

Corporate Watch

50p

Newsletter

Issue 4: July - August 2001

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The Corporate Takeover of Universities:

In December, the University of Nottingham accepted £3.8 million from British American Tobacco to contribute towards the setting up of an International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility. The acceptance of this grant caused a storm of protest which eventually led to the resignation of Richard Smith, a professor of medical journalism at the University. Is this something new? Dr Stuart Parkinson went for a stroll round the campus...pp. 4-5

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BIO-Justice or BIO-Devastation

Recent anti-globalisation protests have been met by an increasingly militarised state response which is extremely good at deflecting attention from the issues. Corporate Watch's Lucy Michaels reports back from the BIOjustice protests against the US Biotech industry in San Diego, where the terms of the debate on the future of biotechnology were being set not by the public and free speech, but by a corporate media and corporate security: the police. When twelve hundred people turned up for a completely peaceful, colourful march and rally, the industry rubbed its hands in glee at the low turnout, but on the ground it was obvious why people had stayed at home.

At the annual, and largest ever, gathering of the Biotechnology Industry Organisation, BIO 2001, in San Diego this June, things were not expected to run smoothly. For months in advance, the citizens of San Diego had been told to expect up 8000 protesters, untold property damage and 'violent' protest. With Gothenburg a week before, TV images of petrol-bomb throwing incoherent anarchists abounded.

Don't worry, said the mayor, we'll protect you from these trouble-makers. Sadly he wasn't referring to the biotechnology industry, whose R&D facilities in San Diego provide an important source of income for Southern California. Accustomed to friendly coppers pointing us towards the GM field, and to the high level of public awareness on biotechnology issues in Britain, I wasn't prepared for San Diego. The neatly-laid-out city, home to the US navy, was effectively under siege - boarded up shop

windows, high-profile police presence, and the FBI in black cars prowling the manicured blocks for 'activists'.

It seems that the police and the industry worked for months to create this culture of fear. The media filmed police riot drills and made statements warning that anyone on a protest where someone broke the law would be subject to arrest. Leaflets to local shopkeepers screamed of a threat to property and said they should consider closing. The public were persuaded not to lend buildings to the protesters.

Organisers were openly tailed and kept under surveillance. The BIOjustice legal team reported at least 75 people detained for ludicrous minor offences like jaywalking. Myself and a Greenpeace campaigner were pulled over and our passports briefly confiscated for allegedly being members of the Black Bloc. Yet of the three 'Black Blocs' marching on the day, two were confronted as police infiltrators and couldn't even be bothered to deny it.

With a small but eager bunch of activists mostly new to the GM issue, we couldn't match the PR industry's media saturation with stories like 'organic food is bad for you', 'why we don't need labelling of GM foods', or 'why little children shouldn't be denied the right to gene therapy'.

When BIOjustice asked BIO to come to a debate, the executive director of BIO called the organisers saying they didn't deserve a debate and were wasting his time. 'You are a bunch of hooligans, I don't need to call you back'.

From the outside, things look pretty bleak in the US. There is no mandatory labelling of GM foods and very little public

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If you can't beat 'em, get 'em to join you....photo by t.c. miranda - chunkofunk@hotmail.com

Brazil victory over US in AIDS drugs battle

The US pharmaceuticals lobby were wringing their hands last month after the US government withdrew a patent infringement claim against Brazil. Brazil is now effectively free to continue its successful AIDS treatment programme, which, relying on cheap local versions of patented drugs, has managed to cut AIDS deaths by half since 1995. The charity Medicins Sans Frontieres says the programme has

offered free treatment to at least 90,000 patients but would be threatened if Brazil had to pay higher prices for imported drugs.

The decision follows the collapse earlier this year of a similar case brought by drugs giants against South Africa, in which only the 'business-friendly' UK government was willing to back the profiteers against South Africans,

health needs. Drugs companies are increasingly being forced to back down and offer products at reduced prices as they come under attack for large profit margins; attention is also turning to the habit of devoting research funding to non-fatal rich world problems such as obesity and sexual dysfunction while neglecting killer 'poor people's diseases' such as TB and malaria, which are unlikely to yield lucrative markets.

Exxon Mobil on torture charges

The world's largest oil company, Exxon Mobil, is to face charges of complicity in human rights abuses in Aceh province, Indonesia. The US-based International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) is bringing the charges in Washington on behalf of 11 Acehnese villagers, holding Exxon Mobil accountable for torture, murder, imprisonment and sexual abuse by members of the Indonesian army unit assigned to protect Exxon's operations. It is also alleged that Exxon paid for the construction of barracks which were used by the notorious Kopassus ('special forces' - responsible for many of the atrocities in East Timor and West Papua) units for interrogation and torture of local civilians suspected of involvement in separatist activities, and provided the military with heavy equipment for digging mass graves.

The company has been operating in Aceh, which has some of Indonesia's largest oil and gas deposits, since the 1970s (as Mobil until the merger in 1999).

According to the ILRF's indictment, Mobil paid large bribes to get the contract initially and in return received military protection against the Free Aceh Movement guerrillas fighting for independence for the province. Local human rights campaigners have accused Mobil of pursuing an 'enclave development' approach, in which work was done mainly by outsiders in secure compounds and hardly any benefit reached the local communities. Free Aceh Movement guerrillas perceived the company as complicit in oppression, and it became a target for attacks, which led Exxon Mobil to temporarily close its operations in March this year, but they re-opened in July. Abdurrachman Wahid's government had ruled out independence for the province, but it is not yet clear how the new government - led by Megawati Sukarnoputri and widely believed to be open to manipulation by the military and nationalist forces - will deal with the situation in Aceh.

Genoa - G8 Summit

Corporate Watch has very little to add to existing coverage of the G8 summit, the protests and the police reaction. The summit produced so little result as to be scarcely worth reporting, while the protests and police reaction have been covered in depth on IndyMedia sites - we've trawled the mass of coverage and give links to some of the most interesting articles below.

http://uk.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=8274 - Detailed statement by Jonathan Norman Blair, Briton beaten and arrested in the raid on GSF headquarters.

http://uk.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=7965 - account by Genoa policeman of planning and aftermath of raid on IMC/GSF

http://uk.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=7604 - twisted Daily Mail rant piece accusing beaten and still hospitalised Indymedia journalist Marcus 'Sky' Covell of 'co-ordinating attacks' in Genoa.

http://uk.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=7997 - appeal for witnesses from Irish protester arrested in Genoa and still being held

http://uk.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=7627 - worrying report of police intimidation of British activists returning from Genoa.

As with Corporate Watch web links, we can provide printouts of these articles for 50p per three articles or less - send stamps rather than cash.

Byers does a U-turn on the bypass

Transport Minister Stephen Byers endangered traffic last month by pulling a swift U-turn on the Hastings bypass. In a rare instance of New Labour doing the right thing, he has withdrawn plans to build two bypasses around the Sussex town, through an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The aim of the bypasses was not only to speed up traffic but to 'regenerate Hastings', because it would - you guessed it - open up a whole area of greenfield sites to new business and housing

developments. Gillian Bargery of the Hastings Alliance (the coalition opposing the bypass) pointed out that as well as trashing one of the nicer bits of Sussex, the bypass would have been of very little use against congestion as 95% of the traffic on the roads the bypass was supposed to relieve is local.

Hastings had become a flagship for New Labour's planned 100+ new road schemes, meaning this decision could sound a death-knell for some of the other schemes too.

BIOJustice or BIODEvastation - from p. 1
awareness of the issue. Nevertheless a recent ABC News poll stated 93% of US citizens favoured labelling. US farmers are struggling to get hold of certified GM-free seeds, and risk law suits if their seeds are shown to contain GM material from cross-pollination. The media and government are under almost complete control by the corporations. Even the Secretary of State for Agriculture is a former director of Calgene - a subsidiary of Monsanto.

Despite this, resistance is flourishing. This was evident from the people, especially farmers, attending the teach-in event, 'Beyond BIODEvastation', and the creative and inspirational activism that did take place. On Thursday we formed the voluntary labelling brigade to label GM products in a supermarket. One TV

station asked whether this was vandalism! Other activists formed the 'Biojustice Buccaneers' to protest from boats in the bay behind the trade fair. Some did 'invisible theatre' in malls, holding loud staged conversations with each other and with local retailers.

While the biotech industry has hailed the event as a victory, they are clearly in trouble, especially in agricultural biotechnology. Their spin struggled to keep the debate on medical issues to avoid the mess agbiotech has got into. They can't afford to lose the confidence of the venture capital which provides research companies' start-up costs. Overall, BIO seemed rather lacklustre. Prince Andrew was keynote speaker and the rest seemed to consist of children and minor celebs thanking companies for their health.

BIOJustice's greatest triumph, however, is that despite San Diego's militarised economy and police, despite its compliant media and despite the fact that this is suntan-worshipping silicon-breasted Southern California, it forced the ethical debate on GM technology to the fore, and San Diegans came to the teach-ins and marches.

With the debate on globalisation (and street protest generally) so stifled in the USA, and with what seems like a deliberate international policy to up the ante on the burgeoning movement of the disenfranchised and disillusioned, the need to develop new creative tactics, to find new theatres of action and to build alternative and genuinely democratic institutions within our own communities, is even more pressing.

What's wrong with...the Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol is important because...

- **We need some kind of international agreement.** Climate chaos is a global problem needing a global framework and a global solution. We need a negotiated agreement supported by all countries, responding to existing inequalities.

- **It's taken 13 years.** The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was created in 1988. The Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed at Rio in 1992. The Kyoto Protocol was agreed in 1997 - but not ratified. Many people say 'yes it's shit, but it is a start and we can't afford to lose another 13 years'.

- **It will be renegotiated.** There is an argument for getting an agreement now, even if it's weak, so that there is something already in place to renegotiate before 2010.

...The Kyoto Protocol is pants because...

- **The targets are crap.** The average reduction on 1990 levels was 5.2% before any loopholes. Australia, Norway and Iceland even negotiated increases. The scientists say the whole world needs to reduce emissions by at least 60% on 1990 levels just to stabilise the atmosphere.

- **Carbon Trading.** The greatest weakness of the Protocol may be that it proposes an international commodity market in carbon.

This will be a vast accounting loophole.

- **Joint Implementation** allows countries to trade emissions reductions. Russia's emissions, like its economy, have shrunk 30% since 1990. In theory this shortfall can be traded to replace real reductions elsewhere - it's an accounting fiddle.

- **Clean Development Mechanism** allows rich countries to offset domestic emissions by funding projects in the South with some vague climate change aim. A gift to logging, nuclear and hydropower corporations.

- **Land use changes and reforestation** can be offset against reductions, including changes in use and forest cover which were happening anyway.

- **Air transport and shipping are excluded.** Emissions from air transport and shipping are not accounted to individual countries, so don't appear in anyone's targets - another incentive for international air transport.

- **No one has ratified it anyway.** The argument that 'it's better than nothing' is looking pretty lame given that Romania is still the only country with a target that has formally ratified it.

...And the Bonn agreement's even worse...

The US accounts for around a quarter of global emissions, and 45% of the total emissions reductions pledged in 1997.

When the US withdrew, the Protocol could only be saved by letting recalcitrant countries use their veto power to stretch the loopholes. There is now no requirement to reduce domestic emissions - all targets can be met entirely through CDM carbon credits and forest and land use changes and actual emissions may well be higher than in 1990. Pretty impressive for 13 years work.

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A protester dressed as Tony Blair hangs from a tripod blocking the entrance to Esso UK's headquarters in a protest against corporate lobbying weakening Kyoto. Photo: ISF/StanKujawa



WBB-We've Been Beaten (Again)

Over the last couple of years a battle has been waiting to explode on the southern edge of Dartmoor. In 1999 two large clay companies - Watts Blake Bearne (WBB) and Imerys (ex English China Clay) - announced their intention to expand their existing china clay workings at Lee Moor and Shaugh Moor by enacting 50 year old mineral planning permissions and constructing a super quarry within the boundaries of the Dartmoor National Park. The threatened area is rich in wildlife and constitutes an area of international archaeological importance, containing extensive areas of Bronze Age and later remains. This was threatened by 2 companies seeking to extract a mineral used to make toilets and glossy paper. After strident opposition from the National Parks Authority, local people and the Dartmoor Preservation Association, both companies agreed to conduct a full environmental and archaeological impact assessment on the threatened area.

In late June WBB and Imerys released a joint statement, through their PR consultants Proteus, partially withdrawing from the scheme.

'On the basis of...the archaeological and ecological evidence...we believe that...relinquishing the permissions we both hold to work within the Dartmoor National Park is the right thing to do'¹

This is a major victory for campaigners. However, Crownhill Down, an area of equal archaeological and ecological significance which lies outside the National Park to the south is still threatened by the construction of new quarry access and haul roads and by tipping of china clay waste.

At present the clay quarrying industry in Devon seems to be undergoing massive changes. Local company WBB (still smarting after their failed attempt to dig up the Teign and Bovey rivers at Teigngrace) have recently been subsumed by Belgian-based Silbenco. Silbenco have started to asset strip WBB, apparently selling off pieces of WBB infrastructure including their social club and closing their Newton Abbot headquarters, relocating staff to new premises in Chester.

What does WBB and Imerys' retreat really mean? Are they both suffering from a nasty bout of environmental conscience, or is this a calculated withdrawal from a potentially messy situation to buy favour with the planning authorities? Only time will tell.

Notes and References

1 www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/dnp/news/nr200601.html
Further reading on the area threatened by quarrying - 'Sacred Land-Working Land', Tom Greeves - available from the Dartmoor Preservation Association, www.dartmoor-preservation-assoc.org.uk

Toxic waste for all

BBC's Newsnight revealed last month that incinerator ash contaminated with cancer-causing dioxins from burned PVC has been used in construction materials. The toxic ash was scattered on allotments (helping it straight into the food chain...), used to build a bypass at Waltham Abbey and car parks at the Ford factory in Dagenham, Essex as well as incorporated into blocks widely used in the building industry. 50,000 tonnes of ash from an incinerator in Edmonton was supplied to the building industry, apparently with the consent of the Environment Agency.

When interviewed, Environment Minister Michael Meacher refused to say whether householders will be notified if the locations of the contaminated materials are identified, leaving open the possibility that the government could know of people living in houses contaminated with carcinogens, and not tell them. Apparently telling them could cause a panic. Newsnight also suggested that the Environment Agency's investigation into the affair was being 'prosecuted with an extraordinary lack of vigour'.

There are currently around 70 planning applications in the pipeline to build new incinerators around the country - many are facing strident local opposition, but given planned changes to the law on public enquiries they may be forced through regardless.

The Corporate Takeover of Universities

In December, the University of Nottingham accepted £3.8 million from British American Tobacco to contribute towards the setting up of an International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility. The acceptance of this grant caused a storm of protest which eventually led to the resignation of Richard Smith, a professor of medical journalism at the University¹. Is this something new? Dr Stuart Parkinson went for a stroll round the campus...

This high profile event illustrates not just a one-off aberration in the behaviour of universities, but a systemic growth in the power and influence of corporations within higher education.

Declining Public Money

The funding per student in UK higher education fell more than 40% in real terms between 1976 and 1996², partly as a result of rising student numbers and partly because of cuts in funding. Such cuts are reflected by, for example, the drop in public funding for scientific research and development, a large proportion of which is carried out in universities, which fell by 17% in real terms between 1987 and 1999³.

A major byproduct of this is erosion of working conditions for university staff. Teaching and research workloads have considerably increased and job security is in many cases precarious. The Association of University Teachers (AUT - the main academic trade union) go so far as to claim that bar staff now have greater job security than academic staff! Further, pay levels have not kept pace with other professions. Between 1981 and 2000, pay for academic staff rose 5% in real terms whilst the average for UK employees as a whole was 44%⁴.

Increasing Corporate Funding

Decreasing public funding and eroded working conditions have had two main effects: highly qualified staff are leaving academia for industry, while those who stay are having to rely much more on private funding from industry.

Indeed, it turns out that this has become a deliberate government policy. In 1993, the Conservative government published a White Paper on science entitled 'Realising Our Potential'⁵. Its main aims were to forge closer links between publicly-funded researchers and industry. Industry money would be used to expand work in promising new technological areas, so that the UK might gain competitive economic advantage. As a further sign of this prevailing view, in 1995 the Government's Office of Science and Technology was moved to the Department of Trade and Industry. When Labour came to power in 1997, there was hope that this trend might be reversed. Unfortunately, though funding for higher education is once again increasing (partly through the use of tuition fees), it is conditional on an even greater role for the private sector.

The growing financial involvement of corporations in universities is shown in the large number of sponsored positions that exist. For example, Cambridge University has top academic posts sponsored by Shell, BP, ICI, GlaxoSmithKline, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and Marks and Spencers. Meanwhile it has laboratories sponsored by Rolls-Royce, AT&T, Microsoft and Zeneca⁶. Other Universities are also following this trend. The University of Surrey even has a Chair of In-Flight Catering sponsored by an industrial trade association!

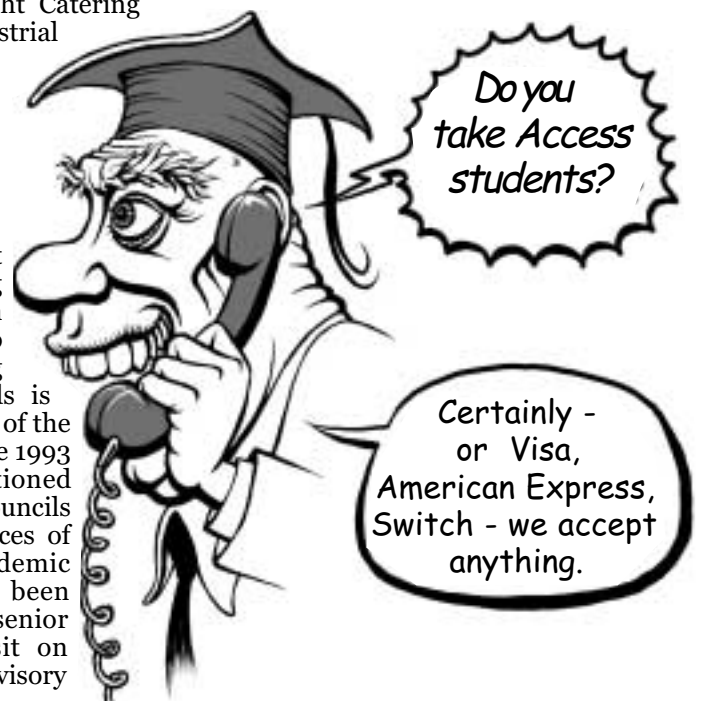
Public-Private Partnerships?

However, it is not just direct industry funding that corporations can affect: their ability to redirect public funding to meeting their needs is also increasing. As part of the policies laid down in the 1993 White Paper mentioned above, the Research Councils (one of the main sources of funding for academic research) have been encouraged to have senior staff from industry sit on their steering and advisory

committees and even chair the committees. Such a recommendation has increasingly been taken up. For example, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) has as its chair Dr Peter Doyle, a former executive director of biotechnology company Zeneca, and industry representatives make up a significant minority of each of its advisory panels⁷. The Research Councils' mission statements also reflect this shifting emphasis. For example, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) declares as its mission that it will 'contribute to the economic competitiveness of the UK and the quality of life of its citizens' - in that order⁸!

A further aspect of the industry influence over public funding is the LINK programme, where public money is used to match industry funding for research projects.

Inevitably, the growing presence of corporate interests on UK campuses will influence the direction of the research. Corporate Watch's forthcoming study of the relationship between UK universities and the oil industry⁹ found that five times more funding went to projects involving oil and gas production than on those involving renewable energy. This is at a time when the Government has in place a strategy to reduce carbon dioxide



emissions by 20% by 2010 to help prevent climate change.

Independent Education?

If you think university teaching may somehow be exempt from these corporate influences, you are sorely mistaken. Research and teaching are inextricably bound - researchers are also tutors and lecturers and their thinking cannot be totally split. When applying for a lecturing post at any university, one of the main criteria set down is to have a demonstrable ability to attract research funding. To do this in today's higher education system means that you must be able and willing to gain funding from industry. Indeed this ability is often valued more highly than the ability to obtain public funds, since corporate funding can often be larger and have a less demanding application procedure. This means that successful lecturers must be sympathetic to industry priorities.

Conclusion

Industry influence within universities, in both teaching and research, is

growing. Since industry in general has narrow economic priorities this will inevitably lead to academic independence being compromised and a restriction of research and teaching agendas away from broader social and environmental issues.

Governments and universities must recognise that the critical need to achieve sustainable development requires a much broader focus in academia and more public funding must be provided to counter powerful economic interests. This funding could come from some form of tax on corporations to allow more independent research and teaching to take place.

Dr Stuart Parkinson is chair of Scientists for Global Responsibility

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4 as 2

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6 Monbiot G. (2000) 'Silent Science - The Corporate Takeover of the Universities', Chapter 9 of 'Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain'. Macmillan.

7 as 6 and Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) web-site <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/about/gov/members.html> (accessed 13/07/01)

8 Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) web-site, http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/EPsrcWEB/MAIN/ABT/Policy_and_Planning/INTRO/INTRO.asp?Main.htm (accessed 13/07/01)

9 Muttitt G., Degrees of Involvement: An examination of the relationship between the upstream oil and gas industry and UK higher education institutions. Corporate Watch, UK (forthcoming Autumn 2001).

New Owners, New Name, Same CropScience

After months of rumours Aventis, the Franco-German life sciences company, finally look set to sell their controversial CropScience division to German chemical and pharmaceutical giant Bayer. Since their Corporate Watch briefing¹ was published in April 2000, Aventis CropScience have consolidated their reputation as ruthless pushers of GM technology.

The company was created in December 1999 by the merger of German Hoechst and French Rhone-Poulenc. Aventis CropScience, the division dealing with GM crops and agro-chemicals was created from AgrEvo (a joint venture between Hoechst and Schering) and Rhone-Poulenc's Agro. Schering still own 24% of Aventis CropScience.

In the UK they provoked widespread outrage by continuing field trials of GM crops despite huge public opposition. Aventis is behind over 75% of GM field trials in the UK. This figure includes 84 farmscale trials, 13 National Seed List Trials, and 16 research trials². The test sites have become a focus for public rallies and direct action. This summer over 25 of Aventis' UK test sites have been decontaminated by members of the public. Aventis Liberty Link (herbicide toler-ant) maize and oilseed rape are close to entering the National Seed Lists in the UK. In late 2000 Aventis' application to have 'Charldon LL' or 'T25' maize added to the UK

National Seed List was postponed indefinitely when it was revealed they had failed to complete necessary tests prior to applying for inclusion.

In the US, Aventis tarnished their name last year when it emerged that a large part of the 1999 and 2000 US conventional maize crop had been contaminated by an Aventis GM maize crop, Starlink. Starlink, engineered to be resistant to insects, can legally be grown as a fodder crop for animals, but is not cleared for human consumption. The resulting scandal led to claims for over \$500 million compensation against Aventis by companies and farmers forced to recall contaminated products. Rather than acknowledging responsibility, Aventis lobbied for retrospective legislation clearing Starlink for human consumption³.

Aventis have made it clear they wish to free themselves from their controversial loss-making CropScience division to focus on pharmaceuticals. Recent company literature emphasises the peripheral, 'non-core' nature of its CropScience division. After months of speculation as to whether CropScience would be spun off on its own or broken apart it now seems Aventis are close to selling the entire cropscience business to Bayer for an estimated \$8 billion⁴.

Bayer is a huge German chemical and pharmaceuticals company which, despite considerable holdings in crop

protection, has so far kept its distance from GM crops, preferring a more 'traditional' reliance on agro-chemicals. However, Bayer are now looking to concentrate on and expand their pharmaceutical and agricultural sectors. Buying Aventis CropScience makes Bayer the world's number 2 pesticide producer (behind Syngenta) raising their share of the global market to over 15%. It is thought likely that Bayer will sell Aventis' insecticide business to BASF giving BASF a leading 21% in global insecticide sales. Splitting CropScience between Bayer and BASF would avoid any anti-trust proceedings.

A new Corporate Profile of the post-sale Aventis CropScience/Bayer CropScience will be available on the new Corporate Watch website in the autumn.

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 - 2 www.genewatch.org/CropTrials/Trl2001.pdf
 - 3 www.corpwatch.org/un/updates/2001/starlink.html
 - 4 Bayer, BASF Plan to Split Aventis Crop Science Claudia Hume in Chemical Week 4,07,01
- For more information on Bayer and their dubious history go to www.cbgnetwork.org - the site previously known as www.bayerwatch.org - the German giant has just won a court case against Bayerwatch/Coalition Gegen Bayer-gefahr forcing them to withdraw their domain name and trademarked group name. Bayer claim people could get confused between the site detailing their crimes and the real Bayer website.

CAMPAIGNS

No Borders!

The WOMBLES protest camp at Campsfield Immigration Prison, coinciding with Genoa, was foiled by a paranoid over-reaction on the part of the police, as up to 500 cops shut down the nearby town of Kidlington, persuading pubs to close and stopping any 'suspect' (i.e. scruffy) vehicles or individuals. The Home Office joined in by transferring 50 detainees away from Campsfield.

Despite the state-fostered tension, a group was able to get inside the cordon and set up a small camp, but the police immediately moved in, first confiscating the keys to their vehicle, claiming they thought it was stolen, then evicting the camp under Criminal Justice Act laws, claiming it was preparing for an illegal rave.

Undeterred, the demonstrators regrouped and a planned Critical Mass cycle ride from Oxford railway station to Campsfield was transformed into a samba-led march round Oxford city centre - followed by half-a-dozen riot

vans and deafened by a police chopper.

Given that the last protest camp at Campfield, led by local campaigners, was very lightly policed, the paranoia the WOMBLES' plans invoked only goes to show how much the powers-that-be are scared by anything with the words 'anti-capitalist' attached, even if the tactics are the same as those used by other groups.

Contact: Campaign to Close Campsfield, 01865 726804



A WOMBLES placard takes on a new significance...Photo: Hugh Warwick

Genetix RoundUp™

It's turning into a busy summer for GM campaigners. Across the UK, actions both covert and overt have kept the pressure on GM companies. The Genetic Engineering Network (GEN) reports 40 trials in the UK either destroyed/severely damaged by protesters, withdrawn, or failed. These include: 21 farm scale trials: (5 spring oil seed rape (OSR), 4 winter OSR, and 12 maize); 2 winter OSR research trials, all 13 OSR National Seed list trials, 1 barley research trial and 3 potato trials. 25 of these were deliberately decontaminated, including trials at Wivenhoe in Essex, the scene of a rally involving over 100 people in June, which were severely damaged by two covert actions in the following weeks.

Essex and Dorset campaigners also celebrated court victories for activists accused of aggravated trespass. Both cases were thrown out by magistrates on legal technicalities.

Further afield, there have been decontaminations in Belgium, the Netherlands and France, but on the minus side the EU Commission has just introduced rules on GM contamination in food, which allow up to 1% unlabelled contamination with unapproved GMOs as long as it is regarded as 'adventitious' or 'technically unavoidable'. In other words,

the StarLink contamination incident in the US last year (see article on Aventis CropScience, p.5) would be perfectly legal under the new EU rules.

Outside Europe, Sri Lanka has announced a ban on the import and growing of GM crops; Thailand has banned field releases and there are increasing moves to tighten labelling regulations across Asia. The US is threatening Sri Lanka, Thailand and other countries under WTO rules if they refuse to import US GM products or impose strict labelling.

Meanwhile, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has just released its annual report, claiming biotechnology is the way to feed the world. NGOs across the South are condemning the report by what used to be seen as a neutral organisation. Pesticides Action Network Asia-Pacific (PAN-AP) have described it as 'a PR dossier full of pro-corporate technology propaganda', while in India, the Karnataka State Farmers' Association is threatening a 'Burn UNDP 2001' campaign to follow up its 'Cremate Monsanto' actions.

The Genetic Engineering Network is now at: Archway Resource Centre, 1a Waterlow Road, Archway, London, N19 5NJ 0207 272 1586 gen@gn.apc.org

Toxic Waste for Kids

Parents and children at two Welsh schools are getting increasingly concerned about their health - and the health of the democratic process - in the light of plans to move the schools to sites previously used for dumping toxic waste.

In Llandudno, Conwy, a secondary school, Ysgol John Bright, is to be moved from its current site, which the council is selling to Walmart/Asda for a new supermarket, to the site of an old gasworks - known to be contaminated with heavy metals, waste oil and explosive levels of methane. Just to make matters worse, it's on a floodplain, increasing any risk of chemicals escaping. Meanwhile in Newport, Durham Road Infant and Junior School is being transferred to the site of a former municipal dump, which locals remember was previously used by Monsanto for dumping drums of - well, nobody's quite sure what, but apparently when soil samples were taken there were some small explosions. Monsanto cannot be held responsible for cleaning up the site as there is no official record of their dumping. An alternative, relatively uncontaminated site had been proposed, but after soil testing the council decided to sell the clean site to housing developers and put the school and attached nursery on the toxic waste dump.

Both new schools will be built under the private finance initiative (PFI) - the new Ysgol John Bright is to be built by McAlpine while a preferred bidder has yet to be found for Durham Road School. Local campaigner Lesley McCarthy pointed out, 'People are being exploited on three levels here - there's the companies that made the mess in the first place, like Monsanto, the companies profiting from building the schools, like McAlpine and then the companies that buy up the alternative sites, like Walmart.'

Local campaigns are underway and parents in Newport have already persuaded the new Children's Commissioner for Wales, Peter Clarke, to investigate the cases of both schools. If the new schools in Llandudno and Newport are built on the planned sites, the potential dangers are unthinkable. The main possibilities would be a long-drawn-out nightmare of chronic illnesses and possibly deaths caused by leaking toxins, or a major disaster caused by gas explosion. As Lesley McCarthy put it, 'We don't know whether this will be a thalidomide or an Aberfan - or both.'

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Babylonian Times

Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Jeremiah 51:6-8

McStalinism

Strange goings-on at Stonington Indoctrination and Intimidation Centre [sorry, 'High School'] in Connecticut, US. A couple of months ago our old chums McDollars, being short of staff for the summer season, arranged with the head of Stonington High to run a recruitment rally, thinly disguised as an assembly on interview skills, during school time. Pupils were obliged to attend, and were greeted by uniformed McDastardly employees handing out refreshments and offering free meal coupons for job applicants.

The assembly continued with mock interviews on stage. Volunteers included Tristan Kading (15), vegetarian, Nike protest veteran and general enemy of the corporate state. Upset at being required to attend a presentation from a company he views as responsible for destroying

South American rain forests in the name of hamburgers, Tristan took the mike and explained how he hates large corporations like McDunghheap. Amid applause, Tristan was removed from the hall, dragged to the principal's office and apparently threatened with expulsion. Instead, he agreed to read a Stalinist-style self-denunciation over the school PA, in which he was forced to describe himself as 'a bad student' who 'no teacher would want in their classroom'.

The US news coverage focussed solely on whether Tristan's right to free speech was infringed, and completely failed to ask what large corporations are doing recruiting minors for slave jobs during school hours, or why the principal so vehemently defended the McMonster against an obviously bright and promisingly independent student...

Treemendous?

'Luton is to become the first airport in Britain to encourage passengers to pay for the environmental cost of their flights. Money raised from voluntary donations will be used to buy trees to absorb carbon dioxide produced by aircraft. Future Forests, the company which will carry out the tree planting for the airport, believes all air passengers should be aware of the pollution implications of aviation fuel. Friends of the Earth say they would rather see airline passengers give up their flights and take the train instead.'

Makes sense, though. If we don't plant forests - what are we going to cut down to build motorways?

Buy now while stocks last...

This, found in the Financial Times, must be the opposite of a small ad:

'MONTENEGRO PRIVATISATION - in addition to the tourist sector the Government's Agency for Economic Restructuring and Foreign Investments is offering majority shareholdings in numerous comp-anies across the board including textiles, construction, wine making, salt production, food, machinery, metals and telecommunications.' To paraphrase a recently deceased American razor boss - 'I liked the country so much - I bought it!'

Wheely Stupid

"An Australian man has registered a patent for a 'circular transportation facilitation device' - more commonly known as the wheel. Melbourne patent lawyer John Keogh said he registered the patent to show flaws in an intellectual property law...[which]...only requires claimants to show 'innovation', not 'invention'. "The government decided to find a way to issue a patent more easily," Mr Keogh said. "The patent office would be required to issue a patent for anything. All they're doing is putting a rubber stamp on it." But Patent Commissioner Vivienne Thom said "Obtaining a patent for the wheel would require a false claim, which would certainly invalidate the patent." BBC Online.

One thing is patently obvious - we really need to sack all the lawyers.

Only here for the beer

It's always an education to read the Financial Times and see what to the rest of us is depressing written up as the best news ever. This is from an article about a brewery in Montenegro:

'The privatisation of Niksic brewery by Belgium's Interbrew is the most instructive investor privatisation to date. Interbrew was able to shed many of its least productive workers by offering 3 years pay for early retirement. Employment is now down



Cattery Farming

'Allergy-proof cats could be the next genetically modified "breakthrough",' according to BBC Online. 'A biotechnology company intends to alter the genetic makeup of moggies to create the perfect pet for allergic cat lovers. Transgenic Pets claims sufferers will soon be able to own a cat without fear of a runny nose or streaming eyes. "We're simply removing a non-essential protein from the cats and it shouldn't hurt the cats in any way," said Jackie Avner of Transgenic Pets. The company is still looking for funding to carry out the work.'

Look no further. Corporate Watch advises Frankenpets to ask Tony Blair - tell him you work for Huntingdon Life Sciences and the cash will soon roll in.

DubyaWatch - from the Corporate Watch email...

'...when the President was here [in Philadelphia] on July 4, I had the opportunity to shake his hand. I wasn't sure if that was a good idea or not but I did it anyway, and said to him, "Mr President, I hope you only serve four years. I'm very disappointed in your work so far."

He kept smiling and shaking my hand but answered, "Who cares what you think?"'

from 580 to 350. Old habits die hard though and trade unions recently called workers out on strike. Frequent disputes like this are what President Djukanovic describes as "a self-destructive Balkans attitude".

Yes indeed, how passé. Imagine workers actually sticking up for themselves - Maggie put a stop to that sort of 'self-destructive' nonsense here in Britain years ago...

New on the Corporate Watch website:

We are now running fortnightly news updates on our website at www.corporatewatch.org.uk. These are also available on email - subscribe via the website or send an email with 'subscribe' as the subject line to news@corporatewatch.org. This service is free, but donations are always welcome. Some of the news updates and articles from the last two months are included in the newsletter, some are now out of date. Articles which may be of interest to paper subscribers are listed below - paper copies may be obtained from us for 50p per three articles or less - i.e three articles = 50p, five articles = £1. Send stamps rather than cash. Articles are between 500-2500 words long.

'Smoking is good for your economy's health'

According to a new report by consulting firm Arthur D Little International, smoking may in fact be beneficial to the economy, as smokers who die young use less public services than they would if they lived past retirement.

Campaigns - Policy that stinks

With foot and mouth disappeared from the mainstream media the slaughter policy is still spreading its poison around the country. Carcasses are being dumped on a site just outside Tow Law, near Bishop Auckland, to spread toxic

gases around the surrounding area.

Editorial - Greenwash and GO!

Positive engagement types were no doubt intially overjoyed at last week's launch of the FTSE4Good Index, intended to provide a guide for ethical investors. Good idea, you may think, except that only about a third of the companies currently in the FTSE All-Share are excluded.

Analysis - Silent Democracy

'It's sociologically interesting, though scary', said the actor Anthony Sher in an interview, 'that you can be inside an evil system and be somehow unaware of it.' Sher was talking about the former system of apartheid. But what if the same could be said of our 'liberal-democratic' western society? *David Cromwell and David Edwards*

Book Review - Taming Global Financial Flows - A Citizen's Guide by Kavaljit Singh

Ever since the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates in 1970s there has been an explosive increase in global financial flows. Today, \$1.49 trillion is traded on the foreign exchange markets alone every day.

Book Review - Naming the Enemy: Anti-corporate movements confront globalisation by Amory Starr.

Starr - an American sociology teacher and activist - has tried to describe the movements against corporate globalisation and show how they can improve their strategy. Initially this looked like an interesting book but as I read further I found it edging ever nearer to the bin - ultimately, this is a lesson in the dangers of lazy scholarship

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Diary

AUGUST

Fri 27th July - Fri 11th August Trident Ploughshares summer camp, Peaton Wood, Coulport. Bring sleeping bags and 'disarmament tools'! 01324 880744 mobile 07775 711054 e-mail davidmc@enterprise.net

Wed 1st - Sun 5th Earth First Summer Gathering, Derbyshire, www.eco-action.org/gathering 0845 4589595 summergathering@yahoo.co.uk

Sun12th - 18th National Week of Action against sanctions, including a mass demonstration on the first weekend. Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq www.casi.org.uk fax 0870 063 5022 or email voices@vivuk.freemove.co.uk Voices in the Wilderness

Sun 12th - Smokey Bear's Picnic, Southsea Common, Portsmouth, from 2pm. Last year the police arrested a man for commenting on a bald officer's wig, and had to pay him £1,200 compensation afterwards, (hee, heel!), so picnickers are being encouraged to wear brightly coloured daft wigs! www.smokeybearspicnic.com

Sat 18th - Anti-GM crops march and fun day - Inverness

Thur 23rd - Sun 27th - Green Up North. Acoustic successor to the Northern Green Gathering, with workshops and exhibitions themed around climate change. Tickets £30/£5 kids. <http://www.vis.u-net.com/ngg/>

SEPTEMBER

Sat 1st - '3 headed' demonstration against Porton Down. Meet at the Maltings, Salisbury 1.30pm for a march and demo in the town and on to Porton Down front and rear entrances. For map send SAE to Jenny Potheccray, Lemerle, Amesbury Road, Salisbury, SP4 0HN.

Sat 8th - Norwich Street Carnival. Day of peaceful protest against globalisation, McDollars, Starbucks, GM trials... Direct Action Forum, PO Box 487, Norwich, NR2 3AL 0794487393

Tue 11th - Fri 14th DSEi Arms Fair. Guns, tanks, landmines or cluster bombs get them all at Defence Systems and Equipment International arms fair (DSEi) London Docklands. Fiesta for Life Against Death on the first day - 020-72810297, Disarm DSEi, PO Box 9656, London N4 4JY www.disarm-trade.org.

Sun16th - Worldwide day of action against McDonalds to mark World Food Day. Adopt YOUR store. Leaflets £10 for 750 from veggies 0845 458 9595

Sun16th - Mon 24th Third International Conference of Peoples Global Action, Cochabamba, Bolivia www.agp.org

Fri 20th - Car Free Day www.carbusters.ecn.cz

Sun 22nd European Car Free Day

Sat 28th - Fri October 4th IMF/World Bank AGM Washington. Call out for activists from all over the world to protest and expose the illegitimacy of the institutions and officials who continue to claim the right to determine the course of the world economy. 50 Years Is Enough Network www.50years.org