

Corporate Watch

50p

Newsletter

Issue 5: Sept-Oct 2001

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Say YES! to corporate stupidity:

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Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD)

In September 2002 the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, ten years on from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Like its predecessor, the Johannesburg summit, also referred to as Rio+10, will be under strong pressure from the business world and others preaching the neo-liberal gospel. In preparation for Johannesburg international lobby groups the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) have formed a joint initiative called Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD). The BASD was launched during a UN Commission on Sustainable Development session in April 2001 by its chairman, Sir Mark Moody-Stuart, retired chairman of Shell. This is the first time the world's major business organisations have 'come together under one banner in the interest of sustainable development'.

Or so they would have us believe. So far the BASD has shown nothing more of itself than a few press releases stating their deep concerns for the world's future and that 'business is a part of the solution to sustainable development'. But it is already clear that the BASD has no intention of keeping their involvement at the level of parading their concerns. Its steering committee has set out to 'ensure maximum participation from the world business community' in the preparation for and execution of the summit, and to 'communicate its core message at every available opportunity'.

But what is the 'core message' of the BASD? From reading their material one could assume that they are acting like Mother Teresa but driven by 'unabashed egoism'. The logic being, as Sir Mark explains: 'a future built on sustainable development is very much in the interest of business...'. A better picture of the BASD agenda can probably be found by scrutinising the records of the ICC and the WBCSD.

The ICC is a lobby group representing over 7000 corporations from all over the world. It has lobbied against any binding emission targets at the climate summits (promoting voluntary action by industry instead), worked against the implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity, opposed the

inclusion of the precautionary principle in the Biosafety Protocol and is trying to obstruct the implementation of the Basel Convention banning the export of hazardous waste. In an effort to improve its image, the ICC has been deeply involved in the UN Global Compact initiative, an alliance between the UN and TNCs (the corporations give money and a token promise to follow nine altruistic principles, and in return they get to use the UN logo - see Newsletter 3). During this relationship they have vigorously defended their position that the UN should in no way measure or regulate how the companies live up to the principles they have promised to follow.

The WBCSD may be more subtle in its promotion of the corporate agenda, but a glance at their membership list (Cargill, Dow Chemical, Monsanto, Nestle, RTZ, Shell, Unilever, etc), again confirms that sustainability comes second to profitability. At the Rio Summit they lobbied against regulation of business and at the climate negotiations they have promoted emissions trading and other business solutions such as joint implementation.

The BASD will have its first major strategy meeting in Paris on 9-10 October. More than 150 industry leaders will discuss 'how best to ensure that business is effectively represented at the Johannesburg Earth Summit'. From reading the programme it becomes clear that they will be using the same greenwash tactic as WBCSD - supplying a list of narrowly chosen examples of good corporate citizenship. In the programme the BASD asks participants to bring examples of 'initiatives to be showcased and consolidated'. They are especially looking for examples that 'involve multi-stakeholder activities in developing countries'. That's only the PR part; behind the scenes you can count on them working on setting as much of the Rio+10 agenda as possible, using the usual extortion tactics against governments and the UN process.

A broad coalition of grassroots groups will gather in Paris during the time for the BASD meeting to discuss how they can counteract the corporate co-option of the UN and to expose the greenwash agenda of the BASD. To join them, please contact: Etienne, ecoropa@magic.fr, or Flip, flip@aseed.antenna.nl, +31-20-6682236 or +31-6-17836486 (mobile). A public meeting will be held Wednesday 9 October at 6.30pm at La Bourse du Travail (Salle Charlot, M° République, Paris).

All the above quotes are from the BASD website: www.iccwbo.org/basd/

Dicey goings-on at arms fair

The protests against the DSEi (or Dicey) arms fair in London on September 11 turned out to have been badly timed. Press coverage was virtually nil as any story was overtaken by the news of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon.

The main marches led over 1000 people - samba band, pink and silver bloc, Critical Mass, CND, Campaign Against the Arms Trade and others to the west gate of the centre, where a thoroughly over-policed party went on for several hours. Meanwhile, a smaller group was attempting to blockade the side entrance. The presence of a contingent of Wombles had the police severely rattled - they made periodic attempts to stop the crowd during the march and arrested one woman for attempting to leave the group to go for a pee. A full Section 60 (the law wrongly used to corral, search, photograph and take details of demonstrators at Mayday this year) was not

applied. It was left to Schneus to point out the irony of searching demonstrators for weapons just outside an arms fair where machines capable of killing and maiming thousands were openly on sale. Slap a Section 60 on the ExCel Centre - there's people in there tooling up for a breach of the peace...

Meanwhile, over at Trafalgar Square the Redhanded Activists had made one of the fountains run with 'blood' in memorial to the 'millions maimed and killed, people dispossessed of their land, environmental destruction, communities shattered, entire populations displaced and forced into exile'.

DSEi itself clearly has no sense of shame. It seems that the organisers could see no connection between their trade in death and the attacks on the US. Business continued as usual through to Friday 14th, and not so much as a message of condolence appeared on the official website.



The PRIVATE Sector

This new section will cover news and campaigns around privatisation, PPPs (Public-Private Partnerships) PFI (Private Finance Initiative) local authority sell-offs and similar schemes.

The Great Gene Sell-Off

Privatisation takes a whole new turn as the Blair plc contemplates selling off something they don't own and which most people don't even realise exists - genetic records.

A panel recruited by Health Secretary Alan Milburn to advise on the Genetics Green Paper is calling for the NHS to auction off results of genetic testing to drug companies. The idea, revealed in papers leaked to the Genetic Engineering Network (GEN) and the Observer, has been condemned as a privatisation too far and a breach of civil liberties.

Apart from the objection to selling off information given for free for another purpose, the plan raises worries about how consent will be obtained - especially as doctors may have an interest in obtaining financially valuable samples. Although the leaked papers make perfunctory mention of confidentiality, anonymity could be breached and insurance companies, the police and employers would then surely be interested in obtaining data. Another confidentiality issue is ignored - would discoveries based on genes from an NHS database be published immediately for the public good, or would they disappear under a cloak of commercial confidentiality until patentable and profitable?

The industry emphasis, and contempt for ethical considerations, is hardly surprising given that the panel is made up overwhelmingly of of scientists, medics and pharmaceutical industry lobbyists, plus two representatives of genetic research NGOs

(Genetic Interest Group and Breakthrough Breast Cancer) and one lone bioethicist. The minutes and accompanying members' submissions contain much discussion of the needs of industry, and the advantages for the NHS of industry involvement, accompanied by an assumption that concerns about industry involvement (and about use of genetic information generally) are the result of ignorance and bad PR. Dr David King of Human Genetics Alert, in an analysis written for GEN, expressed concern that the panel is meeting in secret and without involvement by official ethics advisers the Human Genetics Commission - yet another case where policy is being written behind the scenes by industry-dominated groups.

The most vociferous proponent of the plan to privatise Britain's DNA is Crispin Kirkman, head of the BioIndustry Association. Kirkman claims that without NHS test data, the UK

bioscience industry will crumble and Britain become 'a third-world genetics country'. He also suggests the UK should be talking to the drugs industry's working party on guidelines for genetics research, presumably in order to adapt its ethical guidelines to suit the convenience of industry. This is a man not known for his sensitivity towards ethical concerns - earlier this year, he told Blair, in reference to stem cell research 'You must support the science and afterwards we can bring in the controls' Wishing to stave off accusations that they are solely concerned with industry, the leaked minutes suggest that the section of

the Green Paper dealing with industry should be placed at the back of the document 'to avoid giving the impression that commercial considerations are at the forefront'. Oh well, that should put everyone's mind at ease...

Sources:

Full text of leaked documents plus analysis by Dr David King: <http://www.geneticsaction.org.uk/sellingukdna/>
'Fury at plan to sell off genetic secrets' Observer 23 September 2001
SRA News Feb-Mar 2001 <http://www.srainternational.org/cws/sra/restrict/sra2-01.pdf>

Down the Tube

The skewed logic of the government's plans for a 'public-private partnership' to run the London Underground was finally exposed in August after the High Court lifted the injunction banning publication of an independent report on the scheme's value for money.

When published, the report (by consultants Deloitte and Touche) still contained numerous blacked-out sections where names of companies chosen as 'preferred bidders' and details of bids have been censored (yet again, commercial confidentiality overrules the public interest). However, it did express serious doubts about the techniques used to estimate the costs and benefits of keeping the Tube in public hands, choose the preferred bidders and dismiss the alternative strategy of public sector bond financing. Overall, the report suggests that the figures do not conclusively show the PPP to be value for money, and even if one chooses to read them as such, the figures themselves have been fiddled. What a great new start for the Tube.

Text of report: http://www.transportforlondon.gov.uk/PDFfiles/report_23_08.pdf

Comment: September 11

TNC's reaction

In recent weeks we have been told over and over by our great leaders that it is vitally important for us to consume - 'Shop Britain out of economic slowdown!' 'Americans! Buy goods - it's your patriotic duty!' At the same time, certain parts of the US government are calling for reduced capital gains tax and a speeding up of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) - apparently this will help the fight against terrorism. There seems to be a rather badly hidden agenda here - surely the beneficiary of tax cuts and increased trade liberalisation is not security but corporations? This should not surprise us.

There has been little remarkable in the reaction of most corporations to the events of September 11. While individuals have demonstrated the whole gamut of human reactions from selfless heroism to violent xenophobia, TNCs have for the most part simply absorbed the shock into their normal profit-driven behaviour. It is hard not to see the immediate massive layoffs by airlines and plane manufacturers as using an available excuse for previously planned actions. Every vaguely charitable act has its accompanying press release and web page. 'Vaguely' is the operative word here - the BBC reported how supermarket firm K-Mart made a much-publicised donation of 50,000 US flags to the city of New York, while on September 16, it ran full-page ads featuring an American flag, with small print below, reading: 'Remove from newspaper. Place in window. Embrace freedom.' General Motors (GM) shares Bush's suspect take on the patriotism theme - according to GM North American president Ron Zarella, 'GM has a responsibility to help stimulate the economy by encouraging Americans to purchase vehicles.' This would translate as, 'Be a good citizen: buy a planet-

trashing SUV and help us make lots of money' Hmmm. Fellow vehicle manufacturer Chrysler similarly played on the patriotism angle by launching an ad campaign for its Jeep range featuring US soldiers beating the Nazis in World War II. Unsurprisingly this did not go down well in parent company Daimler-Chrysler's homeland - Germany.

The really sickening hypocrisy is elsewhere - in the twisted, sanitised world of the arms manufacturers. Lockheed Martin, whose products fuel wars worldwide and who are responsible for thousands of deaths every year, is running a fund for victims of the bombings. The innocents killed by their 'defence hardware' are written off as 'collateral damage'; only Americans count as real people, and only when there is a publicity point to be scored.

The arms companies are doing extremely well out of September 11 - stocks in US defence companies have soared by up to 39% even as the Dow Jones average fell by 14%. Anyone supplying military equipment to the US government is now considered a sound investment.

It hardly seems worth writing that corporations are incapable of anything other than a self-interested response - even to a vast tragedy on their doorsteps. As long as these non-human entities impose their sole, blind, all-dominating aim of money-making on their staff and the societies from which they draw their non-life, we can expect nothing different. The guns will be sold to the murderers, and the oil and food and money will flow from poor to rich, leaving behind the frustration which drives people to fanaticism and terrorism as readily as to progressive rebellion.

Break the cycle - stop shopping, start acting.

An oil connection

At the time of writing, the US is engaged in talks with the ageing former king of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, about forming a 'government-in-exile', presumably with a view to installing it if full-scale military action against the Taleban goes ahead. Deposing the Taleban may have little to do with the 'war on terrorism', but it would help the 'war for oil' which has dominated US foreign policy for most of the last century.

Afghanistan itself has some oil and gas reserves, but is more important as the only practical route for a pipeline to take natural gas and possibly oil from the rich fields of south-east Turkmenistan to the growing markets in Pakistan and India. A plan to build such a pipeline was drawn up in 1997 by a consortium including US oil giant Unocal, Saudi Arabia's Delta Oil and the government of Turkmenistan, with smaller partners from Japan, Korea, Pakistan and Russia. Unocal stressed it would not go ahead with the project until an internationally recognised government was in place in Afghanistan, and in December 1998 they pulled out of the consortium, following the US missile attacks on what was claimed to be Osama bin Laden's training camp in Afghanistan. A US-friendly regime in Kabul would remove the only significant obstacle to the resumption of the project. Is it too much to suggest that such a consideration might carry weight with the notoriously oil-friendly Bush government when considering their strategy?

Sources:

Unocal news releases:

<http://www.unocal.com/ucnews/97news/102797a.htm>

<http://www.unocal.com/ucnews/98news/082198.htm>

<http://www.unocal.com/ucnews/98news/centgas.htm>

Genetix RoundUp™

'Elstree Eleven' - Not Guilty

On 22nd February, activists blockaded Sainsbury's Elstree depot at Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, along with four other sites around the country, in protest at their continued use of GM animal feed. Eleven arrests were made for aggravated trespass and obstruction at Elstree, but on 28th September all 11 activists received a 'not guilty' verdict, since the prosecution failed to prove that they were on private land, and failed to provide a witness to attest that the use of GM-fed animal products complies with food safety and labelling requirements. For more on this, see

http://www.uk.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=12745

11th September Gives Rise To Outrageous Claims

It was fairly predictable that the tragic events in the US would give rise to the erosion of civil liberties and hasten the expansion of the term 'terrorist', but

nowhere has this been more evident than in the bizarre world of the GM fanatic. CS Prakash's AgBioview e-list has recently played host to a particularly rabid attack by one Andrew Apel, (who runs a biotech industry newsletter,) who claims that GM critics have blood on their hands, and compares Greenpeace and Vandana Shiva with the perpetrators of the 11th September attacks. If this is what GM advocates are reduced to, then the activists must be doing something right.

International News

Last month Sri Lanka dropped plans to introduce the world's strictest anti-GM regulations, which would have required importers to certify their food's GM-free status. The US had threatened to take Sri Lanka to the WTO, claiming the ban was aimed at discriminating against US exports. It is clear that the US and biotech corporations are worried about the example a GM-free Sri Lanka would set to other countries.

On August 29, in the Philippines, the

Philippine peasant organisation Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) along with students and church groups, carried out a mass decontamination of Bt-corn at a Monsanto Agro-corporation field testing site in South Cotabato. Around 800 people descended on the test field and uprooted the quarter-hectare test crop in less than ten minutes. Chair Rafael Mariano said that 'the uprooting of Bt corn in Mindanao serves a strong political message to greedy agro-chem TNCs like Monsanto and the Macapagal-Arroyo government which sanctioned field trials of Bt corn in particular and GMOs release into environment in general.'

Can of Worms

In another great leap in progress, scientists now believe it is possible to genetically engineer mosquitoes so that they cannot carry malaria. The difficulty with this is that no-one knows what they might take to carrying instead. If you thought pollen was a problem, think where mosquitoes can get...

Say YES! to Corporate Stupidity!

The Yes-men are a genderless, loose-knit association of some three hundred impostors worldwide... In other words, the Yes Men are team players... but they play for the opposing team.' from their website - www.theyesmen.org

In March 2000, the Yes-men were given control of GATT.org by the group that designed it. Gatt.org looks just like the WTO's official website (but conveys the WTO's message more clearly, because it was designed by anti-globalisation creatives RTMark). In May 2000, an organizer of a conference on international law wrote to GATT.org inviting WTO Director-General Mike Moore to present. Three months later, 'Moore' politely declines but suggests a replacement, Dr. Andreas Bichlbauer of Vienna. Dr Bichlbauer attended the conference, where he gave a presentation on 'barriers to trade', including, amongst other things, the suggestion that the logical conclusion of the WTO's agenda would involve the standardisation of culture across the world, abolishing local anomalies like the Mediterranean siesta. He also argued in favour of schemes allowing apathetic citizens of 'consumer democracies' to sell their votes to the highest bidder - notably the spoof site votauction.com, run by the Yes-men's close collaborators RTMark. A few of the audience were mildly offended by remarks suggesting Italians preferred having fun to pursuing the work

ethic [*What's offensive about that? I'm sure I'd rather have fun...Ed.*], but no-one noticed anything wrong with the voting suggestions.

This August, in Tampere, Finland, the yes-men struck again, with unofficial WTO representative Hank Hardy Unruh delivering a lecture about the rights of slavery, the stupidity of Gandhi, and the supremacy of free trade to an enthusiastic crowd of scientists, engineers, and marketing professionals. Even when, at the climax of the presentation, Hank Hardy Unruh ripped off his business suit to reveal a skin-tight gold bodysuit with a three-foot long inflatable phallic appendage - the 'management leisure suit', supposed to allow managers to communicate directly with workers via chips implanted in the suit and in the workers' brains - no-one called his bluff.

We contacted the yes-men at their secret hideout in an almost extinct volcano [*What?!...Ed*] to find out what makes them tick.

Corporate Watch: Who or what inspired the Yes men in their quest to discredit the WTO?

Andy: Well, the WTO is a really big deal that has a lot to say about what happens and what doesn't. And you take a look at the things they say in the press and on their website and it's so ludicrous, so infantile. They say things like 'Letting big companies do whatever the fuck they want anywhere in the world will lead to cleaner air because the companies will have really big profits and therefore so will the countries they are in and then those countries will spend that extra money on buying equipment that's better for air quality.' This is really the gist of what Mike Moore has said. Given this sort of idiotic idea, it's really funny to see how much respect this organization gets from really and truly smart people. And we wonder: just how totally repulsive could it be and still get respect and allegiance from those really smart people? Could it, say, proclaim something like 'Voting should be privatised-companies should be able to purchase votes for president'? Could it say 'Today's remote labour system is a lot like slavery, but even better'? Could it say 'Gandhi was really misguided'? Would people clap? The answer has



A Finnish journalist gets a close-up of the 'Employee Visualisation Appendage' photo: the Yes-men

always been a resounding YES - and that's why we are the Yes men. We say YES too!

CW: Your accounts suggest the audiences make virtually no response at the time of the presentations - no questions, booing, heckling, only polite applause - mightn't this be better interpreted as a sign of incomprehension than of acquiescence? Alternatively, was anyone listening?

Andy: Well, in Finland, they certainly were listening. After the lecture, Mike and I wandered around the enclave and spoke with people in various environments - at lunch, at dinner, in the lobby, etc. Always people understood what the lecture had been about. Always people said it was not offensive. Under other circumstances they would have found it offensive, but because it was the WTO saying these things, they were ready to gosestep.

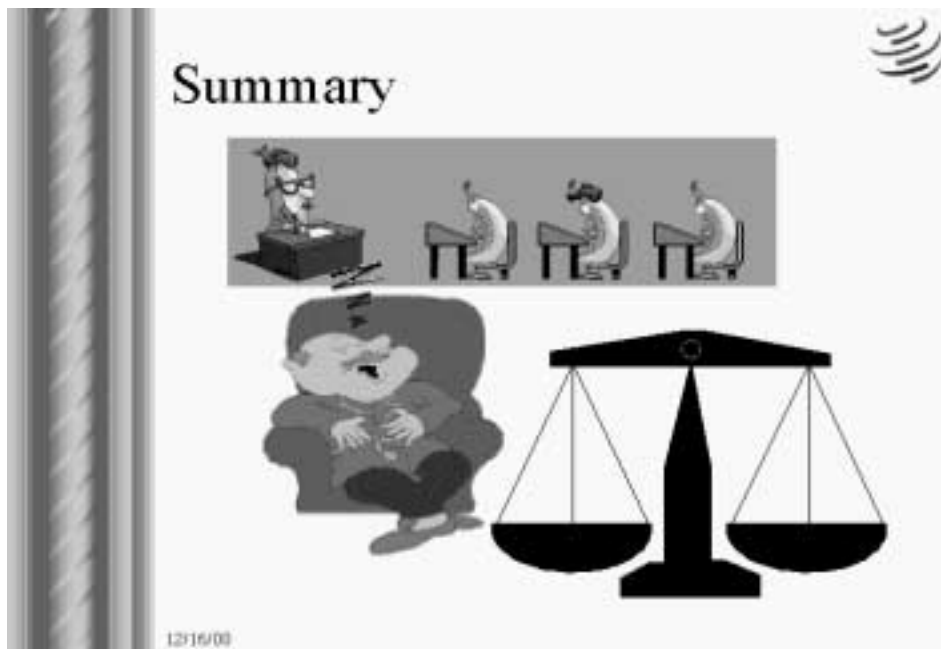
And they gave us more than polite applause. They gave us robust applause, in fact. And the president of the conference mentioned the talk at least three times in public - once right after, once during the day, and once during his dinner announcement, right before the traditional Finnish folk music part. Each time, he said how grateful they all were for this very nice presentation by this WTO representative.

In Salzburg they were listening too, though apparently not quite as well. Perhaps they were less smart? Or perhaps the performance was less clear? I have learned to enunciate. SLAVE-RY. GAN-DHI. E-LEC-TRO-CU-TION.

CW: What do you think these responses indicate about the mindset of the corporate man?

Andy: Ready to gosestep. Fully in sync with the bottom line of the commanding operation. And not just the corporate man: the corporate woman, the academic man, the political woman, the alcoholic child. Many, many people, regardless of education, are easy prey for the ideas of the corporate decision-makers. Present them with a decision, they will accept it! This is why it is important for citizens to decide what sorts of corporate decisions are and are not acceptable. It is never possible to count on the highly educated to filter the okay from the rotten. It is not possible to expect that Ph.D.s will always be on the lookout for the fascist and murderous.

Fortunately, it is possible to establish laws that regulate the behaviour of corporations and the like. That way, it is not necessary to rely on the alertness of Ph.D.s to yell when scary things get said.



Trade lawyers in Salzburg accepted slides like this as part of a serious presentation...

CW: Your speakers presumably circulate among the delegates after their presentations - what sort of reception do they get?

Andy: Very friendly! Apple wine and pretzels! Hearty handshakes! Sometimes, great earnestness and desire to continue relations into the future between our camp and yours. Do you have a card? Here is mine. Let us read one another's position papers! I like you!

CW: What's your opinion of the mainstream media's response to your actions?

Andy: Very nice. We do what we do because we think it is very funny. Mike and I, we can laugh for hours about these things. We are really stupid that way. The mainstream press picks up on the funniness and transmits it, it may be what they like the best. But almost always the journalist gets the serious point too, and transmits it to the journalism-consuming consumer.

CW: Has the WTO ever made any direct response to you?

Andy: Not direct, but they have told at least two reporters (from Transfert, and from New York Times) that they 'deplore' us. 'Deplore!' Well, we deplore them! Those dumb-asses! Also, in Transfert, they suggested we should wear masks of Mike Moore's face and run around yelling angry epithets about him. That would be funny, they said. They are really stupid!

CW: Is claiming to be a WTO official, a passport into any obscure corporate trade meeting? Can anyone do it?

Andy: Sure!! WTO identity is not necessarily the only thing to do - it's also just as interesting to pass as any old corporate worker or manager. To do so you can just dress up real splendid-

like and make up a history - no one ever asks for proof of identity at most things. Party-crashing, very fun. Can learn things and make points. It's like this urban exploration thing, where you climb into tunnels and go through buildings and so on, where you're not supposed to, so that you get a sense of what's behind things - you can do the same thing in society. Then you get a sense of how strange things are, a sense that most of those who are actually within the environment, no matter how smart they are, rarely get, because they're used to it.

CW: Have you any measure to gauge the success of an action? do you get fan mail?

Andy: Sure, lots of it, and that's a measure of success for us - shows us that the point we're making is coming across and people are inspired to do similar or parallel stuff. We also like to see how much press we get - if we get a lot, it must mean that a lot of reporters think we're as funny as we do!

CW: And finally, in 25 words or less, your message to the anti-corporate anti-globalisation movement from your hideout in the depths of an almost extinct volcano:

Andy: Well, just that the destruction of the Twin Towers shouldn't change things too much. It's going to confuse a lot of people - they're going to think that the freaks who dance around in the street to oppose the corporate takeover of society are the ones who crash planes into buildings. This seems like an obvious difference to us, but people will make the mistake. Nevertheless, the big picture hasn't really changed at all. It's just the first time that, in the war between the First and Third Worlds, the First World has been so horribly hit. The Third World has suffered many such devastating blows...

CAMPAIGNS

London Against Incineration

Edmonton, North London, has the misfortune of being home to Britain's largest incinerator. It sits beside the north circular, a menace to local residents. In defiance of widespread opposition, the government plans to enlarge this blot on the landscape as part of its bizarre, incinerator friendly waste policy.

London Against Incineration was formed by local residents determined to resist the planned expansion and to campaign for closure of the plant. The group sees this double aim as inseparable from a shift toward a zero-waste policy based on reduction, re-use and re-cycling.

The environmental and health hazards of producing and then burning waste are now widely recognised. Yet London Waste Ltd, who run the Edmonton monstrosity, boast impeccable environmental credentials. Their glossy PR brochure 'Energy from Waste' claims the proposed enlargement 'will make a significant contribution to the reduction of air pollution in the United Kingdom. By displacing other forms of energy production, emissions of dust, sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide, hydrogen chloride and oxides of nitrogen can be reduced.' However, this list does not

include dioxins, the seriously toxic products of burning chlorinated substances such as PVC. Dioxins are associated with cancer, birth defects and other conditions and incinerators are a well-known source - scarcely surprising that London Waste would rather not discuss them.

London Waste is a 50/50 joint venture established by the North London Waste Authority, representing seven boroughs, and Sita, a French multinational - the same company that recently lost the Brighton refuse collection contract (see www.schnews.org/archive/news308.htm).

London Waste has a vested interest in expanding incineration, and continues to promote it in the face of mounting informed opposition. But the Edmonton incinerator is now established as the site of successful direct action. In June the five Greenpeace activists who climbed the chimney and shut down the plant for six days last October were cleared in court of criminal damage charges.

More info on: www.londonagainstinincineration.moonfruit.com

David Binns

Rising Tide UK Gathering

Rising Tide is a diverse network of grassroots activists taking direct action to combat climate chaos locally, nationally and internationally.

The Rising Tide UK national gathering will take place on 13-14 October in the inspiring new Bridge 5 Mill environment centre in Manchester. The weekend will be a vital and empowering opportunity for all those already taking action to tackle climate change, as well as people who want to become more involved, to meet, learn and plan strategically for the coming year and beyond.

Contact Rising Tide UK - 01865 241097, info@risingtide.org.uk, website www.risingtide.org.uk.

If bombing starts, protest in Trafalgar Square. Further peace demo updates at www.uk.indymedia.org or contact CND 0207 700 2393, 162 Holloway Rd. London N7

Stop it, for peat's sake!

Thorne and Hatfield Moors once formed part of the biggest lowland raised peat bog in the country. It was called a 'raised bog' because peat acts like a sponge, so when it's wet it rises up and used to reach up to 8m in height. Now however, there's very little left, thanks to peat extraction (milling) by US-based horticultural company Scotts for use in compost.

Peat is used as compost for its water retaining quality, but is very nutrient-poor and acidic. This means that in its natural state it forms a very specific and rare habitat. Due to the fact that bogs are inherently dangerous and are therefore largely undisturbed, there are about 5,500 species of invertebrates (1/5th of the entire British fauna) on Thorne and Hatfield along with the UK's largest carnivorous plant. Unfortunately, this biodiversity is

limited to the conservation areas - the milling fields have been turned into a desert.

Peat milling can only be done when the peat is dry enough to support heavy machinery, generally from Easter until late September. The major distributor is Securicor Omega, although there are many smaller ones. The site is owned by English Nature, but has been leased to peat miners since the 1950s.

Currently the site is awaiting Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status from Europe. If it receives it, all milling will have to stop - after Scotts has gone through an appeal process, defending its statutory rights (and even Human Rights under the new Act) - which could take up to 7 years. Doncaster Council will not withdraw mineral extraction permissions before this, as they say they would be liable for

tens of millions of pounds in compensation.

Local campaigners are fighting a constant rearguard action to try and preserve as much peat depth as we can until Scotts are finally stopped. This means:

- direct action to stop the milling and processing machinery and to slow down distribution
- leafleting garden centres and general media blitzing to stop the public buying peat
- lobbying and demos to stop garden centres selling peat
- lobbying municipal and other commercial peat users to go peat-free
- targeting Scotts' suppliers and customers to limit their involvement in the industry
- direct action at Scotts' offices in the UK and retail outlets in the US, to get them to convert to peat-free production. Scotts already produce a peat-free compost at their processing works.

More info on the campaign from Leeds EF! 0113 262 3536, leedsef@ukf.net or from Friends of the Earth UK. Action pack available, send a large SAE worth 66p to Bog Off Scotts, c/o Cornerstone Resource Centre, 16 Sholebroke Avenue, LEEDS LS7 3HB.



Reviving the traditional sport of digger-diving at Hatfield Moor



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

Rum Deal?

Bacardi have launched a nationwide promotional Bacardi Breezer campaign at football stadia across the country through The ADI Group's Media Division. Bacardi Breezer have opted to sponsor goals and near misses at a number of grounds. Whenever these events occur in a match, the in-stadia LED screen will show a short clip of the advertisement followed by an animated 'goal' or 'miss'. ADI Press release.

And presumably the screen will also flash up a Breezer ad whenever the bladdered fans start taking lumps out of each other?

Vanilla and germ flavour, please

'Ice cream will taste smoother with the addition of a natural antifreeze discovered by Unilever. The company's researchers found the antifreeze in bacterium *Marinomonas protea*, which lives in Antarctic lakes. They shredded and centrifuged the remains to obtain a protein dubbed marinomonin. Unilever is now looking at ways to mass produce the protein.' New Scientist

Mmm yummy! Just like mummy used to make. Or do I mean Lord Haskins. Anyway - what's a few Antarctic lakes when there's fat western couch potato bellies to fill.

School's out for profit



As the government announces more private money in schools, British education is set to become very Logo Friendly. 'Nike's Zoneparcs scheme is backed by the Department of

Education and involves redesigning playgrounds and introducing new sports equipment. "This is not about selling our products to kids in school" says Yvonne Iwaniuk, Nike's communications head. "It is about using the positive aspect of our brand - the fact that it is very aspirational for kids - to encourage better behaviour." Steve Hilton of Good Business agency adds "Nike knows far more about kids than educationalists or government." Financial Times.

Scary - and I bet most teachers wouldn't agree with the last bit.

"Putting you on hold..."

'Time spent waiting for a response on the phone gives companies a chance to dig out information held on client records. Using so-called customer relationship management (CRM) technology, firms can decide whether to pass callers on to a gold-star personalised service, to automated menus, or to put them on hold till they go away. "At last companies are beginning to segment their customers...to reveal which customer groups should be targeted and

which deserve first class attention," a statement from Dimension Data subsidiary Merchants said. "The underlining point is firms cannot afford to serve all customers in the same way because they are simply not worth the same amount" said a spokesman.' BBC News Online.

Apparently the survival-of-the-wealthiest system was inspired by New Labour's manifesto.

Corporate Stress-Fix™

Is your work dull and unrewarding, yet also stressful? Do you dream of a meaningful life? Never mind down-shifting, never mind unions - you need a Corporate Stress-Fix™ - and UK companies are rushing to deliver...

Consignia discover mind control

'The Royal Mail is hoping to restore its reputation by calling in a team of consultants who specialise in bringing "spirituality to the workplace". The UK arm of US management consultancy Corptools will begin work shortly. Corptools ... brand of 'corporate culture transformation' involves asking staff what kind of "love-based values" they

would like to see in their workplace, and what kind of "fear-based values" they could do without.' Financial Times.

Easy. Love based value: keep Royal Mail nationalised. Fear based value to be binned: all capitalist brainwashing schemes.

Virtual Counselling

'Stressed call-centre workers could soon find solace in a computer designed to act as a "guardian angel". Called Angelo, the computer measures heartbeat and sweat levels. The machine detects stress among staff and then it tries to help them get over it.' Financial Times.

And of course, if staff fail to get over

their stress, the computer automatically sacks them.

Serco with a smile

'We still think that having fun is perhaps one of the most important Serco values. Letting our hair down with work colleagues, family and friends has played a substantial part in creating the "Serco magic". At Serco we don't like any opportunity for a party to pass us by.' Serco Website.

Fun loving Serco's services include Australian Navy training (no refugees need apply), UK asylum detention centres, and, coming soon, the British education system. So presumably the biggest ever Serco piss-up was when New Labour got re-elected.

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 500-1500 words long.

Argentines protest at 'austerity' measures

Protests and strikes have rocked Argentina in the light of IMF-ordered reforms which penalise public sector workers. On August 8th, thousands marched in Buenos Aires at the height of a two-day strike which disrupted the civil service, hospitals and transport. The cuts mean state employees' salaries and pensions are being cut by 13%.

Child labour fine for McDonalds

A McDonald's franchise-holder in Surrey has been fined £12,400 after being caught illegally employing ten schoolchildren aged 15 and 16. Not only did the children have no work permits, but they were found to

be working much longer than the legal hours. Campaigns - Prison labour/Mark Barnsley

On Friday 3rd August, activists from the Mark Barnsley campaign blockaded Hepworth Building Supplies in Doncaster to highlight their use of prison labour. The issue has been highlighted by the case of Mark Barnsley, who is currently in solitary confinement for refusing to participate in prison labour for Hepworth, calling instead for the opportunity to further his education.

French PM speaks out for speculation tax

French PM Lionel Jospin has raised a small storm by declaring his support for a tax on international financial speculation - called the Tobin tax after its proposer US economist James Tobin. Plus interesting reactions from UK press.

Basmati rice patent upheld

There have been protests in the Indian parliament and both houses were briefly adjourned after the US Patent and Trademark Office upheld a patent granted to US food company RiceTec which many Indians claim is a 'back door' patent on basmati rice.

20,000 jobs created, thousands of livelihoods destroyed

Tesco has just announced its intention to take on 'up to' (less than) 20 000 workers worldwide in the next year, as it continues in its quest for global uniformity. What Tesco hasn't mentioned is that the livelihoods destroyed as a result of its expansion will far outnumber the jobs created.

www.corporatewatch.org.uk

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Diary October

Tues 9 - Wed 10 Business Association for Sustainable Development (see front page) meeting in Paris. Actions organised, contact Etienne, ecoropa@magic.fr, or Flip, flip@aseed.antenna.nl, +31-20-6682236 or +31-6-17836486 (mobile).

Thurs 11 - Fri 12 TransAtlantic Business Dialogue (TABD) meeting, Stockholm, Sweden. TABD's mission is to 'remove obstacles to trade' between the EU and US. For details of protests planned www.tabd.nu.

Sat 13 March and rally for peace and justice called by CND. Assemble 12 noon in Hyde Park (Marble Arch end). March 1pm. The march takes place on the International Day of Protest to Stop the Militarisation of Space.

Sat 13 - Sun 14 Rising Tide UK national gathering for campaigning against climate change. Bridge 5 Mill, Manchester. Contact Rising Tide UK - 01865 241097, info@risingtide.org.uk.

Tues 16 Worldwide day of action against McDonalds to mark World Food Day. Leaflets £10 for 750 from McLibel Support Campaign / London Greenpeace 5 Caledonian Rd, London, N1 9DX, UK. 0207 713 1269 mclibel@globalnet.co.uk www.mcspotlight.org

Sat 20 No Star Wars. Organising against Bush's National Missile Defence Programme, Conference at University of Westminster 115 New Cavendish Street W1 10am-5pm. Contact London Region CND 0207 607 2302 www.londoncnd.fsnet.co.uk

Sun 21 Mass Sit-down for peace, organised by ARROW (Active Resistance to the Roots Of War) meet 1pm Temple Place, London WC2. Contact ARROW c/o NVRN, 162 Holloway Rd. London N7 8DQ 0845 458 9571

Mon 22 The Big October Blockade - Faslane Scotland, 6pm - 7am <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/cndscot/protest/okblok.html> OKBLOK Action Line: 0141 423 122.

Mon 29 - Fri 9 Nov Climate Change Conference COP7, Marrakech, Morocco. Contact Rising Tide UK - 01865 241097, info@risingtide.org.uk, website www.risingtide.org.uk.

Tues 30 - Thurs 1 Nov. COPEX arms fair, Sandown Racecourse. Contact Campaign Against Arms Trade 020 7281 0297 enquiries@caat.demon.co.uk

Weds 31 Give Nike Hell III Protest against Nike using child and sweated labour. 6pm Nike Tower, Oxford Circus. Contact No Sweat: 07904 431 959 www.nosweat.org.uk

November

Fri 3 Trade Justice Carnival 12:30pm Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London. <http://www.tradejusticemovement.org>

Mon 6 - Mon 13 WTO Shrink or Sink: Week of Action against World Trade Organisation Meeting, Qatar Events are planned in London, Paris, Washington and Geneva alexandra.wandel@foeeurope.org. www.agp.org