



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER CHILLED OUT...

# SchNEWS

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# ICE BURKS!

**Super-cool Iceland, the eco-tourist's wet dream, right? Maybe not for much longer if the Icelandic government has its way.**

You see, they've got a cunning plan to turn the whole country into a heavy industry paradise for all sorts of multinational scum, damming and flooding and generally trashing nature to power up a bunch of giant aluminium smelters and other slight blots on the landscape.

This is not an early April fool - it's already started. The construction of the giant Karahnjukar dam in the Icelandic Highlands - one of Europe's last surviving wildernesses - is well under way. Landsvirkjun (the national power company, a government quango) has a raft of further projects that would see 25% of the entire country dam affected by 2020: some vision.

Karahnjukar and most of Landsvirkjun's future schemes harness glacial rivers fed by Vatnajökull - the biggest non-arctic glacier in the world. This glacier is the heart of a fantastically intricate eco-system: barren red and black Martian landscapes; geo-thermal springs and pools hot enough to take a bath in; rivers banked by deep, springy emerald green moss woven with tiny red and yellow flowers where no-one's ever walked; the glacier's own fantastic ice caves; seal breeding grounds on the black sand deltas to the north. All this will be destabilized and damaged forever if these dam projects are allowed to happen.

An international protest camp this summer aims to halt this war on nature. It's going to be one hell of a struggle since the Icelandic government seems determined to push these projects through, no matter what opposition it faces.

What's going on at Karahnjukar demonstrates the way that government operates. When plans for the mega-project were first submitted to the National Planning Agency (NPA) in 2001 they were rejected because of the "substantial, irreversible, negative environmental impact" the dam would have. All the experts agreed with this verdict (see IRN's report linked below). But the environment minister overturned the NPA's ruling and declared that in her opinion the project was environmentally acceptable - of course she is suitably qualified to decide on environmental issues - she's a physiotherapist! There were a few financial hiccups with banks getting all ethical but Barclays bravely stepped forward with the necessary dosh - even though they'd signed up to the Equator Principles which demand "sound environmental management practices as a financing prerequisite."

Work started in July 2003, with Italian bully-boys Impregilo (construction arm of Fiat, currently charged with corruption in Lesotho and 'financial irregularities' at home) and a terrifying squadron of Caterpillar bulldozers began to claw up and dynamite the fragile sub-arctic tundra. Reindeer, arctic foxes, other small animals and thousands of bird species that lived there fled in fear.

## FROZEN ASSETS

All electricity produced at Karahnjukar is contracted to a massive Alcoa aluminium smelter (being built by Bechtel, due to be operational in 2007) which itself will pollute and ruin Reydarfjordur, a pristine eastern fjord. A Reykjavik court recently ruled that Alcoa's planning permission for this monstrosity isn't valid, but that probably won't stop them as they immediately appealed to the - allegedly - rigged High Court.

Karahnjukar won't benefit Icelanders at all: none of the electricity is destined for the national grid and cos there's little unemployment in the region no Icelander's gonna want a nice healthy job at the smelter thanks.

Yet the cost to the nation is enormous: independent experts say the economy is at risk (see IRN report), it has cost \$1 billion so far and is likely to cost more - the electricity for Alcoa is for a price linked to the changing prices of Aluminium on London Metal Market...in other words no guarantee it'll ever make a profit.

The environment suffers more by the day. They've already blown part of Dimmugljufur - Iceland's Grand Canyon - to smithereens, and if they fill up the reservoir (scheduled 2007), 65.5 square kilometres of pristine wilderness will be completely submerged. This land includes birthing grounds for the majority of Iceland's reindeer and Ramsar 'protected' nesting sites for endangered species such as pink-footed geese, and Gyrfalcon. Sixty waterfalls will be lost as will a range of sediment ledges - judged completely unique in the world by scientists studying global warming - which record 10,000 years of geological and climate change. And this vast projected reservoir would extend right onto the glacier itself, which is breaking up because of global warming. Wouldn't giant icebergs trucking up to the dam be a bit - er - dangerous? Yep. And it gets worse - the dam is being built over a seismic fault!

In 2003, Landsvirkjun's chief, Fridrik Sophusson, was asked what would happen if there was an earthquake under the dam. "It would burst," he smiled calmly. "A catastrophic wall of water would annihilate everyone in Egilsstadir [the nearest town] and

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

**For acting like a baby**

In one of the "smallest" cases of civil disobedience, four Bangladeshi kids have appeared in court this week accused of looting and causing criminal damage. The "potty" four - whose ages range from three months to two years - were released on bail after a brief hearing. The magistrate commented that he was a "bit surprised" to see the kids in court and, in a fit of rationality, promptly suspended the four cops who'd brought the evidence against them.

The case stems from an ongoing land dispute with a neighbour and is likely to be found: "false and fabricated" Wahhhh!

all the neighbouring farms would be swept away." Icelandic Tsunami anyone? "It won't happen," he added smugly. Yet in August 2004 there were continuous earthquakes at Karahnjukar for several days.

Environmentalists also warned that silt residues left by changing water levels round the projected reservoir would dry to a fine dust which the wind would carry onto local farmland. This was dismissed, yet last summer silt left in the wake of unexpected surges in the newly diverted glacial river produced just such devastating dust storms.

But none of this makes any difference: while everyone else in the 'developed world' is busy dismantling dams, Iceland's rulers just can't get enough. There are plans to dam every major glacial river in the country. Rio Tinto Zinc are reportedly salivating over the chance to devastate the North of the country, while Alcan and Century (who've already got smelters near Reykjavik) are keen to expand their deathly shadow in the south.

Ironically, the government - via its tourist board - still invites visitors to enjoy the "unspoilt pure natural beauty" it's hell-bent on destroying! So how do they get away with it? Well, Iceland has a tiny population (290,000) and power is concentrated in the hands of a few very wealthy families who control politics, industry and the media. Scientists, journalists, anyone who asks questions is swiftly discredited and then sacked.

But it's not all bad news and you can even help. A really vigorous and up-for-it grass-roots environmental movement is emerging, determined to stop Icelandic nature being pimped to the highest bidder. It's a David v. Goliath battle and the call is out for international support.

If you are up for peacefully showing your solidarity with some of the most fantastic nature on our planet, check out [www.killingiceland.org](http://www.killingiceland.org) and joining the protest camp summer 2005.

\* An Icelandic activist will be showing films and doing Q&A at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton next Thursday (10th) 6.30 - 8pm [www.irn.org/programs/europe/030530.karahnjukar.pdf](http://www.irn.org/programs/europe/030530.karahnjukar.pdf)

## STRIP SLEAZE

In India tribal Adivasi people are once again facing massive repression as they try to stop a \$1.4 billion monster strip-mine and refinery that promises to displace up to 20,000 people from their ancestral homes, destroying their livelihoods and culture, contaminating food and water sources and obliterating their spiritual sites. Still, who cares about that, what's at stake is the right for us in the West to be able to drink our fizz from a can.

The battle has been raging in the Kashipur region of Orissa, on the east coast of India for the past twelve years. Behind the scheme are Uktal Aluminium International, an alliance between the Indian firm Indal and the Canadian mining giant Alcan, who want to get their hands on one of the world's richest deposits of bauxite - the raw material for aluminium.

A few years back plans had to be shelved after three villagers were killed by police. One company pulled out - but Alcan didn't care, they just bought their shares. Then in November politicians decided that the Alcan mining project was to be launched at any cost and all opposition was to be suppressed. A leaked cabinet document concluded that tribal areas "cannot afford to remain backward for the sake of so-called environmental protection". Six days later, and the police launched a brutal charge on 400 Adivasis, mostly women, who had gathered to try and stop an armed police station being built. 16 people were seriously injured. Since then, platoons of armed police with orders to fire have sealed off the area and banned journalists. Eighteen activists of PSSP, the umbrella organization of Adivasis that is

spearheading the struggle have been arrested and are now in jail without access to bail.

Village teacher Bhagawan Majhi has been fighting the project ever since he was a teenager, and was suspended from his job because of it. He says that most Adivasis just want to be left alone and that strip-mining would desecrate the Baphlimali Hill that is sacred to their tribe. Of course government officials (who will no doubt be getting plenty of backhanders) and Alcan (who of course aren't just thinking about their profits) reckon they are doing this cos they care about the plight of the poor tribal people. They are promising jobs, schools and a health clinic, which, of course, they will need more than ever as Alcan poison their land. Majhi says, "Our village will vanish. What will we do with schools when our homes and rivers will no longer be there? Land is the foundation of our lives. Land gives us food. We are farmers."

Joan Kuyek, head of MiningWatch Canada, also isn't impressed: "Mineral development does not bring with it economic benefit for tribal people." Unsurprisingly the only lasting legacy will 'be poisoned streams and tonnes of caustic soda used for disposing of red mud, a by-product of bauxite refining'.

\* Urgent solidarity action is being asked by the people of Adivasi [www.saanet.org/alcant/intro\\_en.html](http://www.saanet.org/alcant/intro_en.html)

\* To find out more <http://india.indymedia.org>

\* To find out what happens to tribal people who are displaced [www.indiaresource.org/issues/globalization/2004/sterlite.html](http://www.indiaresource.org/issues/globalization/2004/sterlite.html)

## SchNEWS in brief

Late Monday night, a defunct Skoda was dumped at the main gate of **Sainsbury's depot in Merseyside**. Two people locked themselves to it while two others locked on to the side gate. The blockade lasted over 2 hours, costing Sainsbury's about £300,000. This was part of a national campaign to force Sainsbury's to stop selling stuff from animals fed on GM feed. This action followed a similar one in Bristol last week. [www.geneticsaction.org.uk](http://www.geneticsaction.org.uk) \*\* **No rules for the rich** - how tax avoidance is wrecking the global economy. Talk this Saturday (5) with John Christensen of the Tax Justice Network and former economic adviser to the tax haven island of Jersey 10.30 am, French Institute, 17 Queensbury Place, South Kensington, London. [monde-diplo-friends@mondediplo.com](mailto:monde-diplo-friends@mondediplo.com) \*\* There's an **anti-mobile phone mast demo** outside Brighton Town Hall at 3:45 next Thursday (10) [www.queensparkmastaction.co.uk](http://www.queensparkmastaction.co.uk) \*\* **Watching them watching us!** A Public Meeting to launch strategies of resistance to Scotland Yard's campaign of politically motivated harassment, intimidation and surveillance. Next Saturday (12) 2pm, London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1. \*\* Commemorate the **20th anniversary of the Battle of the Beanfield**, Bristol's Kebele Kultural Projekt will be showing 'Operation Solstice' plus the opening night of an exhibition of photos of the Stonehenge Free Festival that runs until 7 April. 0117 939 9469 [www.kebele.org](http://www.kebele.org) \*\* **Shakedown 05** is "a very big one-off non-profit DIY all-night event... probably one of the biggest and best parties that Nottingham has ever seen, to raise awareness of some global issues such as world poverty, climate change and world leading institutions such as the World Bank, IMF

and the G8." next Saturday (12<sup>th</sup>) £5 07910 428 896 [www.m12.org.uk](http://www.m12.org.uk) \*\* **Protest the meeting of the G8 Environment and Development Ministers** in Derby, 17th March. Critical Mass 10am, Derby train station. Street Party - 12 noon, Assembly Rooms. Benefit Gig - 7pm, The Mist, Normanton Road. Plus anti-G8 Frolics. [www.dissent.org.uk](http://www.dissent.org.uk) \*\* **Pots and Pans Noise Demo** on the 15<sup>th</sup> to welcome the G8 International Energy and Environment Ministers Roundtable. Meet 12 noon at The Brewery, 52 Chiswell St, London. 0845 458 8923 [www.risingtide.org.uk](http://www.risingtide.org.uk) \*\* **ARCH** are launching a legal challenge to the Government's plans to put the personal details of every child onto a **national database** (SchNEWS 452). ARCH urgently needs donations to pay court costs - cheques payable to "Action on Rights for Children", 62 Wallwood Road, London E11 1AZ, or via website [www.archrights.org.uk](http://www.archrights.org.uk) \*\* **Anti-ID card demo** outside Brighton Town Hall 3:30pm Thurs 10th. There will also be an Anti-ID card public meeting on March 24<sup>th</sup> at Brighton's Friends Meeting house. \*\* Find out how taxpayers' money is funding the corporate takeover of the **world's water** - and hear from grassroots campaigners who are fighting back. Cardiff 16th, Shrewsbury 17th, Nottingham 18th, Edinburgh 19th, Rochester 20th, Cambridge 21st, London 22nd. 020 7737 6215 email [wdm@wdm.org.uk](mailto:wdm@wdm.org.uk) \*\* **Fundraiser Collective, at The Volks, Madeira Parade, Brighton**. Club night every Wednesday raising money for different causes each month. Weds 9th, all female DJs playing hip hop, breaks, DnB, techno and jungle. Weds 16th Country and Bluegrass night, funds to Dissent! and a womens refuge. [www.funraiser.org.uk](http://www.funraiser.org.uk)

## Tasmanian Devils

The Tasmanian logging company Gunns are trying that age old tactic of silencing your critics by trying to sue them. They are seeking A\$6 million from 20 individuals and groups for "conspiracy to injure Gunns by unlawful means", in other words for protesting and taking direct action. This approach may well backfire on Gunns as over 600 people attended a rally against the charges and more than 7000 people have taken part in a letter writing campaign, and as the McLibel campaign showed - using financial muscle to bully someone can sometimes backfire spectacularly. [www.gunns20.org](http://www.gunns20.org) & [www.corporatewatch.org.uk/news/loggingcompany.htm](http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/news/loggingcompany.htm)

## Inside SchNEWS

Animal Rights activist, Sarah Gisborne, has been sentenced to six and a half years for "conspiracy to cause criminal damage" to eight cars in connection to the campaign against vivisectioners HLS. Write to: Sarah Gisborne LT5393, HMP Holloway, Parkhurst Road, London, N7 0NU. \* Five anti-war activists barricaded themselves into the Irish Embassy in London for almost three hours on Wednesday in solidarity with the five Irish anti-war saboteurs on trial that day in Dublin. All were arrested. [www.warontrial.com](http://www.warontrial.com)

## Wind Up Windrush

Last week four anti-war activists were arrested for disrupting the supposed "lawful" activity of corporate pirates Windrush Communications Ltd, by occupying the entrance to their offices. Windrush organize "Iraq Procurement Conferences" where Iraq's public assets are sold off to private companies. A week of action is planned against the corporate plunder of Iraq from 1-6th April - starting with a Pro-Plunder Party on April 1st outside the offices of Windrush Communications in Old St, London. More info: [www.corporatepirates.gzzzt.net](http://www.corporatepirates.gzzzt.net) 07931337890

## ...and finally...

Paparazzi who turned up to witness a confrontation between fashion designer Serpica Nero and anti-precarity activists got more than they bargained for at this years Milan Fashion Week. Models, all wearing anti-precarity\* slogans, paraded the catwalk, cheered on by the anarchists who had turned up to oppose the show. What next? Hand-woven, hemp balaclavas?

Anarchists, highlighting increasing precarity in our lives, had already stormed the catwalk at a previous Prada show, and threatened the same at Nero's. Journos gathered at Nero's Marquee on the night of her show as police blocked the bridge leading to the marquee. As the activists approached, cops were surprised to see it led by none other than Nero herself, flanked by a posse of models. Waving her official papers allowing the gathering, the cops had to let the self-styled "fashion designer" through, with all her crusty mates. Don't look for it in next months Hello, though. You probably won't find any Nero underpants in Primark (or anywhere else), either.

**SCHNEWS VOCAB WATCH: PRECARITY** - a (take a deep breath now) 'condition of life without predictability or security, generally with regards to an individuals material or psychological welfare. Precarity increases in late-capitalism as nations shift from manufactory to service and information based economies.' Or like casualisation with knobs on. Precarity is the new buzz for anarchists in-the-know, cool cos no one else knows what the fuck you're talking about. See [www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk) for photos of the "fashion show".

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers with frozen features and feeling like ice - it's heartwarming to print and be damned. And, anyway, there's lies, damn lies and statistics... Honest!

## SchNEWS AT TEN MOVIE OUT SOON (HONEST!)

Screening at the Ocean Rooms, Brighton Weds 9th March as part of an eclectic night of music,

visual theatre films, DJs, and loads more from Idiot Savant. Los Albertos playing live. 8pm-late £5/4.50

\* The SchMOVIE will also be playing at the Big Bath Book Swop, at The Bell Hotel, Walcot, nr Bath. 12-6pm [www.wiffle.bathfringe.co.uk](http://www.wiffle.bathfringe.co.uk)

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