

schOUND OFF!

plymouth and area direct action news autumn 2002

AGAIN! AGAIN!

Telesubbies take a hammer to Trident!

Dr Margaret Jones, well known Bristol campaigner, and veteran Welsh CND activist Councillor Ray Davies, were today charged in Plymouth Magistrates' Court for their part in the plan for a "Maximum Disarmament" against a hunter-killer submarine in Plymouth harbour.

In the early hours of the morning of the 3rd September, Jones and Davies rowed up the River Tamar in a small dinghy, and entered Devonport dockyard in Plymouth. They took with them hammers and a crowbar to damage sensitive equipment aboard the hunter-killer submarine HMS Tireless. Tireless forms part of the support system for Britain's Trident nuclear weapons.

After cutting their way through four fences the pair were stopped and arrested before they could complete their action. They have both been charged on two counts: 1) with alleged criminal damage to the fences and 2) carrying tools to effect "maximum disarmament" of HMS Tireless.

The submarine (recently in the media for radioactive leaks in Gibraltar) was due to finish her refit and to return to active service later that day.

Jones and Davies were remanded to be brought before

Plymouth Magistrates' Court, but released at three p.m, just after HMS Tireless sailed from Devonport.

Jones and Davies have opted for a jury trial in the Crown Court. The committal hearing will be on 31st October.

Jones and Davies are members of the "Telesubbies" affinity group of Trident Ploughshares, an organisation dedicated to safely, non-violently and accountably disarming Britain's nuclear weapons, in accordance with international law.

"Trident represents a threat to us, as much as to the rest of the world," say Davies and Jones.

"We undertook to disable part of the support system for this terrible weapon, because our government refuses to disarm it for us. They are the terrorists."

The pair carried with them a banner that read; 'END TERRORIST NUCLEAR WEAPONS'.

The pair were prompted to take their action now, due to the fact that Britain has threatened to use, and may actually use, nuclear weapons in any attack on Iraq.

To find out more visit www.tridentploughshares.org

Sam Regis is at it again!

Local lass Sam Regis was on the GM case again, this time in Hilton, Dorset. Fourteen people were arrested for 'criminal damage' and aggravated trespass when a group of fifty or more ordinary people met to remove an illegal public nuisance - a farmscale trial of GM oilseed rape - one of at least 14 where an unauthorised release of antibiotic-resistant rape has been found.

Those taking responsible and reasonable action in an attempt to decontaminate the site were promptly arrested. Up to forty police officers, four vans, six cars, police dogs, and a



helicopter attended the demonstration that had hastily been organised in reaction to the contamination news. Those people attending included an ex-genetist, a local organic farmer and a local

councillor. A spray test carried out earlier in the summer had confirmed which side of the field was genetically modified and the plants removed were carefully bagged up to be left for Bayer or DEFRA to dispose of.

The blunder by biotech company Aventis (now owned by

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German chemical giant Bayer), has resulted in at least 25 of the farmscale trials since 1999 being planted with almost 3% of the unapproved seeds containing an antibiotic resistant marker gene. Aventis was first informed of the problem in June and quick and decisive action at that time could have removed the threat prior to pollination. However Aventis did not inform the government until a few days ago.

The government quickly announced that it would suspend the planting of the final trials (which were due to be sown next week) until the purity of the seed could be assured. However while they admit the failure is a significant one and is damaging to the credibility of the farmscale evaluations, they continue to resist calls to abandon the final phase of the trial.

One of the protesters, Sam Regis said;

"How can we trust the biotech industry with the future of our food when they can't even run a experiment safely? When the government chooses to represent the interests of industry over those of the people, we have a duty to remove whatever we can of these illegally planted GM crops. By doing so we hope to reduce the risk that the antibiotic resistant trait will be taken up by other organisms."

Local mum Claire Taylor said:
"These trials aren't about establishing the safety of GM crops, they don't examine the creation of herbicide-resistant 'superweeds', or the effect of an incompetent and unpredictable biotechnology industry on our agriculture. They're an amateurish investigation into the effect of the herbicide on insects."

What will it take for the government to admit that they're a threat which must be immediately abandoned? We must start to limit the damage now by cancelling all further planting and banning the growing of related species on land which has contained these antibiotic resistant crops."

Bill Posters, from Weymouth said;

"The trials are widely recognised as a farce - a waste of time and money and an unnecessary risk to our environment. They should be abandoned. Any information required about the effects of growing GM crops can be obtained by looking to the US, and Canada, were they have been grown commercially for several years.

These real life situations show that in practice, growing GM increases the use of chemical herbicides, creates and spreads 'superweeds', and has failed to provided the promised economic returns for farmers."

Want to get involved? Call ToGG on (01803) 840 098 for upcoming Genetix actions and events!

Countryside Alliance hits Plymouth - and meets more sabs than hunters

The Countryside Alliance turned up in Plymouth city centre in August to try and gather support for their ehem, cause, but were swamped by anti-hunt protesters from the Plymouth Hunt Sabs, the RSPCA, League against Cruel Sports and

members of the public who queued to sign the anti-hunt petition while the Countryside Alliance's posh display trailer looked lonely.

The Countryside Alliance did manage to drum up some local news coverage though, but this as well was 'sabbed' as even the cameras couldn't ignore the huge anti-hunt presence.

And finally... Plymouth Home Educators get hassle from bored LEA

Before the summer break, a home educating family in Plymouth were taken to court, for not satisfying the Plymouth Local Education Authority (LEA) that their methods were satisfactory.

It is perfectly legal to educate children at home, the law states that children can be educated by attendance at school "or otherwise".

An increasing number of families are choosing alternatives to school attendance, due to increasing exam pressure, bullying, or just wanting to let children enjoy life outside an institution.

Luckily, legal help has been given to the family by Education Otherwise, the national home educating network. The family are hoping that the court case will be dropped, so they will be free to continue with their lives.

Another Plymouth family has had their child-centred approach accepted by the LEA. It all seems to depend on what mood the bureaucrats are in on the day they visit !!

QUESTION EVERYTHING!