

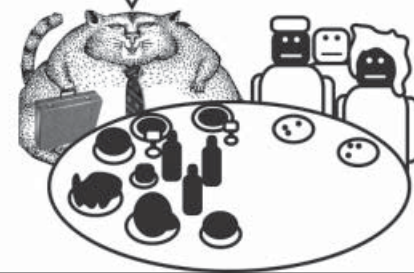


wake up! It's yer doing the cancon

# SchNEWS

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## FLUSHED DOWN THE CAN-CUN

**"I am crying out my words to you, that have for so long boiled in my body... My warning goes out to all citizens that human beings are in an endangered situation. That uncontrolled multinational corporations and a small number of big WTO Members are leading an undesirable globalization that is inhumane, environmentally degrading, farmer-killing, and undemocratic. It should be stopped immediately." - 56-year-old Korean farmer Lee Kyung-hae, who took his life in Cancun.**

Outside thousands were pulling down the fences. Inside the poorer countries from the majority world (the so-called third world) were coming together to demand a better deal. By Sunday afternoon the talks at the fifth ministerial of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Cancun, Mexico had collapsed. "You are small fish in a big pond. You eat when the big fish decide" Pascal Lamy, the EU Commissioner for Trade, informed the Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific Group. But this time the small fish weren't biting the bait.

In the WTO's ideal world there would be two kinds of agriculture systems - the rich countries would produce staple foods for the world's 6 billion plus people, and majority world countries would mainly grow cash crops like tomatoes, cut flowers, strawberries and vegetables to export to the west. The money that majority world countries would earn from exporting these crops would eventually be used to buy foodgrains from the west. And guess what? The poorer nations would be unable to feed themselves and would be forever dependent on the west not just for patented seeds, patented medicines and patented technology but also for much of its staple food. Food sovereignty? Forget it!

Previous WTO negotiations were always characterized by the US and the EU isolating poorer countries and forcing through one-sided agreements that benefit western investment and corporations. But this time the G22 (a group of African, Asian and South American countries), in coalition with an African bloc, stood firm, refusing to budge until the question of the west's unfair agricultural subsidies was dealt with. Nearly seventy other nations in addition to the G22 refused to sign the final US and EU-written accord in Cancun. When the WTO decided to address western issues of investment and competition instead of agriculture it was the final straw and the talks collapsed.

Outside of the WTO fortress the thousands ripping down fences, running the eco-village, holding alternative conferences and

spreading the news were also playing their part. According to Peter Muchoki Njoroge, Deputy Commissioner for Kenya's Ministry of Finance and Planning, "Sometimes we think we are going mad. They bully us, play with our minds and tell us that we don't understand. But what you, Civil Society, do reminds us that we are right, that we are not going mad. Your actions are very important."

One chuffed fence puller described the scene to SchNEWS "With the Interminable Noise Machine grinding out their Mad Max battle calls in the Caribbean humidity, the slack is taken up on hundreds of yards of rope, an instruction is shouted, and three hundred people go to work. The four metre wide three metre high metal barrier, separating the protesters from the WTO delegates finally gives way and for the second time in four days the barricades are breached. The team made up of hardened Mexican students, campesinos from Chiapas and Black Block anarchists is organised and lead by Korean farmers. Meanwhile hundreds of women methodically bolt crop and hammer their way through other sections of the fence and news filters through that members of Korean Civil Society have succeeded in entering the ministerial conference centre."

### On A Knife-Edge

56-year-old Korean farmer Lee Kyung-hae was among the group of about 150 Koreans in the frontline, pulling down the security fences. Climbing to the top of the fence, Lee turned to his compatriots and said: "Don't worry about me, just struggle your hardest." He then stabbed himself in the chest with a knife hoping to focus the world's attention on the hidden misery of what the World Trade Organisation really means to millions

Lee Kyung-hae had always dreamed of revitalising farming in his hometown and returned from agricultural college in 1974 to put his ideas into practice turning a patch of harsh mountain land into a thriving farm. Seoul Farm became a teaching college and in 1988 he received a UN award for rural leadership. The Lees, now with three daughters, were prospering. The herd had expanded to 300 cattle and the fame of the charismatic farm leader

#### SIZE REALLY DOES MATTER!

| No of delegates in Cancun |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| European Union            | 651 |
| USA                       | 212 |
| China                     | 54  |
| Chad                      | 11  |
| Egypt                     | 5   |
| Burundi                   | 3   |

who had mastered a hostile land was growing. But then Korea was flooded with foreign imports and he was ruined. Koreans are up to their necks in debt and with the US and EU subsidising agribusiness at \$1 billion per day imported rice has been wiping out formerly self-sufficient Korean farmers. In Lee's town the population has almost halved while farmers commit suicide or run off in the middle of the night because they cannot make their interest repayments. One of Lee's sisters said the collapse of his farm prompted him to throw himself with more fury into organising unions, influencing government policy and opposing trade liberalisation.

One Korean farmer told SchNEWS "It is very difficult for Western people to understand what he did. In Korean history if people want to show their strong will, they sometimes give their lives. Now more and more people think the WTO is a very bad thing and needs to be protested against. What he did is like a burning candle. He had to sacrifice himself to make the world shine." Han Gyuha a town official added, "Lee knew the Korean countryside is slowly dying, that farmers are living lonely, miserable lives. He wanted to tell the world. That is why he sacrificed himself and that is why we call him a hero."

Lee's sacrifice helped focus the world on the plight of the poor suffocating under the belly of a corporate-stuffed WTO. The collapse of the talks is undoubtedly a victory for the new unity of the majority world but it will come under increasing strain in the coming months with the US and the EU resorting to 'divide and rule' tactics - picking off individual countries for bilateral and regional trade deals. It's also true that G22 countries such as India, Brasil and China don't have a common negotiating position. However, united as 22 countries plus the 70 other states that supported them the majority world countries have the possibility of wringing out concessions from the west, using a combined threat of non-payment of their foreign debts. This victory wouldn't have happened without the grassroots global justice movement - written off after September 11 - as it intelligently mobilised worldwide against two sides of the same dollar coin - capitalist war and capitalist economics. Cancun represented the wonderful diversity of this movement - campesinos and US anarchists opposing the talks of the power-drunk, while proposing their own empowering alternatives - from the Zapatista's radical municipalities to the New Agriculture movement in Bangladesh. And this movement doesn't put all its faith in detached representatives. It will be there in force when America hosts the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas in December.

\* More info: [www.cancun.indymedia.org](http://www.cancun.indymedia.org); [www.cascadiamedia.org](http://www.cascadiamedia.org); [www.corporateeurope.org](http://www.corporateeurope.org)

## SchINTERVIEWS in CANCUN

One SchNEWS scribe got to Cancun – here are a couple of quick interviews he managed in between pulling down fences and sampling the local tear gas.

**SchNEWS:** What does the WTO mean to you?

**S. Korean farmer:** WTO means the colonisation of the Third World. That means the US trying to dominate all Third World Countries. Their strategy is one of colonisation through opening up the market. I've been a farmer for fifteen years. When I started there were 10 million farmers but now there are only 3 million of us as a result of this 'openness'. This spells the death of all South Korean farmers.

**Sch:** Why only 3 million now?

**Farmer:** First, our revenues are getting lower and lower. Second, we cannot afford health and education so many farmers are leaving for the city to try and earn enough money to survive. Third, Korean farmers have very little land compared to US farmers, so we cannot compete. In this situation the Korean government is trying to open the market more and more and free up competition. The government is not interested in the lives of small farmers. They are just interested in corporate companies.

**Sch:** What do you think of bio-technology?

**Farmer:** The US already dominates the seed industry, if TRIPS\* is completed then their power will be strengthened. There is a new kind of rice, 'Reunification Rice' made in the Philippines supported by the US. Before this arrived, we farmers didn't use fertiliser. Now we have been led to believe that we have to use them. I think this is very bad for us and for the land. The land is becoming very infertile and very acidic after using these products. The US built a fertiliser factory in Korea and the farmers use their products. Many believe we have no choice even though we can see we are killing our land. In the past we thought the US was a good country and helped us because they built the fertiliser factory but we don't think this now. All the profits leave Korea for the US.

Our masked-up geezer also spoke to a Mexican campesino/farmer from the Chiapas region.

**Sch:** What do you grow?

**Campesino:** Maize, beans and coffee.

**Sch:** How does the WTO affect you?

**Campesino:** The WTO is pushing prices down. The market is now flooded with cheap GM maize so I don't have anywhere to sell my produce. Now I only grow maize for my family and my one pig. Likewise the beans I grow now are just for us. My main production used to be coffee. In 1994 I received 35 Pesos per Kilo and now it is only worth 5 Pesos. Then 95% of Mexico's coffee consumption was home grown but now it is down to 45% due to people buying cheap imported coffee. There is a big problem with the US border. Many campesinos cannot survive here so try to cross the border to find work but are shot and never return. Their deaths are not reported. There is little alternative work here and everything is getting more expensive like soap and clothes. It is very hard for me to look after my family. Since 2002 the Mexican government have been moving people out of my region to flood the land and build hydroelectric power stations. The electricity is used by US corporate companies here and in the States.

**Sch:** What do you think of bio-technology and TRIPS\*?

**Campesino:** They are selling GM food and many people are getting ill in our communities. People are conned into using insecticides on the land and this is poisoning them. I have always grown organically and the land is rich and fertile. I see no reason for using fertilisers and insecticides in Chiapas. Before 1994 the coffee I grew was enough to look after my family now we are struggling to survive.

**Sch:** Who do you think benefits from the WTO?

**Campesino:** Capitalists from the US, The World Bank and the Banco de Desarrollo Interamericana (Development Bank).

\* **WTO Vocab Watch:** TRIPS - Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (see SchNEWS 420) a US-pushed 'agreement' which has seen corporations patenting everything from indigenous peoples' rice seeds to publicly-funded AIDS drugs and then demanding absurd prices from the people it ripped off in the first place.

\* **'Colludo - whodunit to the World's Poor?'** World Development Movement and Jubilee Debt Campaign Debt Speaker Tour 11-22 \_ October with Demba Dembele, director of the Forum for African Alternatives [www.wdm.org.uk/campaign/debtour.htm](http://www.wdm.org.uk/campaign/debtour.htm) for details.\_

## HELL AND DAMNATION

So you're about to get evicted, eh? Some fat cat developer wants to turn your cozy home into yet another concrete mountain full of soulless, yuppie boxes. Or perhaps the local Sainsbury's wants to demolish your house in favour of yet another parking lot for its 19th store in town. Or maybe the powers that be have decided to evict you from the ancient stone village where your family has been living for hundreds of years so that they can cover the whole thing in... water. As absurd as it sounds, this last scenario is exactly what's happening to people in the Irati valley, located in the Navarra district of the Basque Country.

The construction of a mega dam in the Irati valley, conceived of back in the days of Franco's rule, has been fought by local residents for decades. In 1993, against waves of protest, the construction of the dam began, but the resistance did not stop there. Over the past ten years, activists and local residents have fought against the Itoiz Dam, cutting cables for concrete mixers and staging frequent demos. Despite all this, the dam is now complete - a dam which will create the Navarra Canal, covering the Irati valley and its ancient villages in an ocean of water and destroying an area of natural beauty and ecological importance... not to mention that most of the water taken from the canal will be wasted on golf courses and luxury resorts in the South of Spain.

This past June, the eviction of the soon-to-be-submerged villages began, with Itoiz, being the first to go. Residents and supporters did not accept their watery grave in silence, however, staging a three-day fight with the Spanish police in an attempt to defend the village. Now yet another village is facing a similar fate, and activists and local residents are preparing themselves for another fight. The village of Artozki was scheduled for eviction this past Monday (15), but so far, the brute squad hasn't made its appearance. Now looking at the possibility of a longer occupation than they had first planned on, activists are calling for reinforcements!! Stage a demo at your local Spanish embassy or consulate, or better yet, help to fight the evictions in person!! (What better excuse do you need for a spontaneous holiday to Spain??) For more info, email [powerfullysmall@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:powerfullysmall@yahoo.co.uk) or visit [www.sositoiz.com](http://www.sositoiz.com) or <http://euskalherria.indymedia.org/eu/2003/09/9331.shtml>

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## BAYER FOR BLOOD

Bayer Cropscience is the biggest player in the GM crops market. Out of 11 GM crops that can be potentially planted commercially, Bayer owns 9 and two of these could be introduced as early as Spring 2004, opening the floodgates to the growing of GM crops in Britain.

To oppose this a national umbrella campaign has been set up, the aim is to make the growing of GM crops commercially unviable for Bayer. Already actions have taken place against the corporation with their Head Offices being invaded and conferences they attend disrupted.

September 25<sup>th</sup> is a national day of action against Bayer Cropscience and groups and individuals are urged to target them that day. A list of Bayer's offices can be found on the campaign website. If you can't get to any demos then on the day of action let Bayer know what you think about their involvement in GM crops. Phone them on 01223 870312, or fax 01223 872142 or email [ukinfo@bayercropscience.com](mailto:ukinfo@bayercropscience.com).

If you are an employee of Bayer or have any dirt on them get in contact with the campaign: 07092 036576 [www.stopbayergm.org](http://www.stopbayergm.org)

For more detailed info on Bayer see [www.corporatewatch.org.uk/genetics/](http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/genetics/)

## SchNEWS in brief

**Project Censored** have released their annual list of the top 25 censored stories in the US, number one spot going to "The Neoconservative Plan for Global Dominance" (see SchNEWS 387). [www.projectcensored.org](http://www.projectcensored.org) \*\* Talking of the Neo conservative plan **Halliburton** was awarded a \$1 billion contract to rebuild Iraq's oil wells. Vice-President Dick Cheney used to be the Chief Executive of Halliburton (SchNEWS 399), it has emerged that Cheney has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from Halliburton since becoming the vice-president. Bingo! \*\* **The Tribes and Tribulations Film Festival** looks at ancient tribal people and how they have suffered under governments and multinational corporations. 27-28 September at the Dogstar, Brixton. Details, tickets and webstream: [www.fpcn-global.org/films/film\\_festival\\_2003.php](http://www.fpcn-global.org/films/film_festival_2003.php) \*\* **We Interrupt this Empire** a video about the San Francisco actions against the War on Iraq, at the Cowley Club, London Road, Brighton. Mon 22<sup>nd</sup> 7pm. Free. \*\* **From Ecuador to Edinburgh:** An evening of stories of resistance with two Ecuadorian activists talking about the effects of oil exploitation on their country. 7.30pm Weds 24<sup>th</sup> at New Dalry House, 15 Orwell Place, Edinburgh. \*\* 73 police, jail and medical staff have been charged over the raid on the Diaz School and subsequent detention following the protests against the G8 summit in **Genoa**, 2001 (SchNEWS 314/5). The raid on the School saw 93 protesters arrested and many hospitalized, the police planted Molotov cocktails and even faked a stabbing of one of their own to justify the violent raid. \*\* **'The Role and Effect of Advertising'** meeting, Tues 23<sup>rd</sup> Phoenix Millennium Centre corner of Vincent Rd and West Green Rd, Haringey 020 8374 5027.

## ...and finally...

Cancun again and four of the earth's poorest nations - Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and Benin - are asking Washington to slash its cotton subsidies. In 2001, the 25,000 US cotton growers received nearly \$4 billion in subsidies for producing a cotton crop that was worth only \$3 billion. In one sickening example an Arkansas cotton grower received \$6 million, equal to the combined annual earnings of 25,000 cotton farmers in Mali. So did the WTO take action against the US? Not a cotton-picking chance. "Create a bigger demand for t-shirts," sneered one participant.

## Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers Cancun tsars here we do the Can-Can, we just need more ball room. Honest!