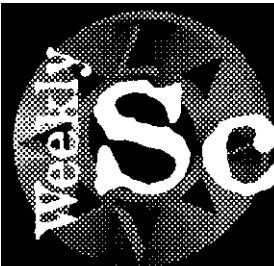


WAKE UP!! IT'S YER SHOP TIL YOU DROP...



SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 7th September 2007

Free/Donation

Issue 602

AISLE BE DAMNED

AS SCHNEWS GOES FOR A SPIN DOWN THE HIGH STREET

“Of course, you’ll judge us by our actions and not by our carefully crafted words...but hopefully you’ll see that when it comes to the environment, we mean business.” Asda CEO, Andrew Bond

This year has seen a massive tide of greenwash from the big supermarket chains. Sinking hundreds of millions of pounds in efforts to convince consumers of their eco-credentials and banging on about being really just out to save the planet and not just make out-of-town warehouses full of cash. Unsurprisingly, SchNEWS remains unconvinced (See SchNEWS 493, 442, 295, 140 for some of the story so far.)

Green-friendly advertising has become the new battleground for the retail giants hence the impression that most hypermarket PR is coming out of a yurt in Totnes these days. The well-paid marketing consultants involved must have been working overtime (highly paid, of course) due to the number of cracks they’ve been asked to paper over ...

Supermarkets are ultra carbon-intensive businesses that rely on transporting food from all over the world, driving down costs at all points on the supply line, exploiting labour and trashing more sustainable local businesses in the process. And that’s without mentioning energy wastage and the creation of a pile of unnecessary

packaging of Himalayan proportions.

But if we can be convinced to shop our way out of Ecogeddon – the big chains have it made. So what if the odd documentary expose wobbles the consumer faith? They’ve learned that there are heftier than usual profits to be made from rapidly increasing eco-guilt. So what are the current campaigns promising?

Every little helps says Tesco – especially now that they’re planning to reduce the number of plastic bags customers use. This global catastrophe-avoiding scheme will mean that only 75 billion bags will be used by their customers next year. If you’re thinking that 75,000,000,000 plastic bags is still quite a lot, Tesco is quick to point out that the bags will be sunlight-degradable (although not bio-degradable), so no worries there, as they sit under mountains of landfill never seeing daylight.

OFF THEIR TROLLEYS

Those eco-worriers over at Sainsbury’s are now charging customers for carrier bags in an effort to reduce consumption. Of course they’re also flogging a designer eco-bag to carry your shopping around – a snip at 5 quid. In fact, they seem experts at ‘doing their bit’ by launching new product ranges designed to look more environmentally friendly. They’re also singing from the rooftops

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For Not Being in the Wrong Place....

Another week, another Action Camp it seems. On Monday (3rd), attendees for the ‘Flood Summit’, a PR knees-up from regional over-development quango ‘Yorkshire Forward’ to convince everyone that its response to the recent flood chaos in the county was just terrific (tell that to the people left snorkelling in Hull), were rolling up at self-styled ‘Robin Hood’ Finnerley airport, near Doncaster.

But these robber barons were ambushed by an impromptu camp of local merry men (and women) who popped up with banners, leaflets and workshops highlighting the link between aviation growth and climate change.

The local sheriffs, as ever, were less than enthusiastic and soon arrived to make sure the local barons could continue the back-patting without confronting any awkward truths. Two were nicked for leafleting and one outlaw for breaking bail conditions – conditions that actually only applied to the scene of the Climate Camp, Heathrow. Only out by the distance of a short internal flight then...

* Pics and report at www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/09/380316.html

about making more of their ready meal containers recyclable – anything so long as you continue consume their processed crap and, after all, it’s not their fault if most waste never actually gets recycled...that’s someone else responsibility. Welcome to the market-driven solution to climate change, folks.

Still there’s “nothing better” for Wal-Mart owned Asda, “than the environment.” The company is showing its commitment by producing a regular sustainability newsletter together with the promise that it is the true ‘green grocer’. Not only does Asda have all the carrier bag schemes; it’s also thrown in a little bit of energy efficiency for good measure, planning big cuts in its carbon emissions. Great news surely? But they’ve neglected to mention the impact of building new stores. In a report out last week, Wal-Mart Watch reckon that at the

Continued overleaf...

Last Throw of the DSEi?

Killing people in conflict zones is a profitable business (seven million since 1989, with 75% of those civilians). If it wasn’t, then the Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi) wouldn’t be around. As one of the world’s biggest arms fairs, organisers promise that they’ll be something for everyone whether army, navy, air force or self-employed mercenary.

The death show kicks off on 11th September with an Armageddon ridden agenda running until Friday 14th. When it last ran in 2005 the show was home for over 1,000 exhibitors with 20,000 visitors from more than 70 countries.

Last time round, hundreds of campaigners took part in blockades and other actions (See SchNEWS 511). The arms traders will be facing more direct action this year as it vertically-lands at the Excel centre in London’s docklands.

And ahead of next weeks actions, campaigners have some right to feel optimistic. After a long effort by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) and others, Fair-backer Reed Elsevier will be organising its last DSEi this year and unless another com-

pany steps in the fair could be a goner.

Reed Elsevier is a big publisher of medical and scientific journals and the doctors amongst its readership mobilised to persuade company bosses to pull out. Not an organisation to worry about the ethical, company boss Sir Crispin Davis admitted that they were selling the DSEi product for financial reasons – so the warmongers could be back after a re-brand in 2009.

Unsurprisingly, Neo Labour is fully behind the show providing subsidies to research and development and running its own marketing department for the weapons UK plc flogs – the Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO). Set up by another Labour government in 1966, Gordon Brown announced at the end of July that DESO would be shut down. Although this is a victory for arms trade activists who have been campaigning for more than 30 years for the department’s closure, PR for weapons sales is not going to go away. It will now be the responsibility of UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) a body that



supports all UK exports. Military sales total less than 2% of UK exports and it remains to be seen whether the UKTI will use less than 2% of its resources flogging military hardware or whether it’s business as usual.

Get involved in stopping DSEi

* Public meeting at 8pm on Monday 10th at the convergence centre, which opens on Saturday 7th.

* The expo kicks off on Tuesday with a critical mass bike ride starting 10.30am from Bank tube station and a march from Plaistow Park at 11am, organised by CAAT. Find out more by going to the convergence centre. See www.dsei.org

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

Copyleft
Published in Brighton since 1994

current rate of growth in the US, Wal-Mart (also the country's largest private purchaser of electricity) will be churning out another 28 million tonnes of carbon every year by 2013.

Tesco are trying a similar blag. The company says it has plans to halve the amount of energy it uses in its stores by 2010 and become the most environmentally friendly store in the UK. Friends of the Earth had a look at Tesco's expansion plans and found that the supermarket's carbon output would actually increase! Even if Tesco meets its target, its overall fuel consumption will go up by 100 million Kilowatt hours – the equivalent of 25,000 UK households. And that's excluding the carbon cost of building the new shops in the first place.

Supermarkets are profitable precisely because the systems they use to get food to our plates are the very ones that are contributing to climate change. Over 95% of our food is imported from abroad - Tesco imports nearly three quarters of even its organic produce!

Take 'Fair Trade' Bananas for example. Action Aid recently exposed how workers at both ends of the supply ball'n'chain are being squeezed by Tesco's hunger for offering low low prices. Not only are Costa Rican and Nicaraguan workers on the banana plantations given unrealistic targets and forced to work excessive hours for minuscule pay, with no right to organise and abuses of women's rights commonplace, so too the migrant workers at the UK-based banana importer firm Pratts are similarly exploited. It may say 'Fair Trade' on the label, but it's still more important for the supermarkets to maximise profits, minimise costs and sell 'em cheaper than their rivals. (To go really bananas, see SchNEWS 581)

And supermarkets actively work to undermine local food systems by undercutting local suppliers' prices. According to the New Economics Foundation, between 1995 and 2000 the UK lost around one fifth of our local shops and services.

So their pretences of 'corporate responsibility' continue. Everything they tell us is based on their own reporting - with little or no external audit. In an attempt to hold the supermarkets to account, groups including the Fair Trade Foundation, Soil Association and trade unions came together with retailers to set up www.racetothetop.org – a website dedicated to tracking supermarket's progress towards a 'sustainable and fair food system.' Tesco and Asda declined to participate and Sainsbury's pulled out early on. Now the project's over. Why bother indulging in external scrutiny when the greenwash is working so well?

* For more 'check out' www.walmartwatch.com - www.tescopoly.org and <http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid=2596> ... and buy local or better still GROW YER OWN!

Party & Protest

SEPT 10th – 'Confronting Empire' former US Presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney talks about the loss of fundamental freedoms under the Bush Junta. From 6.30pm at Friends House, Euston - £5 or £3 for concessions. www.confrontingtheempire.org.uk ** **19-24th - Gatwick No Borders Camp.** This will be a space to share information, skills, knowledge and experiences, and to plan actions together against the system of border controls. Place: Gatwick area. Info: g-anbc2007@riseup.net <http://noborders.org.uk> ** **OCT 1st - Faslane365 Big Blockade.** After a year of blockading Faslane nuclear base, a mass bloc will take place to celebrate the campaign and shut down the base. Starts 6.30am, at the north and south gate of Faslane naval base. For more call 0845 45 88 365, web www.faslane365.org

* For full listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

MEXICAN STAND-OFF

In the words of one SchNEWS correspondent on the ground in Mexico...

"Bombs, elections, protests, arrests and Oaxaca City is still fighting. It's been over a year since teachers, trade unionists and their supporters took over the city in protest, spawning a larger uprising and the creation of the Popular Assembly of Oaxacan Pueblos (APPO), a grassroots organisation attempting to force the resignation of corrupt local bigwig Governor Ruiz and a minimum wage amongst other things (see SchNEWS 567). It's been nine months since the government and military violently took back the city but the area has remained in turmoil and state repression continues. Only a few weeks ago the People's Guelagetza, (an alternative to the state sponsored tourist spectacle of traditional arts and dance) ended with the usual brutal police violence.

There was one death and 45 demonstrators were nicked as around 10,000 people tried to enter the Guelagetza auditorium. All this because people were asking why their traditions and culture were being used to line the pockets of businessmen. Meanwhile the latest crop of tourists are blissfully unaware that any such war took place as they wander the city's colonial splendour, occasionally mumbling dissatisfaction as to why anyone should feel the need to deface such a splendid church with revolutionary propaganda.

A recent Amnesty International report condemned the actions of the federal and state officials in Oaxaca, calling for an immediate investigation into the abuse of human rights, torture and sexual abuse in custody. At the beginning of August a bomb went off in Sears department store. Another unexploded device was found in a bank. Although the Peoples Revolutionary Army allegedly claimed responsibility for these, some claim that its more recent actions have been used by the government to create a state of fear.

During the elections on 5th August, hundreds of police were patrolling the city 'cleaning' up the main plaza of the unsightly banners proclaiming support for the Popular Assembly, freedom for political prisoners and an end to the fascist government. Four of the arrestees were from Catalonia, who were assaulted and had their documentation, cash and other personal effects stolen by the cops. They are still being held by state officials in Mexico City. More than 80% of the population failed to vote, and not through apathy. There are still many autonomous villages in Oaxaca state, and anti-government feeling still runs high. There are regular large marches, such as the the one on the 10th August - anniversary of the death of mechanic José Colmenares, shot dead in a paramilitary police ambush whilst out on a demo.

As the marchers neared Colmenares former home, the people chanted, "Are you tired? NO! Then Fight Fight Fight! We want this fight. No matter what the consequences."

For more in-depth analysis on recent events in Oaxaca see articles on www.counterpunch.com (and, provided the gov't's not closed it down) www.oaxacalibre.com

SHELL'S BELLS

After a short break, work has resumed on the proposed Shell refinery site at Bellanaboy in County Mayo (see SchNEWS 597). Last Monday (27th) around 20 protesters occupied the site and stopped work for several hours. Afterwards they joined others outside who were blockading traffic attempting to enter. On Tuesday and Wednesday, concrete trucks entering the site were blockaded. In another area, surveyors, subcontracted to Shell, were prevented from carrying out surveys on the likely pipeline route. Resistance continues and on the 14th of September there is a national day of action at Bellanaboy. For those who cant make it to Ireland, solidarity actions are called for. See: www.indymedia.ie/article/83932, www.indymedia.ie/article/83972

BALLUCHS TO EM

Dr. Martin Balluch, an animal rights activist nicked for his part in filming the fur farms, has been found not guilty by a Finish court. Back in Autumn 2003, three Austrian activists were attacked by fur farmers whilst filming conditions and arrested by police. In what was heralded as an important victory in the fight against terrorism the activists were held for three days and one had his home raided by the police. Upon the collapse of the £20,000 prosecution case, Marin said, "This verdict should send a clear message to the authorities and to fur farmers: it is not just necessary and legitimate to investigate and publicise the conditions on fur farms, it is fully legal as well."

UN-BIL'IN-ABLE

Victory for the villagers of Bil'in in their struggle against Israel's apartheid wall (see SchNEWS 544). On Tuesday, the Israeli high court decided in favour of a petition drawn up by the Palestinian villagers to change the current route of the wall which encircles the small village. For years, residents of Bil'in, along with international and Israeli activists, have led nonviolent resistance actions every week against the encroaching wall and the illegal settlement colonies that expand on a daily basis on their land. Villagers and activists have been tear-gassed, shot at, arrested, and beaten by Israeli occupation soldiers during direct confrontations against the wall and the continued theft of Bil'in land, but the resistance presence has grown into a force to be reckoned with.

However the victory is only partial: Yonatan Pollack of Anarchists Against the Wall, says that the larger context is important to keep in mind while looking at the situation in Bil'in. "The overall picture is that of Israeli annexation of land and strategic control over the Palestinian population. The most important thing people can do in the international arena is to support the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, which is the most powerful tool of international resistance."

* For more check out <http://electronicintifada.net>

...and finally...

If you've got a great idea for futuristic killing machines then the Ministry of 'Defence' are waiting to hear from you. They've got a super competition called the 'Grand Challenge' open to allcomers... Design the next generation of military hardware! But be warned, competition will be tough. A team from the University of Portsmouth, all secret Transformers fans no doubt, are leading the field with a war robot designed to hunt down enemy troops (and, maybe, the odd civilian) in the urban environment.

The team of academics like to refer to themselves as 'Team Locust' presumably because they envisage a thousands of their battle bots destroying everything in their path. The flying death dealer is touted as the 'future of warfare' and if the team win then their robo-warrior will be put into commercial production.

"The challenge was to create devices that could be used in the fight against people who don't fight under established rules", says Charlie Baker-Wyatt, manager of the university's defence and homeland security research section. "We are fighting ideologies espoused by very clever extremists who are often one step ahead of the game and not constrained by a public purse, health and safety, environmental or legal concerns or even their fellow human beings."

Of course, concerned civil service mandarins will even now be rewriting those 'rules' of war to include the use of flying robots...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - don't believe the supermarket. Honest!

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