



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

SchNEWS

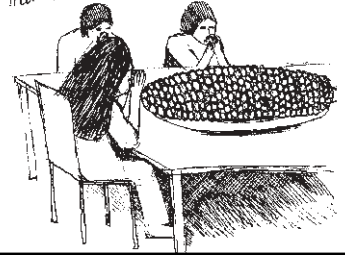
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Friday 12th March 2004

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Issue 445

Thankyou, oh lord Monsanto provider of all food,
for that which we are about to consume.



MAIZE OF LIES

This week the Chardonnay drinking neo-Labour bureaucrats gave the go-ahead for the commercialisation of the UK's first genetically modified (GM) crop - a fodder maize, with the snappy name Chardon LL T25.

This new wonder-crop is coming to us from the test tubes of Bayer CropScience (for more about one of our favourite companies check out SchNEWS 436), and will supposedly only be fed to animals - who luckily for Bayer can't say no! Despite massive opposition to GM in this country this decision will give the biotech companies their first Frankenstein foot in the door.

Bayer probably can't believe how easy it's been to blind the gullible Environment Minister Margaret Beckett with crap science. To prove that GM maize didn't damage the environment, field trials were carried out which compared GM maize to a crop grown using a conventional growing system, which uses the pesticide Atrazine - a pesticide which will be banned in the EU because it's so toxic.

Some 'independent' scientists think that these tests are a justification for giving the go-ahead - Chris Lamb, Director of the John Innes Centre, commented that the decision was "based on scientific evidence". Er, of an invalid field trial? But of course his judgement won't be clouded by the massive funding the John Innes Centre receives from the biotech companies and government's biological research council whose aim is "to help industry, commerce and Government create wealth". Research was also carried out into the effect on cattle who'll be fed the maize, but the results were obviously so bad the report was never published.

The full details of conditions under which GM maize can be grown won't be published until the summer. Until then it isn't clear whether the GM crops will be separated from other crops, and whether the government will be obliging enough to publish where the crops will be grown. For the sake of the 3,000 people who have signed the Green Gloves Pledge - to rip up GM crops when they're planted - let's hope they do.

But it wasn't all good news for the biotech industry this week: The government rejected the commercialisation of GM beet and oil seed rape (as a result of field scale trials which showed GM varieties caused more damage to wildlife than conventional varieties). Also Chardon LL T25 maize won't be grown this year, and will have a license that will only run until October 2006 (the date when Atrazine will be banned). So they'll have to hope the government gives the green light again. The biggest blow to the pro-GM lobby

though, is the government's decision that those who've developed and grown the GM seeds will have to accept all liabilities for any contamination of conventional and organic crops, although the biotech companies are none too happy with this. This may provide a faint glimmer of hope that GM crops won't be coming to a field near you soon.

Cooking The Books

In other parts of the world where GM crops have already been grown commercially there's mounting proof of cross-contamination of the environment. In the USA, two thirds of all crops grown are now contaminated with GM genes, admittedly the amount of contamination is usually less than 1%, but this still causes long term future concerns. The US Biotechnology Industry Association is rather blasé about all this saying they were "not surprised by this report, knowing that pollen travels and commodity grains might co-mingle at various places." This has become one of the GM industry tactics, hoping that once GM contamination is widespread the public will just give in and drop its opposition.

Another tactic of the GM industry is to fund "independent" research to present a respectable front. A \$6 million research project supposedly conducted by the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute into a virus-resistant GM sweet potato which would double yields, was in fact paid for by the World Bank, USAID and Monsanto. The corporate media in the US loved this story, and used it to attack anti-GM campaigners. The only problem was that all the claims were complete crap - the sweet potato was susceptible to virus attack and yields were already at the target level!

One of the biotech giant's main claims, that GM reduces pesticide application has also been proved to be blatant rubbish. According to official records of the US Department of Agriculture the planting of 55 million acres of genetically engineered (GE) corn, soybeans and cotton in the US since 1996 has increased pesticide use by about 50 million pounds. This is not surprising, as the plants grown are herbicide tolerant, tempting the farmer to chuck on a load more herbicide the moment a 'weed' appears. A similar situation in China has occurred where pest resistant cotton cultivation has resulted in pesticide usage going back up to 1999 levels.

Bayer, the company behind GM maize are being targeted by campaigners 07092 036576 www.stopbayergm.org For more anti-GM direct action see www.geneticsaction.org.uk

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For walking along the street.

A group of eight people were walking home from a show recently in Vancouver Canada when all of a sudden they were attacked first by one group of cops, before back up officers arrived on the scene using batons and pepper spray. At the height of the frenzy there were around 30 coppers and 15 cars, and the street was shut down for two hours. Out of all this seven were held for 18 hours and are now facing criminal charges for obstruction and assault on police officers, while another was knocked unconscious and hospitalised.

Why? Could it be that all those nicked are well known anti-poverty activists. One woman who was beaten is a nurse who opened North America's first safe injection site for drug users. When police closed this site last year, activists re-opened it by grinding off the locks.

Blinded by Science

But the battle over GM crops isn't just about single issues like health or the environment, it's much larger than that. It's about a few major companies monopolizing the food chain. It doesn't matter whether it's Monsanto or Bayer who own the technology, they aren't really competing against each other, the biggest threat to their commercial interest are the small seed companies, the farmers and the general public. So they've been busy buying up smaller seed companies, bribing farmers with promises of increased yields and just hoping those pesky protesters will go away and the public becomes resigned to the fact GM is here to stay.

Their last desperate attempt (after claims GM would benefit the environment as well as feeding the world made everyone puke) to get GM forced down people's throats is to accuse anyone opposed to GM food as being anti-science, even when their own science is deeply flawed.

Many scientists have allowed themselves to become pawns used by the government and biotech companies - afraid to speak out against their paymasters for fear of being marginalised and having research grants cut. If the power of the big bio-tech companies is limited then science could become free of the shackles of corporate control and dedicated to serving the public. The way this will happen is for people to continue to reject GM food and the manipulation by science of the food chain.

* Almost 3,000 people have signed up to rip up GM crops if they are commercially planted: Green Gloves, 16B Cherwell Street, Oxford, OX4 1BG. www.greengloves.org

* GM Watch has a list of people playing an active role in the "massive and deceptive push" to promote GM foods. www.gmwatch.org

* For a comprehensive list of what foods are GM and what aren't www.greenpeace.org.uk/Products/GM/

Feet of Strength

Remember the first march to Aldermaston? Never heard of the place and wondering what the fuss about Aldermaston is? Well while people were wondering where the Weapons of Mass Destruction were they forget to check out Berkshire!

Way back in 1958 Britain's nuclear weapons programme caused such disquiet amongst the population that thousands of people joined a march from London to Aldermaston called by the Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War. The march was a key point in the formation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The symbol for Nuclear Disarmament, now the universal symbol of peace, was designed specifically for the march and was displayed on the original lollipop-style placards carried along the way.

The Atomic Weapons Establishment, where Britains nuclear warheads are designed and built, still exists at Aldermaston (near Reading). What's more, planning permission has recently been given for an extensive development programme worth £5.3 billion. So people from across the country will again be marching to Aldermaston AWE over the Easter weekend (10-12 April) starting at Trafalgar Square. To join in (the march goes through Southall, Slough and 02077002350 / 07968420859 www.aldermaston2004.net/

*Required reading: "The CND Story" by John Minnion and Phillip Bolsorer, published by Alison & Busby and "Police Movements" by April Carter published by Longram.

* 9-12 April Peace Walk to Faslane trident nuclear submarine base from Glasgow. Leaving George Square at 1pm on the Friday. March and rally on the Monday Assemble 1pm at Faslane Peace Camp.0141 423 1222. www.hull.ac.uk/php/ggsdah/faslane/Fashome.htm

* Spearhead, the company behind the DSEi arms fair (SchNEWS 421,422) have recently been bought by Reed Exhibitions (020 8910 7910) They are one of the largest exhibition companies and obviously won't want any bad publicity at all their corporate shows. Meanwhile the offices of Spearhead were redecorated earlier this week with red paint and glue. There's a National Disarm DSEi meeting this Sunday (14) Cathays Community Centre, Cathays Terrace, Cardiff, 1pm cardiffanarchists@yahoo.com www.dsei.org

* Day of action against Spearhead next Tuesday (16) around the Excel Centre in London Docklands where the company are organizing the Oceanology exhibition.

Chance Meeting

An undercover lawyer from law firm Clifford Chance has been exposed as infiltrating an animal rights group. After questioning he admitted his agenda was to persuade activists to intensify the campaign against State Street Bank, which would enable Clifford Chance - State Streets' lawyers - to move against various animal rights groups including Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty. The bank are being targeted because of their association with Huntingdon Life Sciences. The partners of Clifford Chance can all expect a polite visit from animal rights campaigners. londonanimalrightsorganisation@doond.com

Dakar Rally

The first Indymedia Regional Meeting in Africa will be taking place from the 1st to the 14th of March 2004 in Dakar, the Capital of Senegal. The two week event is titled "the Alternative (Indymedia) Conference" to embolden participants who though interested and involved in alternative media, may never have had the possibility to be in contact with Indymedia. <http://imc-in-africa.so36.net/en/>

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SchNEWS in brief

Brighton's premier pirates Radio 4A back on the airwaves this weekend (12-14) 101.4 FM - <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/radio4a/> for info and audio streams ** The 300 year old beech tree and other surrounding trees at the Sherwood Forest tree camp have won a reprieve and the Council have now agreed to an independent inquiry (SchWOOPS! We printed the wrong phone number last week for the protest camp - it should be 07792 789 803) ** SchWOOPS II, Last week an obituary to a woman who had "worked with just about every North London based anarcho organisation primarily organising benefit gigs." Unfortunately we got her surname wrong. We should have put Chris Groner. A benefit gig will be held on May 15th at Chats Palace with PAIN and other "ChrisG" bands. www.chris-groner.com ** There's a Rising Tide roadshow this Saturday (13) with the aim of discussing the "bigger picture" of War, Oil, Capitalism and climate change - which connects all our campaigns. It's at East Moors Community Centre, Sanquahar Street, Splott, Cardiff 10 am 07762 252932 dipseylalabo@yahoo.co.uk ** Refuse is 'a festival of resistance' happening this weekend in Cambridge (13-14) including workshops, Indymedia cinema, café plus entertainment in the evening. For location details call 07968894591 on Fri eve/Sat morn or email: refuse14_03@hotmail.com ** Houzan Mahmoud, from the Organisation of Womens Freedom in Iraq will be speaking on Saturday (13) at Caxton House, 129 St Johns Way, N19 (Archway tube) 6pm ** There's a theatrical protest and tour of Whitehall to mark one year since the US/UK invasion of Iraq next Friday (19) 11am at the Edith Cavell Statue, St Martins Place, London 0845 458 2564 www.voicesuk.org ** There's a screening of 'The Fourth World War' film at Chats Palace,42-44 Brooksby's Walk, London E9 at 8pm this Sunday (14) donation. ** Next Sunday (21) two Israeli Refuseniks (soldiers who refuse to fight in Palestine) will be speaking at Brighton Friends Meeting House, 2.30pm check website for more dates www.brightonpalestinecampaign.org ** 'Get clued up about Globalisation' with the do summat crew on Tuesday 23rd March, from 7pm til midnight at the Green Room on Whitworth St, Manchester. Speakers include a Kenyan flower picker and worker for workers rights Redemta Akoth, plus short films and music, entry donations www.dosummat.org.uk ** A conference for those involved and interested in projects such as social centres, squats, workers' collectives, co-operative projects etc is taking place in Berlin from 4th-11th April. To book a place www.autoorganisation-04.org

Inside SchNEWS

Stuart Tideswell is appealing his conviction under 'anti-stalking' laws which saw him sentenced to four months for harassing benefits staff after having his benefit stopped. This stretches a law designed to protect individuals, and sets a dangerous precedent which could lead to it being used to protect other govt bodies or even companies. Apparently it was the nasty letters he wrote for which he was branded a 'terrorist' - not that you'd expect real terrorists to sign and address their correspondence! The real reason the judge came down heavy on Stuart was because he is also an animal rights activist. Write to Stuart Tideswell (JH8108), HMP Leicester, Welford Road, Leicester LE2 7AJ. www.fightback.me.uk

Bring Out Yer Dead

Next Friday (19) Arms Dealers Out Of Our City - Local actions at arms companies around the county to draw attention to their activities.

In Brighton the focus will be on EDO MBM who reside at Home Farm Business Park, just off Lewes Rd opposite the Moulsecomb estate. This company boasts that it is a "proven designer and manufacturer of weapon interfacing systems." In other words, these pleasant people make aerial bombing possible. "They are "proven" because their products are effective at killing people. Lets make it a day they won't forget..." Meet at the Old Steine 2pm - there will be a vigil outside the companies HQ 5.30pm 07752 844296 www.safp.org.uk

* There will be a Libertarian bloc on the London Stop the War demo next Saturday (20) 12 noon under Marble arch look out for the black flags. www.enrager.net/bloc

Positive SchNEWS

Fancy some fair trade pesticide-free cold pressed Palestinian olive oil? Zaytoun is a non-profit project set up to distribute this oil around Europe. 65% of Palestinians live in rural areas, and rely heavily on agriculture for their existence despite the Israeli occupation destroying their livelihoods through stealing their land and destroying the ancient olive groves, as well as controlling water supplies and preventing them distributing produce outside. To get yours now (minimum orders are required). www.pal-arc.org

SchNEWS at 10 Tour

As part of our 10th birthday celebrations (yeah, we know our birthday's in November but we are starting early) some of the SchNEWS crew are hitting the road again with a 16 date tour! We'll be showing some short films, talking about SchNEWS, the G8 coming to Britain next year, and giving local groups a forum to talk about what they're up to. We'll be starting with Bath on the 10th of April and ending in Norwich on the 30th. For a full list of dates www.schnews.org.uk/extras/tour.htm More help is needed with finding venues, publicity and places to stay, and if people have short, political digital films then send us a CD-ROM and we might be able to show them. Cheers!

* West Pier Records have just launched a SchNEWS benefit CD featuring mainly Brighton based acts, as diverse as Andy Baron and the Believers (Reggae) to Mudlow (Swamp Blues) to the Fish Brothers (Music Hall Punk!) A fiver from Punker Bunker, Sydney Street Brighton.

...and finally...

Lads' magazines have branched out since the days when they only wrote about footballers and cars. The magazine 'Zoo' recently offered the chance to win a 'Cannibal sex holiday' in Papua New Guinea, suggesting the local 'savages' were into a bit of headhunting and 'random orgies'. To throw this empty publicity grabber back in Zoo's face, West Papuan tribal leader Benny Wenda - currently seeking asylum in Britain after torture and imprisonment in Indonesia - visited the Zoo office dressed in full tribal gear! He then told Zoo what's really going on in Papua, and demanded an apology for their cheap racist stunt. Comedian Mark Thomas - once a columnist for Zoo, who quit after one issue calling it "predictable, voyeuristic and dull" - came along with Benny to introduce him to some former colleagues.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers we'll be back unmodified with more amazing facts near at hand from far afield... Honest!