



WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER SMALL GENE POOL

SchNEWS

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GM REAPER

IT'S HARVEST TIME!



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"Since genetic engineering manipulates the basis of life, the risks involved are more frightening than any other developed so far... We feel it is unjust of the richest of the world to expect us to bear the risks of their experimentation." - Tewolde Egziabher, Ethiopian Delegate (CBD).

In April UN delegates will be yapping about the state of the world's biodiversity resources over two-headed salmon and champagne at the sixth meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Holland. Set up during the UN Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the CBD have only just agreed on the useless Biosafety Protocol and The Law of the Seed. Neither will have the power to stop the legal or illegal spread of GMOs, protect farmers rights or stop finite resources being plundered for profit. This is because these UN organisations didn't have the power or force of will to fight powerful biotech corporations and the World Trade Organisation.

Mexico

"What's frightening is how fast it has spread" said Yolanda Lara, spokesperson for Oaxaca's non-governmental Rural Development Agency about the spread of GM corn in Capulalpan, a village in the hills of Mexico's Oaxaca State. Normally locals might be thankful for this new source of corn, the staple food of villages in the area. But they now know this corn is GM, which is surprising because GM crops have been banned in Mexico since 1998. Berkeley scientists have confirmed that this new corn is the spawn of Monsanto: it has the same DNA as the biotech giant's commercial GM maize. David Quist, responsible for the study suggests that "It's more likely that the contamination came from food aid brought into these regions. A lot of it comes from the United States and a lot of it is transgenic." So under the guise of offering support to poverty stricken villagers in remote parts of Mexico, the US has managed to off-load tonnes of subsidised GM maize on unsuspecting shopkeepers and subsistence farmers. Locals are worried that the GM corn, which they say has been around in their shops for several years, will out-compete native varieties. The Berkeley study confirms their fears, suggesting that GM corn is likely to dominate local corn and may also threaten the research of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, home to the largest variety of endangered maize in the world. Quist believes a well-enforced ban on imported GM corn and a programme to encourage traditional habits of swapping and testing wild seeds is the way forward.

Philippines

In February this year Greenpeace Asia activists blocked the unloading of 17,000 tonnes of GM soybeans from the United States. The Philippine government buys about 300,000 tonnes of soybeans and over one million tonnes of soymeal annually, mainly from the United States. Last October, Swiss corporation Novartis AG confirmed allegations from Greenpeace that some samples of baby food it sold did contain genetically modified soybean. Beau Baconguis of Greenpeace Asia said, "We should not be forced to feed our children with food the rest of the world is increasingly rejecting."

India

India is the biggest cotton producer in the world so it was big news when, in 1998, 500 farmers committed suicide in Andhra Pradesh because of the failure of their cotton crops. Dr. Pushpa Bhargava, an Indian biologist, told the Indian Science Congress that the failure of the cotton seed in Andhra Pradesh in 1997 and 1998 should be investigated since Monsanto could have been using local seed companies to market bad seed in order to destroy the supply system. "The destruction of the seed supply and Monsanto's purchase of Indian seed companies would have ensured that Indian farmers had no option but to buy Monsanto's Bt. cotton and in future Monsanto's terminator crops." The Indian farmers ain't taking this lying down and in 1998 the Karnataka farmers union occupied and burned down the three fields of GM cotton and 500 farmers occupied Cargill, the biotech multinational offices, throwing loads of their processing kit out of windows. They did loads of other actions too as part of 'Operation Cremate Monsanto' and hundreds of farmers and activists took part in the Intercontinental Caravan, which toured through Europe.

The struggle against biotech giants in India continues today and on Monday 18th Indian women farmers will be in London to challenge British Government aid to the state of Andhra Pradesh's "Vision 20/20" programme, which will displace 25 million rural people, and corporatise agriculture in the state. This action opposes the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Chief Minister of AP and Monsanto, which will give the company free rein to plant GM crops throughout Andhra Pradesh. They will present the findings of a Citizen's Jury at 2pm in the House of Commons.

Resistance is Fertile

While 9 EU states have a legal postponement of genetically modified organisms, countries such as Sri Lanka and India have been forced to bow to the 'superior' power of US backed World Trade Organisation and sign the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement which limits their ability to deny access to Monsanto and the like. That said, anti GM and anti-capitalist actions are growing, so get yer arse in gear and see what you can do to stop the greedy corporate elite (and their government chums) from controlling our food supply.

The first GM crop bashing of the year kicked off in Warwickshire last weekend. Following a procession about 100 people pulled up some plants in a field of GM oil seed rape for half an hour before police made five arrests. Despite the non-violent protest a police spokesman said "We were treating it as a peaceful protest, but it did go beyond that." - probably unaware of cops enjoying tea and cakes provided by the local Women's Institute, in the village hall, with the protesters after the event. - To see if there's any farm scale trials in your area contact: 020-7272-1586, www.geneticsaction.org.uk.

* After suing Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser for infringing patent rights when his fields were contaminated with GM oil seed rape, even though he was unaware of the contamination and was unable to prevent it (SchNEWS 300) Monsanto are now threatening other farmers. See the threatening letters at www.percyschmeiser.com.

In a separate case two Canadian organic farmers are trying to sue Monsanto and Aventis. They seek compensation for damages caused by GM oilseed rape, and an injunction to prevent Monsanto from introducing GM wheat into the region. The local organic farmers group said "...losing wheat to genetic contamination would devastate organic farming...our very future is at stake." Info: www.saskorganic.com.

* This Sunday (17th) there's a Global Day of Action for Farmer's Struggle, www.viacampesina.org. And on 27th March is a Genetic Futures in Food and Farming CDB talk, 12-4 pm, Main Lecture Theatre School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Contact: enquiries@itdg.org.uk. And running alongside the UN Conference in Holland, Resistance is Fertile are organising actions, workshops and activities for a world without GMOs and patents on life April 6th-19th. www.resistanceisfertile.org.

PUMP IT UP!

Last month in the Ecuadorian Amazon provinces of Sucumbios and Orellana thousands of striking construction workers and local residents protesting against the new oil pipeline were attacked by the country's armed forces. Three children were killed by asphyxiation from tear gas, close to forty people were arrested and over three hundred people were wounded after the military crackdown ordered by President Gustavo Noboa. Demonstrators occupied over 60 oil wells and 5 refineries-halting all construction on the pipeline bringing oil production to a near standstill and erected roadblocks. Nearby in the highland cloud forests of the Mindo, people continue to put their lives on the line by tree-sitting to block the pipeline's passage. The government declared a state of emergency for the provinces in defence of the oil multinationals, immediately suspending civil rights, and invoking the military to break up the demonstrations while the local radio stations were kept off the air.

Meanwhile on Monday Indian tribal leaders from Ecuador began the lengthy and expensive process of taking Chevron-Texaco to the US courts. This groundbreaking environmental class-action lawsuit, the first filed by foreigners in a U.S. court, is being watched closely to

see if federal courts find American corporations accountable to crimes abroad.

"We simply want Chevron-Texaco to pay to clean up the damage it caused." The lawsuit asserts that Texaco installed defective drilling technology that led to the spillage of millions of gallons of toxic wastewater over a 20-year period. Rather than pump the poisonous water back into the ground - as is the industry standard, and as Chevron-Texaco does in the United States - they dumped it into hundreds of unlined pits. From the pits, the wastewater contaminated with oil and heavy metals slowly poisoning the rivers and wetlands of Ecuador.

"To Chevron-Texaco, the clean-up costs represent a small fraction of its annual profits," said prosecuting lawyer Joseph Kohn. "To our clients in the Amazon, this is a matter of life or death."

Texaco and Occidental Petroleum have extracted more than \$60 billion dollars worth of oil from these provinces in the last 30 years, yet 90% of the region's population lives in poverty. Despite the huge profits from oil the locals surprise, surprise have seen none of the loot and all of the pillaging has left them impoverished and sick with cancer. www.amazonwatch.org

* At the end of last month a court gave the go ahead for the families of Ken Saro-Wiwa to take Shell/Dutch Petroleum to court for participation in crimes against humanity, torture, summary execution, arbitrary detention, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Environmentalist activist and writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight other Ogoni activists were hanged by the Nigerian military government in 1995. The "Ogoni Nine" had opposed Shell's pollution and oil development in the Niger Delta. Saro-Wiwa told the military tribunal that sentenced him to death, "Shell is here on trial. The Company has, indeed, ducked this particular trial, but its day will surely come..."

Judith Chomsky, Attorney for the prosecution commented, "Shell had direct involvement in human rights violations against the Ogoni people. Any company that profits from crimes against humanity should be brought to justice wherever they are."

Lawsuits have also been filed against Exxon-Mobil by people from Indonesia's embattled Aceh province, Members of ethnic minorities in Myanmar (formerly Burma) against Unocal And Chevron-Texaco (again) by other Nigerian groups: www.earthrights.org/shell/appeal.html

SchNEWS in brief

A **Peat Alert** activist will talk about the campaign to save Britain's peat bogs and 4 days of direct action coming up at Hatfield Moors this Easter. 7pm Sunday 17th upstairs at the Hobgoblin, London Rd, Brighton www.peatalert.org.uk ** This Saturday there's a meeting to create a crew that the authorities can deal with to run a 4 day celebration of the summer **Solstice at Stonehenge**. It's at the Art Space, 491 Grove Green Road, Leytonstone London E11 (by Leytonstone tube station) 2pm 0798-402-6853 www.greenleaf.demon.co.uk/trcwp1.htm ** The South East Alternative Science Network are holding their first **Brickhurst Science FunDay** on Saturday at Brickhurst Farm in Pembury, Tunbridge Wells. The kids science and environment activity day has been set up as an alternative to the usual overcrowded and overpriced corporate sponsored science events. Tel 01892 863 941 www.geocities.com/seasonscience ** **Manchesters Okasional Café** will be back in business this weekend (Saturday 6pm) with a vegan supper and a gig with local bands. See www.26.brinkster.com/okcafe/home.html for details of the location. ** Zimbabwe now has it's own Indy Media Centre <http://zimbabwe.indymedia.org> ** Two presidents resigned on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean rather than give the green light to a new **Prevention of Terrorism Act**. Mass protests complained that the law was an infringement of human rights and an attack on the country's sovereignty, because it allows the CIA to interfere in national affairs. The law was eventually passed when the Chief Justice became president. ** The **Anti-capitalist Action group** will be hosting a number of workshops, discussions and film-showings on direct action at their newly occupied social centre this coming weekend. The social centre is in Cambridge: on "0" Covent Garden, on the corner of Mill Road just past the Kelsey Kerridge sports centre ** There will be a **Healing UK Medical Training** next weekend (22nd-24th) to teach people about first aid at demonstrations. It's at the London Activist Resource Centre, corner of Fieldgate and Parfett, St's, London, E1 (Whitechapel tubes) 020 7249 6996 healinguk@hotmail.com

Inside SchNEWS

Ever wondered why anti capitalist protesters always get over the top sentences for minor offences? Well, the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group (LDMG) have uncovered secret documents that tell judges to come down hard on activists. These documents were being passed to Crown and Youth Court judges after both May Day 2000 and May Day Monopoly 2001 festivities. The document titled "Mayhem" came to the attention of LDMG in June 2001 at Middlesex Guildhall Crown Court. The defence barrister Ed Rees QC asked to look at the document, but the court refused this on the grounds that it was secret! Sentencing in England and Wales is supposedly based on individual circumstances and the seriousness of the offence, but clearly in the case of anti-capitalists this is not the case. Glaring examples of over the top prison terms are Roger Davis who got 3 months for threatening words and behaviour, which results in a fine at worst, Karl Hodgkinson got 15 months for affray, and another person received a £1000 fine for common assault (the lowest form of assault). Paul Jones, spokesperson for LDMG told SchNEWS "The police have spent millions of pounds preventing the May Day actions from proceeding peacefully and in prosecuting people for minor offences. Now we discover that the judiciary is instructed to send those convicted to prison. Even the pretence of justice has been abandoned. We demand an amnesty for all May Day protesters." LDMG 07949 061 333 e: ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk

* All sorts of pranks and actions are being planned for this year's **May Day**. For more info check out www.ourmayday.org.uk

* Brighton Anarchist Black Cross are hosting a **Mark Barnsley** info/debate night upstairs at the Albert, Trafalgar St. Monday 18th at 7.30pm. Mark has spent seven years inside after being attacked by 15 drunken students whilst out with his baby and a friend. Mark has spent all his time in maximum and high security prisons and has been denied parole as punishment for protesting his innocence. www.freemarkbarnsley.com

* **Emily Apple** the activist that "society needs a break from" didn't go to prison as feared (SchNEWS 345) but got a fine instead for locking onto a train carrying arms dealers to last year's arms fair in East London.

The Un-Dammed

Just 24 hours before a campaign was due to be launched against AMEC, for their participation in the controversial Yusufeli Dam in Turkey, the company announced its withdrawal from the project. The dam would displace 30,000 people, destroy many old churches, fortresses and a citadel as well as displacing endangered red vultures and brown bears. The withdrawal of AMEC now casts doubt over the future of the whole project. Kerim Yildiz, Executive Director, Kurdish Human Rights Project said "We are delighted that AMEC has withdrawn from this project. For minorities on the ground whose homes, livelihood and ways of life are threatened by this project this a huge victory." www.khrp.org

POSITIVE SchNEWS

At Taurus Crafts in Lydney, Gloucestershire, peddlers will be connecting their own pedal generator to the national grid via a plug socket from 2nd-30th April.

Tom from 'Power of the People' told SchNEWS "The paperwork I have generated dealing with the natural grid, power supply companies, and planning department is enormous... In the Netherlands these same panels can be stuck on the roof, plugged in at a wall socket, and your meter will run backwards corresponding to the number of units produced. No paperwork required." Info: 01594-836546 thomas.cousins@talk21.com

...and finally...

"The Corporation took over your country and proceeded to impose its strict rules on an unsuspecting public. Questioning this new authority led to unrest. Unrest led to full scale rioting." - So goes the blurb for a new Sony Playstation 2 game where armed with molotovs, grenades and AK47s you fight the corporation. The company backing it, Take-Two, will profit greatly from this anti-capitalist bestseller at a time when it is in financial woes. Yet another example of a capitalist company selling the anti-capitalist idea. SchNEWS reckons its more fun (and risky) to get out on the streets and demonstrate than sit and smash things up on a TV screen.

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SchNEWS warns all readers if there's any seed of doubt go for the best of the crop. Honest

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