



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER YOU CAN BANK ON US

# SchNEWS

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THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND



## BANKERS' CRAMP

**"The European Investment Bank admits there are problems but wants to keep them under the carpet. We should look under that carpet, take a solid stand and ask for a thorough investigation into the flawed aspects of the bank's governance." - Magda Stoczkiewicz, Bankwatch Network.**

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank are well known to SchNEWS readers, but the European Investment Bank (EIB)? Never heard of it mate. But with an annual budget of 33 billion Euros it dishes out more loans than the World Bank. Supposedly to develop Europe's poorer regions and 'promote social cohesion', in an environment of 'openness and transparency'. Fine words, but just how well are they doing?

Not too good, according to a recent highly critical report by Spanish MEP Monica Ridruejo. She has, among other things, condemned the Bank for lending mainly to richer countries and for its unwillingness to disclose information. The bank and its group of rightwing MEP supporters, meanwhile, disagree and reckon that it deserves a slap on the back and so have re-written Ridruejo's report so fundamentally that she has voted against it and refused to be associated with it anymore. One MEP wanted to delete 28 out of 32 paragraphs, while another Olle who claimed he was all for transparency, asked for deletion of roughly half of all the paragraphs including those asking for... more transparency on the EIB and its management!

The bank didn't just stop at removing criticisms in the report; it changed the emphasis by replacing words and even turned condemnation into congratulations! Where Rudruejo 'condemned' the bank's lending policy, the bank 'noted interest in these activities' and in another part of the report even 'welcomed' the EIB's approach! But this isn't really just about a difference of opinion between politicians and bureaucrats and a bank trying to hide behind a wall of secrecy and report nobbling. There's some reason for the bank's shyness.

### MONEY GO ROUND

The EIB prides itself on its major role in implementing European environmental policies and is committed to ensure that projects reduce the impact on the environment wherever possible. Although this aim is of 'great importance', its perhaps not so well reflected in the fact that they have just one full-time environmental review expert to evaluate more than 300 projects approved each year.

Perhaps this evaluator was just too busy, that they just couldn't make the time to get over to Bulgaria. There the bank has given 40 million Euros to help turn a road into a

motorway between Bulgaria and Greece. Forced expulsion of local villagers and more pollution was just one consequence of the motorway. The 18km section between Dupnitsa and Daskalovo crosses a mountain range with natural habitats, a biological corridor for large mammals, including endangered populations of bears and wolves. The plans for the motorway however include no passages for such animals: no bridges or viaducts over the road, even no tunnels.

Whilst a fair proportion of the Euro projects involve road building, especially in Eastern Europe, the bank isn't shy to lend cash outside Europe. Sepon copper and gold mine owned by Oxiana Ltd of Australia, is located in a region of biodiversity in the south of Laos. Waste from the mine has already threatened the endangered species in a nearby river, local forests have been destroyed and indigenous people have been relocated without proper land compensation. Environmental concerns aside, the Laos government isn't exactly embracing human rights. Amnesty International has condemned the government, which stands to make the most out of this project, for jailing dissidents and torturing people in police custody. The EIB's website is strangely silent on the issue of human rights.

Naturally, the bank's involved in oil. In July 2000 they approved loans to build 300 oil wells and a pipeline between Chad and Cameroon. These loans were justified, in part, by the idea that the money from oil would find its way into the pockets of the poor. Yeah, right. The Bank Watch Network, though, are sceptical that the two governments will get round to setting up systems to distribute profits fairly and put in place environmental safeguards while a Friends of the Earth report said the project is likely to lead to "an ecological and humanitarian disaster." In fact before a drop of oil had even flowed through the pipes the Chad Government blew millions of oil-related money on arms to fight its civil war!

Although they are reluctant to tell us, the salaries of senior management at the bank are a not-to-be-sniffed-at 200,000 euros a year (that's more than £ 133k). The bank's a little more schtum about the salaries of its Directors, although at an average of one day a month the hours aren't bad. Perhaps they'll be at the movies or watching the box having just agreed a loan of up to 12 billion Euros to the European film industry to help it compete with Hollywood and put more crap on the telly.

A recent investigation into whom these murky directors are, has found that many have not declared their interests in multinationals. The airport building bank forgot to

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

**For looking suspicious!**

Last Sunday the Bangladesh government arrested nearly 15,000 people in the capital Dhaka, in a bid to foil any agitation by the country's opposition party. Under laws designed to arrest anyone looking suspicious they mainly nicked people mostly aged between 15 and 30 years, most of whom were not even remotely connected with politics! Some had arrived in the capital for job interviews, some to consult doctors or give examinations, while others were just visitors. Freshly released after two days of ordeal inside jail, one youth from the old part of Dhaka, complained "I was forced to keep standing in a dark and dingy room crammed with over 1,000 people. I could not even sleep for a moment."

mention that one of its directors owns shares in Air France. Whilst the bank involves itself in lending to the Copper Mining industry in Zambia, SchNEWS encourages its readers to draw no conclusion from the fact that one its British directors is the chairman of Zambia Copper Investments Limited. Nor is any suggestion made as to the reasons why he forgot to mention this fact.

The bank's a public organization: in effect all European residents are its shareholders, but it has shown contempt for scrutiny and the people it's supposed to serve and help. [www.bankwatch.org](http://www.bankwatch.org)

\* The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development which dishes out billions of pounds worth of loans to central European and Asian countries has also come under fire with claims that up 20 per cent of its loans are used for corrupt purposes. It's also the bank that supports things like the controversial Baku-Ceyhan pipeline with campaigners arguing that public money should not be used to subsidise schemes that create social and environmental problems and line the pockets of corporations (in this case BP). 01865 200 550 [www.bakuceyhan.org.uk](http://www.bakuceyhan.org.uk)

\* As the Bank and the IMF met this week in Washington, symbolic hunger strikes took place to commemorate the people forgotten by the Bank, such as those evicted from their lands to make way for Bank financed dam projects. Over the past sixty years, the Bank has supported projects that, in the name of development, have led to the displacement of tens of millions of people. [www.aidindia.org/wbfast/](http://www.aidindia.org/wbfast/)

\* The World Bank is supporting the water privatization in Ghana despite the environmental award winning Ghanaian Rudolf Amenga-Etego, pointing out that in a country where about 70% of the people have no access to clean water, privatization would be disastrous. Some Ghanaians already spend 20% of their income on drinking water. [www.goldmanprize.org](http://www.goldmanprize.org)

## Le Pen Lizards

Last weekend was supposed to be a joyous occasion for the British National Party, with their guest of honour a French Neo-Nazi and the commemoration of the patron saint of England, St George. The problem was that wherever they went they were met by anti-fascist protesters who were out to spoil their party with the odd rotten egg or two. In a pathetic show of fascist solidarity showing how they really love foreigners who hate foreigners, they invited over that lovely multicultural bastion of tolerance Jean Marie le Pen, leader of the French Front Nationale, who famously called the World War II Holocaust a "detail" of history.

The visit of Le Pen wasn't exactly a euphoric welcome. Running scared from anti-fascist protesters the BNP had arranged to meet the press in a car park of Stockport Office World, and then be directed to a secret location for a press conference, but then it all went wrong when an anti-fascist campaigner shouted at the BNP press officer and a scuffle broke out. Flyers were handed out by the BNP directing people to the press conference and, er, gave the flyers to anti-fascists! So there was a mad dash to a hotel in Altrincham. Here anti-fascists assembled and when Le Pen and Griffin left they were well and truly rattled, with their car blockaded and everytime the police cleared one lot another would jump in the way, the contents of rubbish bags, eggs and rotten veg were thrown at their car and the driver had to use his windscreen wipers to clear the debris, until one of those unfortunately 'fell' off! Oh and one of the BNP thugs got a bloodied head after a pensioner hit him with a walking stick. And to round it all off no arrests were made! They then escaped to a marquee in Shropshire for a fundraising dinner, but here the police were more prepared and had set up an exclusion zone so unfortunately the evening passed without major incident.

The Bigoted Narrow-minded Party are also rather keen on celebrating St George's Day, 'cos after all isn't he the crusading true English gentleman who saved the fair damsel in distress from the evil dragon in true fairy tale style? Well... no. St George was in fact a dark skinned person from the Middle East who lived around 300AD - yes, that's right, not a true white Aryan. He was born in eastern Turkey and later joined the Roman Army. When they started persecuting Christians, he gave all his possessions to the poor, then confessed to being a Christian and refused to offer sacrifices to the Roman Gods. For this he was persecuted and eventually killed. The bit about the dragon seems to have been invented about 1100AD and probably represents the driving out of pagans from England. But SchNEWS doubts if many BNP supporters really know the true story of St George - we're sure they won't let it get in the way of a good old bit of bigotry.

The BNPs St George's day rallies were also disrupted, in Wickford, Essex where they were prevented from assembling at the station, and in Bermondsey a National Front demo was confronted and failed to have their St George's day march and were forced to sneak away. The weekend also saw numerous other anti-fascist events including: A march through Southall commemorating the 25th anniversary of the murder by the police of anti-Nazi protester Blair Peach on a demo to stop the NF back in 1979 and a weekend of leafleting in Leeds and Bradford.

To read more about the protests against Le Pen's visit see [www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk)

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## Positive SchNEWS

The Talamh Life Centre is hosting a free "festival of environmental science and art" during May 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> in Coalburn, near Glasgow, where you can learn anything from making biodiesel to chainsaw sculpture as well as there being activities for kids. Talamh was first set up in 1993 and has evolved into a housing co-operative with fifty acres of land that now teaches sustainable woodland skills and organic gardening. 01555 820073 [www.talamhlifecentre.org.uk](http://www.talamhlifecentre.org.uk)

\* Don't forget the annual Cannabis March & Festival happening next Saturday (8 May) in Brockwell Park, Brixton. The march starts at 12pm from Kennington Park and ends up at the festie, which is free but costs £100,000 to put on. The Brighton Alliance of Sound Systems (BASS) will be there to entertain. So - donations in the buckets please and if you can help with stewarding email. [marchstewards@yahoo.com](mailto:marchstewards@yahoo.com) 07931 243 855 [www.thecannabisfestival.co.uk](http://www.thecannabisfestival.co.uk) \* More festie information on our website.

## Le Pen and Paper

It was quite odd how the right wing press have reacted to the visit by Le Pen and his support for the BNP. After all the Front Nationale and the BNP are both nationalist parties whose main platform is that illegal immigrants are flooding the country and our way of life is under threat. Pretty much the same as what the Daily Mail, Sun and Express have been saying for years. (see SchNEWS 313).

For example the Express is not averse to whipping up racist anti-immigration sentiment with sentiments such as these: "Unless the flood is curbed it will lead to chaos, public disorder and the growth of repugnant far-rightwing political thugs." And their proprietor, Richard Desmond recently at a meeting impersonated Hitler and said that "All Germans were Nazis" while editor Peter Hill declared that "Immigration is a national disaster...our country cannot cope." But in a strange display of logic the editorial in the Express said about Le Pen "The people of Britain, do not want his type over here, preaching hatred and bile (sic)." As for Hill...well he's married to a woman from Somalia!

But then again we don't really need foreigners, let alone the BNP to preach hatred when we've already got the Express, Herr Desmond, The Sun, Daily Mail, David Blunkett, Tony Blair, the Tories, Neo-Labour, Michael Howard...

\* Every Sunday in May (12-5pm) the Museum of Immigration and Diversity is showing an exhibition created by primary schoolchildren from many backgrounds living in Tower Hamlets that challenges visitors to discover the true stories of British immigration and settlement. The Museum is at 19 Princelet Street, London and entrance is free. 020 7247 5352 [www.19princeletstreet.org.uk](http://www.19princeletstreet.org.uk).

\* Think fascists have a right to freedom of speech? Get a copy of 'The 43 Group' by Morris Beckman an excellent account of how Jewish ex-servicemen fought Oswald Mosley fascist party, literally kicking them off the streets of East London in the 1940's. Copies available from [www.actedistribution.org/](http://www.actedistribution.org/)

\* 'Migrant Voices' is a play by Banner Theatre based on in-depth interviews with Iraqi Kurdish refugees and asylum seekers living in Salford, and shows some of the harsh realities behind the media myths about asylum seekers and draws the link between refugees living in Britain and British intervention in Third World countries. Catch it next Saturday (8 May) East Oxford Community Centre (44b Princes Street, just off Cowley Road) Tickets £5/£3 concessions and all proceeds go to the Campaign to Close Campsfield. For tickets email [timothy.flatman@balliol.ox.ac.uk](mailto:timothy.flatman@balliol.ox.ac.uk)

## SchNEWS in brief

Two people were nicked for aggravated trespass for demonstrating inside the Iraqi Procurement Conference on Tuesday where big business rubbed shoulders with top brass in Iraq to see if they could get a piece of the occupation pie. The charge will be challenged by the two on the grounds that the conference itself is unlawful as it is based on Occupation Orders which have forced a free market economy on the people of Iraq in violation of international law [www.theirpayday.org](http://www.theirpayday.org) \*\* **Next Friday (7)** is the official launch and party for '**Growing our Futures**', from 4pm, an Education for Sustainable Development project at Reading International Solidarity Centre 0118 958 6692 [www.risc.org.uk](http://www.risc.org.uk) \*\* **The Beyond TV Tour** 'The Medicine Show' is 'a fusion of music, carnival performance, subversion, strange books, anti-consumer merchandising and funny films' happening **13th May** - Birmingham Custard Factory Theatre opp. Medicine Bar (**19**) Bolton CattleMarket Pub 8pm (**22**) Glasgow Le cha-teaux. If you can offer them any more dates in the north 016 1226 6814 [www.beyondtv.org/](http://www.beyondtv.org/) \*\* London Rising Tide will be holding An Exhibition of Resistance to BP and **Big Oil**, London in June and are having a public meeting next Saturday (8) to help plan events. It's happening at the Tufnell Park occupied social centre, 156-158 Fortess Road 07969 786770 [www.londonrisingtide.org.uk](http://www.londonrisingtide.org.uk) \*\* 58 Albion St, in Glasgow will be opening for a month from Mayday as a social space, with the aim of a permanent autonomous space in the City [www.glasgow-autonomy.org/](http://www.glasgow-autonomy.org/)

**SCHNEWS FUNDRAISER**  
Celebrate the arrival of spring with  
an anarchic mix of live music,  
techno DJs and the RaggaDubDisco.

with:

**Aliens In The Whitehouse** - live and  
dirty drum n bass  
**Crowzone** - live dubby hip-hop punk  
**Nikki and Shindig DJs** - techno

**The RaggaDubDisco**

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 9.30-late  
At The Volks, Madeira Drive, Brighton.

## ...and finally...

Reckon you're a radical sort of person who'll do almost anything to show off your disapproval of our oil dependant culture? Well forget Critical Mass bike rides, its time to strip off for the World Naked Bike Ride coming to a City near you on the 12<sup>th</sup> June. This is sure to slow traffic down to a snails pace as drivers strain their necks for a peek at your pecker.

Little is known about the first people to ride bicycles naked as early fashions were extremely cumbersome and dangerous for the rider. The latest fad started in Zaragoza in Spain three years ago with the slogan 'Stop the dependence on oil! Down with the pollution! Down with textile industry! - and of course, down with those pants. When 250 took their kit off they decided to make it an international event. So be as 'bare as you dare' but remember a word of warning from the website "naked riders must take special care to protect their vulnerable bodies while riding." [www.worldnakedride.org](http://www.worldnakedride.org)

\* There's a Pedal Powered Music System workshop happening on the 15-16<sup>th</sup> May in Wallingford, Oxfordshire. To book a place call 01491 682106

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers we have no dress code so if yer wanna help distribute or put together the naked truth each week give us a call or e-mail. Honest!