS asks: **Where does all the material that makes the nuclear industry tick come from in the first place?**

Jabiluka is in Kakadu national park, a world heritage site in N.Australia, home to diverse landforms and species. It's also rich in uranium. Since the election of John Howard's Liberal government the mining of uranium is subject to no more restrictions than any other substance; a decision made without public debate.

The land is traditionally owned by the Mirrar Aboriginal people. Aboriginal systems of land use are hard to explain in Western terms but as they do not share our concept of ownership, it's easy to take advantage of them. Kakadu contains sacred sites and burial grounds, for the Mirrar to lose any of it would be a spiritual and emotional loss as well as a physical one.

Uranium was first found in Kakadu in the early 70s, and the Ranger mine, near Jabiluka, opened in 78. Although Mirrar people spoke consistently against the mine, their protests were ignored. Toby Gangale, then senior traditional owner, reacted by saying, "I've given up. It's been six years now. I'm not fighting any more." He died soon after. In 18 years, the mine has had over 100 incidents of mismanagement and safety breaches, including the release of contaminated water into Kakadu. Workers' health and safety has also been a problem, with repeated strikes and disputes. In 1992 the Mirrar began the Stop Jabiluka campaign with actions all over Australia. Until May this year there was a blockade on the road to the mining lease. With the onset of the wet season the camp is no longer liveable and so actions are planned around Australia.

First Hand Account

Spending time at Jabiluka showed me more clearly why protesters felt so strongly. After being there three weeks and travelling around Kakadu I began to get more of a feel for the land and what we were trying to protect. Seeing the life a lot of the Mirrar have been reduced to in nearby towns, showed me vividly how much they had lost. If Kakadu could become so important to me in just weeks, how much more must it mean to a people who had been there for thousands of years and built up a way of life around it? Their culture is inextricably tied to the land, so they are losing more than a few hectares when the bulldozers move in - being paid off for the land is no compensation. The effect western land ownership ideas have had on the Aboriginal community is evident all over Australia on the streets and in job centres and pubs. Because of the damage alcohol has done to so many of her people, Mirrar elder Yvonne Margarula has banned it from the camp. After I left the camp, some British tourists asked me why I bothered with a campaign in a remote place on the other side of the world, especially when I could have been frying on a beach. Maybe these people had failed to grasp the essentially global nature of all nuclear issues. Uranium mined at Jabiluka could go on to uphold oppressive regimes or power games anywhere in the world and end up contaminating other places - quite possibly in Britain. Until all humans realise we share a responsibility for each other and the planet nothing will change until we have nowhere left to mine and no-one left to oppress. The Jabiluka Action Group website is at <http://www.jag.org.au>

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SchNEWS in brief

So now New Labour are announcing plans to tackle the **mass sickie** - people bunking off work when they're not really ill at all. Absenteeism among public sector workers runs at an average of 10 days a year. But what do they expect when most work is dull mind-numbing drudgery that swallows up peoples lives. Anyone for a shorter working week? *** Buy Nothing Day campaigners wouldn't

approve, but the Japanese government is giving away £3.47 billion of coupons to children under 16, adults under 65 and those on benefits - so they can **spend, spend, spend**, boost consumption and revive the economy. Hey, have they been reading Victor Lebow's words of wisdom? The American retail analyst writes "Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and the use of goods into rituals, that we seek our **spiritual satisfaction** in consumption... We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced and discarded at an ever increasing rate." *** If you think that's all a bit much, maybe you want to earmark Saturday 29th November, which is International **No Shop Day**. Send SAE to ENOUGH, One World Centre, 6 Mount St., Manchester M1 5NS Tel 0161 226 6668 www.envirolink.org/issues/enough/index *** Demonstrators this week commemorated the 3 year anniversary of the execution of 9 Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People activists. In Newcastle, the gates to a SHELL depot were chained together. In Norwich, one garage was picketed while another depot had to close for the day due to a 6 hour picket and a tripod at the gates! In London there was a demo at the Shell HQ and a wreath left at the Nigerian High Commission. In both places the **Ogoni National Anthem** was sung (written by Ken himself!). And in Brighton, a Shell garage was closed for over 2 hrs while the entrances were picketed, the pumps padlocked off, and the oh-so-faithful- MURDERERS banner, dropped from the roof! DELTA, 0116 255 3223 www.oneworld.org/delta *** **Tools for Solidarity** is a charity which collects old, unwanted hand tools, repairs and ships them out to skilled tradespeople in Africa and Latin America. Contact Unit 1B1, Endenderry Industrial Estate, 326 Crumlin Road, Belfast BT14 7EE. Tel 01232 747473 *** **Brazil Network** present a workshop on the **Movimento Sem Terra** land reform actions in Brazil, 24th November 8pm, Hobgoblin Pub, Brighton: **Brazil Network**, 1a Waterlow Road N19 5NJ. Tel 0171 2812226 *** **RASP, Rebel Alliance Street Performers** are **Calling All Artists!** (writers, painters, filmmakers) to form an activists arts collective for stunts on our streets! Call James: 01273 203611. Next **REBEL ALLIANCE** Meeting is on Wednesday 25th Nov 7pm Hobgoblin pub, London Road. Come along, meet new friends and hear all about the radical side to yer favourite seaside town *** **Movement Against Monarchy** - a symposium 27th November 8pm, London Anarchist Forum, 25 Red Lion Square, (Holborn tube) Tel: 0181 847 0203 *** **Know your enemy!** Uncover the mad, mad world of the secret police. "Just who is behind the Paramilitary Red Commando?" Dunno Miss. **Notes from the Borderland**, £2.50 to Lary O'Hara, BM Box 4769, London WC1N 3XX... *** **Animal Rights Calendar** have changed their website address. They are now at <http://arrs.envirolink.org/arc/veggies/> *** If you want to learn about setting up a women's, housing co-op get along to a **workshop** on Sunday 15th November from 11am - 4pm at Montague House, Brighton. More details 01273 684736 *** **ARROW** have organised a demonstration outside Downing Street from 1pm this Saturday (14th) to protest against the military build-up once again against Iraqi (SchNEWS 155) 0171 607 2302.

Inside SchNEWS

Two weeks ago the Pennsylvania Supreme Court signed away the life of Mumia Abul Jamal by denying him the right for a new trial. Mumia is an African American journalist who has been on death row for the past fifteen years charged with murder of a police officer. If you scratch the surface, the evidence used to convict him just doesn't add up.

As a teenager he was a member of the Black Panther Party and his work found him a spot on the 'key agitators index' of the FBI. After the Party disintegrated Mumia's work continued and in 1980 at the age of 26 he received the prestigious Peabody Award for Radio Journalism and was elected president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Association of Black Journalists. Despite this and married with children, Mumia was finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet because of his outspoken views and so took a job driving a taxi. Meanwhile, he'd also been highlighting the states escalating harassment of the radical black ecological group MOVE, and its attempts to crush it, eventually leading to the bombing of their homes and the imprisonment and death of most of its members.

As one magazine states "It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the authorities considered eliminating Mumia's reportage an urgent priority."

Opportunity knocked for the state on the morning of December 9, 1981. While driving his cab, Mumia saw a police officer beating a black man with a flashlight. Running to the scene, Mumia was shot by a cop. A few feet away lay a mortally wounded cop. Mumia was taken to hospital, kicked and beaten by police before undergoing intensive surgery. He was then charged with the officers murder. What followed was a trial of fabricated evidence, knobbed witness, dodgy jurors and Mumia often gagged and unable to give his own defence. Unsurprisingly, he was found guilty and sentenced to death. There isn't space to go into the details of the trial but in December of last year an international tribunal of 23 prominent jurists convened in Philadelphia, to consider testimony by 'selected witnesses' and look into the evidence. The panel took just 2 hours to return a unanimous verdict that the US government had violated four human rights conventions during and after the trial. Mumia's work was dubbed "the voice of the voiceless" Now its our turn to pull out all the stops to make sure he is not executed. Last time world-wide protests stopped his death- let's do it again. Remember this is urgent - once the death warrant is signed he has just 30 - 90 days to live.

Demonstrate Picket American Embassy, Grosvenor Square this Saturday (14th) 11am to 1pm. Regular meetings are happening, Next one Wednesday 11th at 56a Crampton St, London 7pm. (nearest tube Elephant and Castle)

Send **protest letters** to Governor Tom Ridge, Maine Capital Building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120 fax 001 717 783 4429

Letters of support Mumia, S.C.I. Greene, 1040 East R Fuman Highway, Waynesburg, PA, Philadelphia 15370-8090

MUMIA HOTLINE----- 0171 326 0353

...and finally...

The French military has good news for soldiers: it has developed a blast-resistant shoe that will protect infantry from land mines. The bad news is, the four-inch thick soles are so heavy and cumbersome that "a soldier would walk so slowly that a sniper whose attention would be drawn by the blast would have time to put several bullets between his eyes before he took cover," said Michel de Lagarde of the French Defense Ministry's "Infantryman of the Future" program. The good news: researchers have also developed a bulletproof vest that stops virtually all military rifle rounds. The bad news: it weighs 28 pounds.

disclaimer
Don't do 'naughty' things