



schOUND OFF!

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Finally giving Plymouth and area an independent voice...a chance to really SOUND OFF!

DOES THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE 'CRIME'?

Wot's all this then? This is the very first issue of schOUND OFF!, the local alternative media. Plymouth finally has an independent voice! This news sheet is hoping to be weekly, and on the front you will usually find some international news taken from Brighton newsletter schNEWS (that's where our 'sch' comes from, by the way) and then local (not just Plymouth but the surrounding areas as well) stories on the back. This week has been really exciting on the anti-nukiller front so this front page is dedicated to local issues. If you have any stories, comments, topical cartoons (yes please!) or poems (oh, go on then) we could use please send them in-see the back page for details!

So, this week...

Seven activists went on trial at Plymouth Magistrates Court on the morning of Monday 12th August. They were arrested back in February, and later charged with highway obstruction at the national demonstration against the refitting of a Trident nuclear weapons submarine at Devonport.

The seven, Susan Brackenbury, Richard Holt, Liz Jones, Margaret Jones, Erica Wilson, Jill Wood and Angie Zelter, were charged with wilful obstruction of the highway after they sat down in the roadway and blocked the dockyard's Drake Gate on 3rd February. The demonstration was timed to coincide with the arrival in Devonport for refit of HMS Vanguard, the first of the four British Trident submarines to be commissioned.

The defendants say that Trident is illegal under international law, so their actions, taken as part of a process aimed at decommissioning the illegal weapons system were entirely lawful. Angie Zelter, one of the defendants

decided not to even attend the trial 'as a matter of principle' because of the court's decision not to allow international law to be heard in the case. She said; *"By refusing to look at the serious reasons for our actions at Devonport the magistrate refused to be a human being and we might as well be tried by a computer"*.

There have been several actions in the run up to the trial. On the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima two activists from the Plymouth Trident Ploughshares group hung a banner from the Camel's Head gate declaring 'Scrap Trident' to the staff entering to go to work.

On Friday 9th August the fountain sundial in the centre of Plymouth ran blood red in memory of the people killed in the atom bombing of Nagasaki by the United States after the Japanese had tried to surrender and stop the second world war.

Sandra Leslie of Plymouth Trident Ploughshares added a non toxic food colourant to the water, which was recommended by the RSPB to ensure safety. Sandra spoke about her controversial act, saying,

"Some people might object to the minor clean up costs my protest today has caused. I think that's nothing against the terrible suffering and 72,000 deaths caused by the terrorist attack in Nagasaki in 1945. These things can happen again and we have to remind people the Trident submarine is Britain's way of threatening countries all over the world with that kind of terror".

Banners were also displayed to remember the 72,000 that died. On the 13th August the defendants received a predictable outcome-they were collectively fined and ordered to pay costs, up to £200 per defendant - Drake's Gate is evidently a very expensive place to sit down!

Margret Jones is refusing to pay her fine, preferring to face prison than support a nuclear state.

All the defendants were angered by the refusal of District Judge Evans to allow calling of expert witnesses or to call on international law, or even to hear out the reasons for their action.

Despite this, the defendants continued to make references to nuclear pollution and possible accidents which could occur in Plymouth and Lizzie Jones, a member of Trident Ploughshares, called for individuals to take responsibility for actively resisting nuclear weapons.

It seems that not only is the justice system handing out impropportionate fines to activists but attempting to silence them in court as well.

Were the Devonport 7 made an example of to deter future activists? It doesn't seem to have worked - Sandra Leslie, as a spokesperson for Plymouth Nuclear-Free Coalition (Devonport), said; *"We shall continue to build the campaign here in Plymouth against this crime in our back yard."*

This case demonstrates yet again that there is no justice-just us!

*On the 14th August a public meeting was held at the Welcome Hall in Devonport to inform and discuss the peace camp coming up in November with local residents. There was also a 'Open Surgery' held the next day for one to one discussions.

*To get in touch with Plymouth Trident Ploughshares call Richard on (01503) 250 030

*See www.tridentploughshares.org for information on Plymouth and other Trident Ploughshare groups.

THERE IS NO JUSTICE. . . JUST US!

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SCHOOL RULES.....?

Did you enjoy your school days? The chances that you did are small, and it's not getting any better for today's kids. The day before publication of this issue, thousands of young people received their AS and A2 level results. There's been all sorts of speculation in the corporate press over the increased pass rate this year

(as there was last year). Whatever the results, you can be sure that the students are placed in heavily pressurised environments by their schools who fight over the misleading league tables.

Any form of achievement other than academic success is ignored-the realising of ambitions and the personal or spiritual growth of a student counts for nothing and the courses are often impractical and restricting, offering little or no life experience and no real lifeskills. How can one system fit all children?

Devon Eco-village gets permission!

Steward Community

Woodland (just outside Moretonhampstead, within Dartmoor National Park) has finally been given planning permission after long legal battles.

The community of six (plus a 5 month old baby) have been living in the woodland in sustainable low impact dwellings and working with the land, growing fruit and vegetables and maintaining paths open to the public.

Their application for 'change of use' was originally turned down and there followed a public

enquiry appeal last summer. This was also turned down but the community appealed again and this time were successful.

They are 'overjoyed' at their victory, a temporary five year permission to stay on the land they bought collectively two years ago, but their planning permission does come with several restrictions including no tents or camping on site without permission of Dartmoor National Park Authority!

*To find out more visit their website at www.stewardwood.org

*If you would like to visit the community please call them on (01647) 440 233

*They are holding a party to celebrate on Thursday 20th August 7pm onwards - bring food, (vegan please!) cabaret and song. If you need to stay over please call them first.

GM NEWS:

Hot off the press-

As news breaks it is discovered that the farm scale trials of oil seed rape were contaminated with another strain of GM.

Although 97% of the seeds were indeed herbicide resistant, 3% were found to be antibiotic resistant, giving rise to fears of cross pollination, superweeds and possible antibiotic resistance in animals and perhaps even humans.

Despite these public fears, at present the government is refusing to halt the trials.

It's often been asked if the government is listening to the public - it seems we have our answer.

Plymouth Delivers Message to DEFRA

Sam Regis from Plymouth joined the nationwide convoy at Totnes to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural

Affairs in London on the 24th July. The march, which included hundreds of people from England, Wales and Scotland, some of whom travelled for three days to get there, culminated at DEFRA where people gave their messages about GM crop commercialisation. Sam (along with hundreds of others) delivered her message - a bag of genetically modified maize she pulled up from Dorset.

Dressed as a bumble bee to draw attention to the dangers of cross-contamination, Sam pledged to continue her work in the fields; *"GM crop commercialisation is not in the interests of agriculture, the environment or the people. If they persist in planting genetically modified crops, we will continue to destroy them."*

*A video of the day's happenings plus other genetix action movies is now available from Totnes Genetix Group (ToGG) for a donation of a fiver. (what a bargain!) Call ToGG on (01803) 840 098 for a copy.

And finally....

Hope you enjoyed this first issue! Let us know if you have anything constructive to add-you can write to us at **schOUND OFF!, c/o In Other Words Bookshop, Mutley Plain, Plymouth**, or email to;

schound_off@hotmail.com
Want to distribute **schOUND OFF!** at your workplace, college, school or just amongst your friends?

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This is essentially a one woman show at the moment so any donations of stamps, paper etc would be very much appreciated, as would anyone willing to help out with editing and so on...

BUT it can't be done without the content so get active, get out there, make it happen! Be your own media!

disclaimer-errr...what we really meant to say was 'Shut up! Consume! It's good for you...' but we didn't have room. honest.

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