

Corporate Watch

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Microsoft

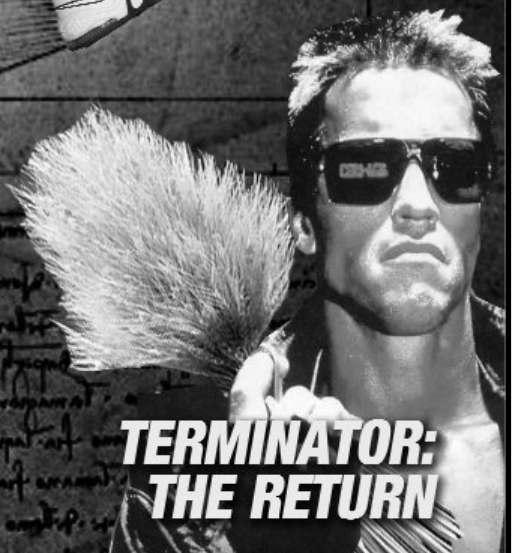
CORPORATE TECHNOLOGIES

SCIENCE - IN WHOSE SERVICE?

**GEEKS
WITH
GUNS**

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A NEUTRAL, 'TECHNOLOGY', ONLY ACTUAL, EXISTING, TECHNOLOGIES. IN THIS ISSUE WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH SUCH DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN SHAPED, AND ARE BEING USED, BY CORPORATIONS

**TERMINATOR:
THE RETURN**



GEEKS WITH GUNS

QinetiQ - The modern technology corporation

QinetiQ's website describes the company as 'Europe's largest technology research company'. The company's website stresses its 'technology rich services and solutions', how it 'operate[s] at the leading edge of technology' and 'gives customers access to the output of 50 years of national investment at the forefront of technology'. But QinetiQ also demonstrates exactly what its state and corporate backers mean by 'technology' - and what they think technology is for.

Most of QinetiQ's work is still based on military applications - weapons, guidance systems, military aircraft technology etc. From this, it branches out into surveillance and security technologies (including some of the technologies being considered for use in ID cards), communications and high-tech materials, including nanotechnology and 'energetic materials' (i.e. explosives) among other areas.. This is cutting-edge technology as our society's political and corporate leaders currently see it - even where it is not arms-based, it is capital-intensive, centralised, facilitates state or corporate control, and is overwhelmingly irrelevant to the most crucial problems facing our planet.

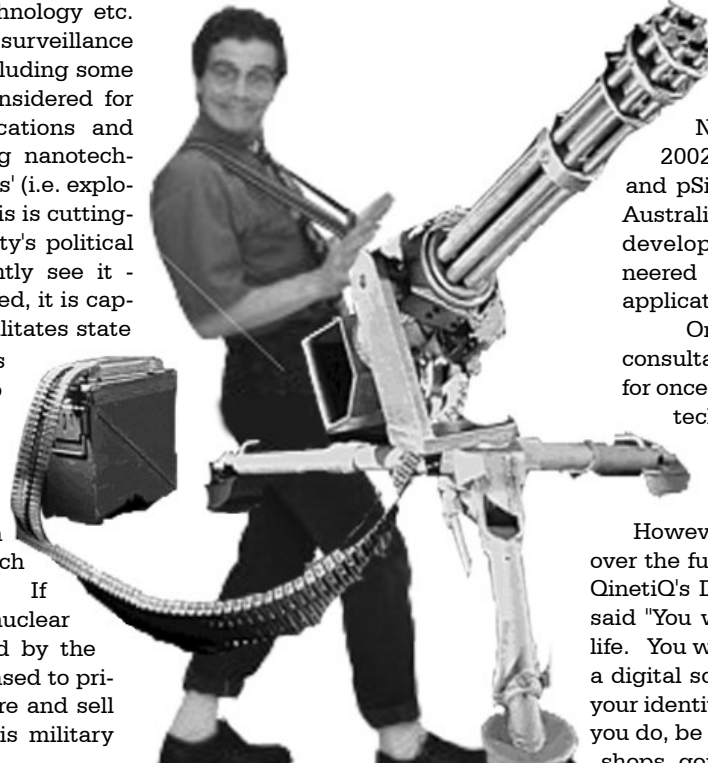
The QinetiQ approach views state-funded military research as a starting point, out of which come military technologies. If they are too sensitive (e.g. nuclear weapons) they are developed by the state, otherwise they are licensed to private companies to manufacture and sell back to the state. Out of this military research come by-products with civilian applications - so-called 'dual-use technologies' - which are similarly licensed to the private sector to profit from.

This approach thus assumes that:

-funding military research is a proper state activity

THE CARLYLE GROUP

The Carlyle Group is a massive (\$24bn capital) US-based investment firm with interests ranging from energy to healthcare to media to defence. It is most noted by campaigners for its military interests and its close links with political power. Current and past executives include former UK Prime Minister John Major, former US President George Bush Sr and former US Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci.



-it is right to devote a high proportion of technological research resources to military ends

-the profits of research belong in the private sector, even where it was publicly-funded

-civilian research is secondary to military in the state's priorities

-spin-offs from military projects are an acceptable means of developing civilian technologies

-research is a self-propelling process producing morally-neutral 'discoveries', and that any problems should be dealt with after the fact

Specific Technologies

QinetiQ is one of the UK's nanotechnology developers. Its subsidiary QinetiQ

Nanomaterials Ltd, founded in 2002, is producing nanoparticles, and pSiMedica Ltd (a partnership with Australian-based pSiVida) is involved in developing 'biosilicon', a nano-engineered material with possible medical applications

On ID cards, QinetiQ, in its role as consultant to the government, does not, for once, seem to be backing the highest-tech option. The company is arguing for barcoded or memory-stick cards rather than the government's favoured biometrics.

However, this is not due to any qualms over the fundamental concept. Neil Fisher, QinetiQ's Director of Security Services, has said "You will want this to be part of your life. You will want, in what's fast becoming a digital society, to be able to authenticate your identity almost for any transaction that you do, be it going to the bank, going to the shops, going to the airport."

Shifts in the military-industrial complex

The 'military-industrial complex' is the coalition of interests that develops between the armed forces, government bureaucracy and the private companies that benefit from military contracts. Since the coining of this phrase, by former US President Eisenhower, many have viewed this complex as an anti-democratic force, skewing government policy towards militaristic ends for the benefit of particular companies, or subsections of government and the military. In this context, the privatisation of a company like QinetiQ represents a shift in the balance of power in the military-industrial complex - towards increasing the private sector's influence over the state, over military policy and over technology development.

QINETIQ - HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

QinetiQ was formed in July 2001 when the Ministry of Defence (MoD) split its Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) in two. The smaller portion of DERA, which engaged with the more 'sensitive' military research, including running Porton Down, was rebranded DSTL and remains part of the MoD. The larger part of DERA, including most of the MoD's non-nuclear testing and evaluation establishments, was renamed QinetiQ and prepared for privatisation. The company became a public private partnership in 2002 with the purchase of a stake by US based private equity company the Carlyle Group. QinetiQ is now, 56% owned by the MoD, 31% owned by the Carlyle Group, 13% owned by QinetiQ employees. Summer of 2005 - it was announced that QinetiQ is to be floated on the stock market - early estimates value the company at around £1bn. Executives from the Carlyle Group and QinetiQ are likely to make around £300m and £145m respectively from the sale of shares, which may have been undervalued at the first stage of privatisation.

TERMINATOR: THE RETURN

Terminator technology is not yesterday's news - it is a serious and immediate threat to crop diversity and food sovereignty worldwide. Governments are drafting proposals to permit the field-testing and commercialisation of Terminator seeds. The International Seed Federation now openly endorses Terminator and is working hand-in-hand with industry-friendly governments to dismantle the United Nations' de facto moratorium. An all-out ban is the only defence against suicide seeds.

WHAT IS TERMINATOR?

Terminator technology refers to plants that have been genetically modified to give sterile seeds when harvested. Terminator technology was initially developed by the multinational seed/agrochemical industry and the US government to prevent farmers from re-planting harvested seed and to maximise seed industry profits. Terminator has not yet been commercialised or field-tested, although trials are currently being conducted in greenhouses in the US.

Genetic Use Restriction Technology (GURTs) is the 'official' term used by the United Nations and the scientific community to refer to Terminator. GURTs is a broad term that refers to the use of an external chemical inducer to control the expression of a plant's genetic trait. GURTs is often used as a synonym for genetic seed sterilisation or Terminator technology.

WHY IS TERMINATOR A PROBLEM?

Over 1.4 billion people, primarily small-scale farming families in the developing world, depend on farm-saved seed as their primary seed source. Terminator seeds will force dependence on external seed sources and disrupt local and indigenous peoples' seed exchange practices, as well as the age-old practice of farmer selection and breeding - the foundation for local seed security. If Terminator is commercialised, seed sterility is likely to be incorporated in all genetically modified plants, because seed sterility secures a much stronger monopoly than patents. Unlike patents, there's no expiration date, no exemption for plant breeders, and no need for lawyers.

WHO OWNS TERMINATOR?

The US Department of Agriculture and Delta & Pine-Land, the world's seventh largest seed company, jointly hold three patents on Terminator technology. Syngenta, DuPont, BASF and Monsanto are among the other big companies that have won patents. Syngenta won its most recent US patent on Terminator technology in March 2004. A Delta & Pine Land representative is now travelling worldwide to promote his company's Terminator technology.

TERMINATOR IS NOT A BIO SAFETY ISSUE

The multinational seed industry is waging a public relations campaign to promote Terminator technology as a way to contain unwanted gene flow from GM plants, particularly from new products being developed, like GM trees and plants modified to produce drugs and industrial chemicals. Industry argues that engineered sterility offers a built-in safety feature for GM plants, because if genes from a Terminator crop cross-pollinate with related plants nearby, the seed produced from unwanted pollination will not germinate. Escaped genes from GM plants are causing genetic contamination and pose threats to agricultural biodiversity and the livelihoods of farmers - especially in centres of crop genetic diversity. For example, studies confirm that DNA from GM maize has contaminated traditional maize grown by indigenous farmers in Mexico. The very companies whose GM seeds are causing unwanted

contamination are now suggesting that society accept a new and untested technology to contain genetic pollution. If GM seeds are unsafe they should not be used. Most importantly, food security for small-scale farmers must not be sacrificed to solve the industry's genetic pollution problem.

WHAT IMPACT WILL TERMINATOR SEEDS HAVE ON SMALL-SCALE FARMERS?

Genetically modified Terminator seeds are not relevant to the needs of small-scale farmers, but that does not mean farmers will not find Terminator seeds in their fields if they are commercialised. If imported grain contains Terminator genes, and farmers unknowingly plant it as seed, it would not germinate. Similarly, farmers who depend on humanitarian food aid risk devastating crop loss if they unknowingly use food aid grain containing Terminator genes as seed.

INTERNATIONAL MORATORIUM

In 2000 the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recommended that governments do not field-test or commercialize genetic seed sterilisation technologies - creating a de facto international moratorium. However, in February 2005 a memo revealed that the Canadian government was prepared to allow field-testing and commercialisation. This was blocked, but the moratorium on Terminator is now under attack.

There are precedents for national bans. In 2005 the government of Brazil passed a law that prohibits the use, sale, registration, patenting and licensing of Terminator technology. The Indian government banned the registration of Terminator seeds in 2001. On 23-27 January 2006, the CBD's Working Group on Article 8(j) will meet in Spain and recommend action on Terminator to the biennial CBD meeting (COP8) in Brazil, March 20-31 2006, where governments will have an opportunity to ban Terminator once and for all.

More info:

www.banterminator.org



THE UK NANOTECH INDUSTRY

The first generation of commercial nanotechnology companies - those whose business is based on manufactured nanoparticles - is already with us. Here is a quick overview of the cast of characters that make up this first wave of the nanotechnology industry in the UK.

Ivory tower tech-heads -- The university spin out company

As state funding for academia decreases and universities seek other ways of bringing in revenue, many are either licensing or selling the results of academic research to private companies, or are setting up their own companies to cash in on academic research discoveries. UK examples of nano spin out companies include Metal Nanopowders Ltd (University of Birmingham); Nanoco (University of Manchester); and Oxonica (University of Oxford).

Oxonica

Oxonica is the UK's most prominent university spin out nanotech company. It was set up to find commercial applications for nanotech research at Oxford University, and this summer became the first pure-play UK nanotech company to be floated on the stock exchange. Oxonica designs and markets its products, leaving manufacture to be done under license by other companies. Its main products are fuel additives (Envirox as used by Stagecoach buses) and sunscreen ingredients (as used by Boots).

Massively tiny and extremely huge The chemicals company

Another major player in UK Nano plc is the chemicals industry, which, given its capacity for manufacturing bulk quantities of highly specialised chemicals, has been able to step seamlessly into the new world of making nanomaterials. Examples include UK based multinationals such as ICI/Uniqema, Elementis and Johnson Matthey, as well as smaller players like Thomas Swann and Co.

Thomas Swann and Co.

County Durham speciality chemicals company Thomas Swann and Co (in conjunction with Cambridge University), has set itself up as one of the only commercial carbon nanotube manufacturer in the UK.

Hardly here at all yet -- The phantom nano company

Looking through a directory of the UK nano industry reveals some companies which, on closer examination, consist of only a website, a single sales representative and a mobile phone number, and turn out to be just the UK sales office of foreign nano companies trying to make it big in the UK and Europe. Examples include JR Nanotech and Guangzhou Heji Trade Co, Ltd.

JR Nanotech

JR Nanotech was set up to market nanomaterials products made in Korea and China. The company's main business is in products with a silver nanoparticle anti-bacterial finish, anything from nano socks to nano sanitary towels to nano tupperware.

QinetiQ

Bomb making boffins - The military industrial company It's not just academic research in universities that is having to stand on its own two feet. So too does military research.

QinetiQ Nanomaterials

QinetiQ Nanomaterials is a wholly owned subsidiary of QinetiQ, the partly privatised wing of the Ministry of Defence research agency (see QinetiQ article, page 3). By cashing in on the MoD's research infrastructure and buying in key manufacturing technology, QinetiQ nanomaterials has established itself as one of Europe's leading manufacturers of metal nanoparticles. Its products can be used for anything from 'energetic materials' (aka explosives), to ingredients for cosmetics, to fuel catalysts.

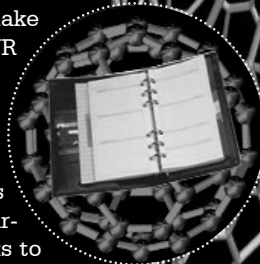
QinetiQ's other venture into nanotechnology is its investment in Australian nanotech company pSiVida, which is working on medical applications of nano-structured 'Biosilicon' (a technology initially developed by QinetiQ).

Serving up the nano products -- The nano delivery company

Right at the other end of the spectrum of the nano industry from the design and manufacture of nanoparticles are the companies which market and sell nanotech based products. These companies will generally have little to do with nanotechnology but are the sharp end of how the public will encounter nanotechnology. In the UK these companies range from cosmetics companies including Boots, Green People and The Body Shop, to clothing companies like GAP, Regatta, Levis and Marks and Spencer, to glass company Pilkington.

Boots

The Boots Soltan sunscreen range contains UV filters based on nanoparticle titanium dioxide. The sunscreens are based on a product called Optisol designed by Oxonica whose active ingredient is manufactured in Belgian company Umicore



CORPORATE T

It is a mistake to presume that technology is in itself neutral and be

The current state of technology is not a naturally occurring phenomenon, but an effect and a reinforcement of existing power structures, meaning that changing power structures and changes to technologies go hand in hand. For one thing, there is no such thing as an abstract, neutral 'technology', only existing, actual 'technologies'. These always interact with power and social structures, and usually act to support the status quo - corporate power.

Corporations, by controlling research and development, automatically influence which of these technologies are to succeed. The dominance and structure of corporations, along with the search for profit, encourage particular forms of technological development.

In order to reduce wages, companies push technologies which replace labour with machinery. A side-effect of this tendency is that technology comes to be identified, in the popular imagination, with

machines or goods which do work previously done by humans. Innovations which work in the opposite direction - such as those elements of organic agriculture which replace chemicals with labour - fail to be identified as technologies at all and are seen as regressive.

Corporate technology also favours the desires of the rich (who are able to pay) over the needs of the poor (who cannot pay). For example, in modern medical research, far more is spent on non-fatal 'lifestyle' conditions of the rich, such as baldness or impotence, than on serious or lethal diseases, such as malaria or dengue fever, which mainly affect the poor.

Technologies which increase the opportunity for centralised control - e.g. standardised machinery, monitoring of workers - are also favoured.

Technological development is not inevitably pro-status quo - sometimes it can undermine existing power structures. For example, contraception has been important in improving the position of women in some societies and has consequently weakened institutions based on male power. Similarly, some aspects of the internet have undermined previously existing hierarchies, particularly by increasing access to information. However, more often, technological developments strengthen one part of a power structure over another, as, for example, the British industrial revolution strengthened manufacturing interests

Whatever one's opinions of nuclear power as a practical means of electricity generation, it is inherently incompatible with a locally-organised, small-scale, pacifist, ecological model of society.

Likewise, mechanised, chemically-aided agriculture can only exist where farmers have cash for capital inputs, have large enough holdings to make these fixed investments worthwhile, and where they produce more for sale than home consumption. It is not possible in societies based on high levels of self-sufficiency and a non-cash economy. Such communities have experienced the introduction of techno-agriculture - usually from above, by a government or a

The issue of technology is, in part, a question of values. The dominant position is currently held by those who might broadly be described as technological optimists.

The 'optimist' position is that

- The general direction of technological development is right and positive
- The drawbacks and risks of technology are outweighed by the benefits
- Further technological progress will compensate those who have lost out in earlier stages of the process
- Progress will rectify the problems caused by existing technologies
- Optimists basically see technology as politically neutral and, more often than not, historically inevitable

'Human progress is being impeded by the deluded belief that the Earth's environment has some mysterious intrinsic value, and that we have a moral obligation to protect it... To rein ourselves in, to conform to the imagined needs of a mindless aggregate of flora and fauna, is a tragic waste of potential.'

'The marks of human progress', Sandy Starr, *Spiked*

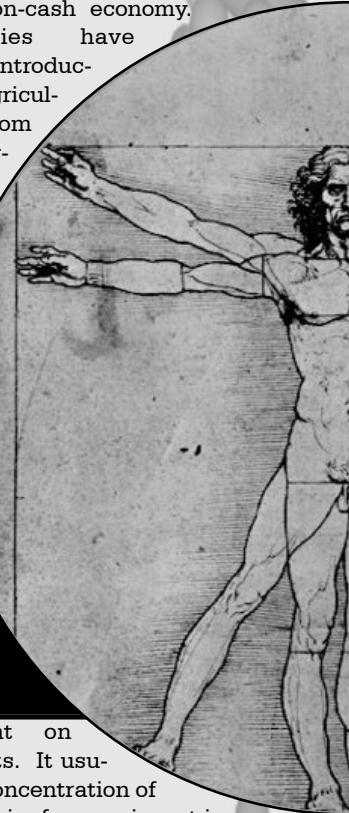
while weakening landowners.

Technologies both reflect and reinforce existing political conditions of control and organisation. Certain technologies can be seen to characterise our current society, run by powerful states and corporations. One example is nuclear power. It requires very large-scale, hierarchical and strictly-controlled organisation. It is based on mining of a scarce natural resource (uranium), a vast research and education budget - and armed security.

A society using nuclear power must include these political and social elements just to maintain the technology.

landowner bent on maximising profits. It usually results in a concentration of land ownership; big farmers invest in expensive machinery, start to buy up the smaller ones, and become the employers of the former small farmers, who are forced into wage labour.

Most modern technologies are fostered by the pursuit of economic growth and financial and productive 'efficiency'. This encourages technologies which exploit natural resources, and produce external costs to society (such as pollution), rather than internal costs to the producer (such as paying for skilled labour). Since the world is being shaped to the wishes of the corporate elite, humans and the natural environment are required to



TECHNOLOGIES

becomes political only as a result of how it is used and implemented.

adapt to technology - such as making workers suit the pace of the machine, and crops suit the mechanical harvester - rather than concentrating on developing new techniques that suit society and the environment.

The pursuit of economic growth leads to the creation of manufactured needs -- new products which were previously undreamt-of become 'necessities'. Technology feeds corporate profit in a variety of ways: the purely novel product (think of the billions of pounds made in the mobile phone industry in the last ten years); the new use of an existing resource (the thousands of uses for crude oil devel-

- genetic information (including the genomes of whole species)
- nano-sized particles of pre-existing chemicals
all of which have been deemed 'ownable' and licensed, patented and 'enclosed'.

In the relationship between technology and politics, the role of the state is crucial. The state functions as an enabler of technologies (e.g. by distributing research funding), as their protector (e.g. in enforcing patents and other property rights), and as their beneficiary. Military technologies, while increasingly produced in the private sector, are mostly used by governments. Developments in surveillance, statistics and IT all permit ever-increasing levels of state control. This in

place.

Priorities for - even publicly-funded - technology research are dictated by crude goals of economic growth, looking to assumed benefits, with little view to the wider social costs and impacts. New technologies are often described as 'emerging', as if they were inevitable; this ignores the role of the state and corporations in shaping these technologies in the 'upstream' stages. Behind the state's pro-technology approach is a top-down view of society - the technologists know best and other people have to deal with what they are given.

A better approach could be to consider the potential impacts of technologies before they are developed, let alone commercially available. This would give people the possibility of stopping undesirable develop-

We present an alternative to the optimist position by assuming that technology is political.

This 'technological sceptic' approach argues that:

- *Technological progress is a flawed concept*
- *The current direction of technological development, dictated by the existing structures of corporations and states, is wrong*
- *The balance between costs and benefits to society from a given technology is often neutral or negative*
- *The vision that there will always be technological solutions to social problems -- themselves often caused by earlier technological developments - is a dangerous illusion: it is more important to address the political and social causes of those problems.*

oped since the nineteenth century); the opening up of new resources (as when developments in shipbuilding and navigation in Europe made colonialism possible). In each case, technology makes new areas available for economic exploitation, enabling 'growth'.

One aspect of corporate technologies has been their tendency to increase the process of enclosure. Historically, enclosure refers to the takeovers of commonly-owned grazing and gathering land in Britain by rich landowners in the early modern period. The concept has been extended to:

- water resources
- raw materials
- radio frequencies
- the air - flight paths

turn benefits corporations, as the providers of technological hardware and as partners in the power structure of the state.

At the same time, the state is generally the main agent responsible for the regulation of technology. State regulation and promotion of technology is, however, heavily dominated by representatives of corporations. They hold seats on the Research Councils which allocate academic funding and on most consultative bodies. At present, regulation of new technologies is almost always a case of damage limitation after the fact, and usually only happens in response to pressure from outside, as in the case of GM crops. There is a significant lack of strategic thought on the development of technology. Only a very few areas, such as human embryology or biological and chemical weapons research, have any prior restrictions or consultations in

ments and allow much more strategic input into the direction of technological research.

Technology is political, therefore it should be democratic. It confers power, therefore it must be controlled equitably to ensure justice. At present, decisions on technological development are made almost entirely by those who stand to benefit from further progress in the current direction. Only by involving everyone affected by a technology in its development and use can society determine what is really beneficial as opposed to merely 'efficient'. Such a development both requires and leads to changes in society's power structures.

For further information:
See Corporate Watch's Corporate Technologies Research Project
www.corporatewatch.org.uk

UP THE INJUNCTION

Since coming to power, it would appear that New Labour has a terrible fear of any form of protest, due to the number of laws and changes it keeps bringing in with regard to public order situations. Some of these laws are fairly straightforward, to criminalise various popular activities such as office occupations or Parliament Square demos.

Others seek to suppress successful campaigns such as Save the Newchurch Guinea Pigs. Several have the purpose of giving the police much wider powers of arrest to suppress protest on the day without necessarily ending up with mass charges. Many increase the punishments available to the courts for various actions.

A number of these laws are very dubious in nature, and will probably be narrowed down in the appeals courts. However, there is a more worrying trend - to confuse civil and criminal law.

At first this may seem simply a semantic point, but for protesters it has consequences. For instance, acts of 'tort', such as causing a public nuisance, or anything normally dealt with by civil courts, are slowly being lumped in with criminal actions. The recent Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (SOCA) has opened the door to this. It begins by focusing on the animal rights movement, but by criminalising action which interferes with commercial contracts (e.g. those related to animal research organisations) the door is open for future versions aimed at other protest movements. This so called 'functional creep' is already happening with anti-terror legislation. Though designed to stop the likes of Al Qaeda and the IRA, it is more likely to be found being used against people exercising their human right to protest.

One strand of this push to crush protest is already well under way: that of using the civil courts to clamp down on individuals and groups. Following the success of the McLibel case, companies grew very hesitant to take out private prosecutions against campaigners, fearing public backlash and the risk of long court cases.

This trend is being reversed using the Protection From Harassment Act 1997, AKA the anti-stalking law. The government, in collusion with a particular lawyer - Timothy Lawson-Cruttenden - is seeking to identify protest with harassment. The act can then be used to create injunctions, legal orders that put draconian limits on protesters' rights

(e.g. banning them from certain areas, from gathering in groups over a certain number, etc.)

In the worst case (for example, to protect property developers Emerson), whole chunks of towns have been declared out of bounds for animal rights activists. These injunctions are justified by referring to past illegal acts, but the court is asked to penalise legitimate protest instead. It is a dubious approach, but because of the incessant demonisation of the animal rights movement in mainstream media, and other dirty tricks, judges have seen fit to grant the injunctions. The police have also been cooperating closely with the lawyers and companies as it makes life much easier for them: instead of having to find you guilty of an actual crime, they can now simply say that you are breaching an injunction, which is the offense of contempt of court, with a maximum penalty of years in prison.

Lawson-Cruttenden describe themselves as 'the market leader in obtaining ground breaking injunctions on behalf of individuals and corporations who have been the subject of harassment by direct action protest groups.' (<http://www.lawson-cruttenden.co.uk/index.html>).

Recently the lawyers have got ambitious and started taking on non-animal rights groups, in particular the campaign against arms manufacturer Edo in Brighton; Smash Edo, a local campaign, got served with one of the injunctions. The result was a public outcry and a case set to challenge both the legitimacy of the war and the injunctions themselves. Edo has got both a lot of bad press and a very weak injunction, while actually boosting the numbers of people protesting against it.

As with the McLibel case, when activists stand up and take the battle to the company in the courts, there is much scope to turn the tables. Huntingdon Life Sciences and Edo have both spent significant amounts of money on injunc-



tions against protests, yet it is hard to see just what value they have got. The Edo trial in November promises to be a very interesting showdown on many issues.

On October 23rd the Freedom To Protest Conference is taking place in London, 11am - 5pm.

Open to all, free of charge, the aim is to bring campaigners from every progressive movement together to discuss the current level of oppressive laws and what we can do about them.

For more information see www.freedomtoprotest.org.uk, or come along on the day to The Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Rd, London N7.

Corporate Watch is a supporting group of the Conference.



CAN'T SEE THE EMISSIONS THROUGH THE TREES

It's tempting to think that we can all continue to live our high-consumption lifestyles, and climate change will go away if we just stick a bit of cash in the right direction. Keep your fingers crossed, someone will invent the technofix to save all our skins. We hope. This is certainly the response encouraged by The CarbonNeutral Company (formerly Future Forests) and Climate Care, the two UK companies pioneering carbon offsetting, the practice of planting trees or funding energy efficiency projects to 'neutralise' the burning of fossil fuels.

Future Forests, rock legend has it, was first conceived of around Joe Strummer's campfire at Glastonbury 1997. The Strummer/Glastonbury connection gave the company the kudos to break into the mainstream. Strummer's tree plantation, 'Rebel Woods', is the first of many 'celebrity forests'. You can now also dedicate a tree in the Atomic Kitten forest, or help offset the greenhouse gas emissions of the Super Furry Animals. But, as Geldof's performance at the G8 proved, you can't trust a rock star to have a political opinion on your behalf. The late rock legend may have slammed popstars for 'turning rebellion into money', but as the man who sold a Clash song to a Levi's advert it should come as no surprise that his solutions to climate change were somewhat less than revolutionary.

With its re-brand as The CarbonNeutral Company, Future Forests is shedding its roots and going for the big money to be

made from helping businesses to 'fully understand the opportunities, as well as the risks, presented by carbon emissions', through its carbon consulting, riskmanagement and marketing communications work.green image on the cheap.

British Airways announced in September 2005 that customers booking through its website would be invited to make their flights 'climate neutral' with Climate Care. By putting the onus on the consumer, BA neatly avoids any obligation or cost for the emissions from its flights, yet gains PR benefits. At the same time the aviation industry in the UK receives a £9 billion a year tax break, and continues to lobby against taxes on aviation fuel, and for airport expansion.

Honda is offering its buyers one month's free carbon offset through The CarbonNeutral Company. But what is



"You know if money did grow on trees, I might be more sympathetic to the environmental movement."

one month's 'offset' in comparison to the emissions over the lifespan of the car? What benefit to the climate is there in painting a car company as a market leader in environmental protection?

Planting trees and energy efficiency are important things to do in themselves, but the trouble with linking them to offset programmes is that their positive impact is cancelled out by justifying and condoning a negative one, implying that we can consume at current rates guilt free as long as we have the money to salve our consciences, which takes us no further forward in reducing emissions. If anything, it takes us backwards, as corporations are able to ride on the image boost of appearing greener.

DUBIOUS 'CARBON - NEUTRAL' CLAIMS

'Carbon neutral' implies that an exact estimation of both carbon emitted and carbon locked up (or 'sequestered'), is possible and verifiable. It also implies that the carbon sequestered in trees is equivalent to the coal/gas carbon extracted from deep in the earth.

The first of these assumptions is highly contested; and the second is just plain wrong. Claiming that carbon stored by trees is safely locked away, as it was under the earth, is simply not true. Carbon in trees is part of the active carbon pool, and moves freely between the forests, oceans and air, whereas fossil carbon is from a very inert underground carbon pool and once released cannot return to it for millennia. Cambridge landscape historian Oliver Rackham described the idea of telling people to plant trees as carbon sinks as having all the practical effect of drinking more water to keep down rising sea levels. Even if this was a scientifically credible solution, we would have to plant an area

of new trees the size of Devon and Cornwall every year and maintain them forever if we were to 'neutralise' all UK carbon emissions.

It is questionable how much any of these schemes contribute. 'You have to be able to calculate exactly how much of an improvement over "business as usual" you're making,' comments Larry Lohmann of The Corner House. 'But there are huge disputes raging over these calculations.' For example, to buy the 'carbon rights' in a tree the companies expect only to pay a small portion of the £5 cost of planting and maintaining it. So, can customers be confident that their tree would not have been planted without 'offset' money?

FEEDING OUR CHILDREN THE CORPORATE WAY

Jamie Oliver's TV series of early 2005 drew people's attention to the importance of school meals. Even though Jamie, as 'the face of Sainsbury,' is no enemy of corporate influence in food production and health, it is true that low spending on ingredients and labour by the private companies that run school dinners has a major impact on children's health.

Since then, some individual schools have gone back to providing in-house catering, due to schools being given greater autonomy to opt out of local education authorities' (LEA) catering contracts. But the key word here is 'individual.' With attention focused on specific schools and schemes, the wider issue of a system run for profit at the expense of health is not questioned.

In the 1980s a decision was taken to out-source school meals provision, in the name of efficiency and under the terms of 'compulsory competitive tendering.' Thatcher's measures made competition compulsory for school meals provision, so that even services still run by LEAs had to be run as private operations. Nutritional standards for school food, in place since 1906, were also abolished. 'Best value' has now replaced compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), but the basis of the system remains. The drive to cut costs has pushed down spending on ingredients, which is currently averaging around 35p, and on labour. UNISON, the public services union, has found that contractors make lower pay and poorer working conditions for new staff a part of their winning bids. Together with changes in kitchen facilities, these cuts make staff 'food service operatives' rather than cooks. Mass produced products are favoured, which are high in fat, salt and sugar, and lack fresh ingredients. And despite these savings, the amount spent by local authorities on meals has actually risen above the cost of inflation. Extra costs arise from administration, processing and transport in the management of centralised catering operations. Does this really represent 'best value'?

Theoretically, 'best value' allows authorities to consider wider criteria when awarding contracts. These could, in theory, include benefits to children's health,

the local economy and the environment through the sourcing of ingredients from good quality local, organic, and independent suppliers.. However, in practice, consideration of cost still dominates, and consideration of non-commercial criteria is limited by the 1988 Local Government Act. In Carmarthenshire, a good quality service involving on-site preparation of fresh food was judged too costly, so the LEA was faced with a choice between reducing the quality, or facing enforced privatisation.

Multinationals providing school meals include Scolarest, providing for 2,500 schools and 37 LEAs, and Castle Independent, providing for 12 LEAs, both divisions of the Compass Group. Sodexo has contracts with 12 LEAs and Initial, a division of Rentokil, with 17. Most caterers source food from a small number of wholesalers including Brake Brothers, Green Gourmet and Bernard Matthews

Beyond school meals, privatisation has been encroaching into schools at the cost of children's health. Under PFI contracts, schools have found themselves tied into long and inflexible catering sub-contracts, which in some cases override new nutritional guidelines because of the terms of the contract. Corporate sponsorship allows companies to market their products to children in return for resources. The European Round Table of Industrialists suggests that 'the provision of education is a market opportunity and should be treated as such.'



Cartoon copyright Colin Shelbourn, www.shelbourn.com. Originally printed in *The Westmorland Gazette newspaper*

Companies have also produced teaching materials, including a website on nutrition by Nestle. A teaching pack by Cadbury's claims that 'chocolate is a wholesome food...[it] gives you important nutrients.' Cadbury's has also provided schools sports equipment through its 'get active' scheme, described by the Consumer Association as 'an irresponsible ploy to encourage unhealthy eating among kids.' Walker's 'books for schools' scheme made parents and teachers 'de facto marketing reps' for the crisps company, in the quest for much needed books. Through vending machines, companies are allowed into schools to sell unhealthy products.

Sadly, the fate of school meals, and as a result children's health, can act as a test case for what happens when a public service is privatised. The case of school meals, and other areas in which corporate interests are entering schools, shows that priorities lie with business and profit rather than health and education.

LOBBY AND PR GROUPS GO FOR NANO HONEYPOT

Rising public concern - over the potential environmental, health and societal hazards of nanotechnology - threatens to make the issue into a repeat of the GM debate. Potentially trillions of pounds are thus at stake for the many diverse industries involved in the new technology. The PR agency flies, who so spectacularly failed to save GM crops, are beginning to buzz around this new honeypot, sensing a very lucrative feast. They are offering their clients assistance with two key objectives: to maintain governments' evident enthusiasm for nanotech and to win public acceptance of it.

The Nanotech Association (NA), launched in February 2005, brings together a number of key companies from small start-ups to large multinationals. They include Smith & Nephew and Oxonica. For an industry body with the aim of 'informing and promoting the uses of nanotechnologies' it was a whisper of a launch. And nothing seems to have been heard of it since. Even Nanoforum (see below) failed to print the NA's launch press release until seven months later.

The NA appears to have been set up by Lexington public relations, whose Bernard Marantelli created the GM crops industry body, the Agricultural Biotech Association. Marantelli apparently set up the NA, but has now left to study for an MBA. Perhaps his association with GM crops has been found to be embarrassing. Lexington was extremely reluctant to discuss its involvement with the NA, but did confirm that it had worked as the secretariat for the NA, although it is 'not currently' involved. We did however have to define the word 'involved' in order to get this comment. Press contacts for the NA are now handled by Kevin Matthews of Oxonica and Peter Arnold of Smith & Nephew. We were unable to contact either of them before going to press. We assume from the NA's low profile either that it is primarily involved in government relations and/or behind-the-scenes press work, or possibly that it is collapsing.

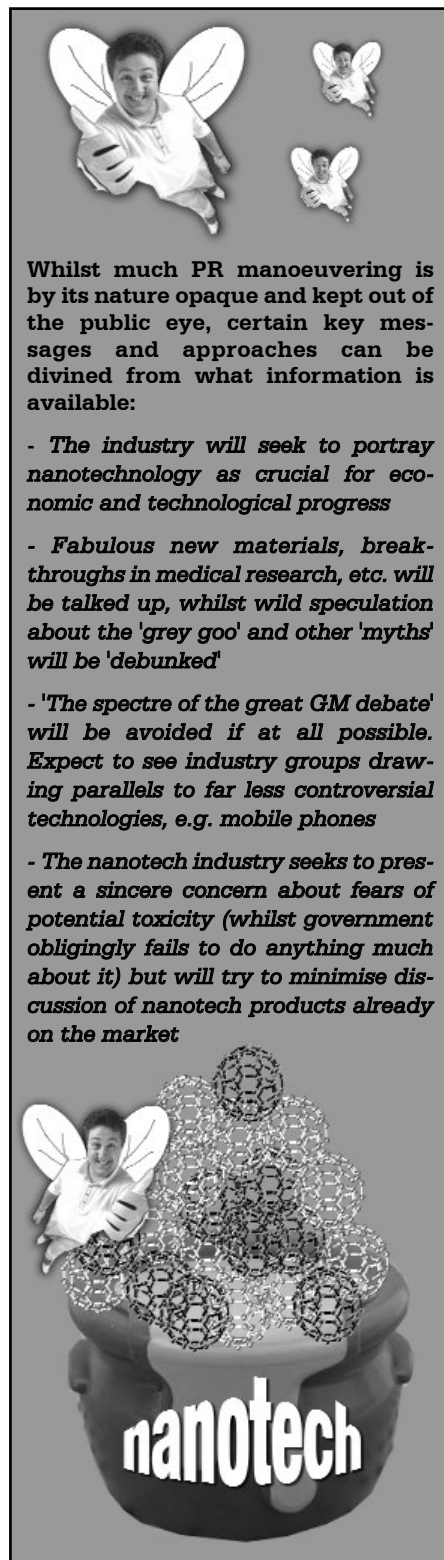
The confident public face of nanotechnology seems to be the Institute of Nanotechnology (IoN), based at the University of Stirling Innovation Park. IoN is a busy networking hub working with governments, universities, researchers, and companies worldwide as well as providing public and press information. It has spawned several different networks in the space of a few years.

Most recently the Institute launched the European Nanotechnology Trade Alliance (ENTA), a pan-European body

created 'to represent the interests of nanotechnology businesses across Europe. ENTA will act to bridge gaps between governments, science and industry policy makers and business'. ENTA is supported by Procter and Gamble, BP International, Thomas Swan & Co., Nexia Solutions, and Imerys, amongst other companies.

The NanoMicroClub is another IoN network which provides support for pre-start-up/spin-out, and early stage nano- and micro-technology enterprises. The Club offers advice on everything from commercialisation to public relations as well as providing a forum for networking with others in the field. IoN's public relations is handled by its 'Nanoforum' information network. Funded by the EU, Nanoforum provides an up to date news service (with over 1600 articles published so far), research and comprehensive links to other nano-related organisations and sites. Amongst other things IoN's business development manager, Del Stark, has found time to attend trainings organised by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), where eager PR flacks can find out about the 'real issues' around nanotech.

One of the more prominent PR companies to be touting for business in the sector is Regester Larkin, a specialist in crisis and issues management. Regester Larkin has a long involvement with biotech, amongst other controversial industries, and has worked for GM front group the Bioindustry Association, Glaxo Smithkline and 3M. For £5000 per day the agency provides media training for companies in which it will help 'develop' a 'position' on their activities and teach how to deal with media interviews. RL also uses current or former BBC, CNN or Sky journalists in media training. A guide to 'Risk Issues and Crisis Management', by Mike Regester and Judy Larkin published on the CIPR's web site, also recommends building 'a profile of the working methods and organisation of pressure groups'.



Whilst much PR manoeuvring is by its nature opaque and kept out of the public eye, certain key messages and approaches can be divined from what information is available:

- **The industry will seek to portray nanotechnology as crucial for economic and technological progress**
- **Fabulous new materials, breakthroughs in medical research, etc. will be talked up, whilst wild speculation about the 'grey goo' and other 'myths' will be 'debunked'**
- **'The spectre of the great GM debate' will be avoided if at all possible. Expect to see industry groups drawing parallels to far less controversial technologies, e.g. mobile phones**
- **The nanotech industry seeks to present a sincere concern about fears of potential toxicity (whilst government obligingly fails to do anything much about it) but will try to minimise discussion of nanotech products already on the market**

Babylonian Times

*Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand,
that made all of the earth drunken: the nations have drunken
of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Jeremiah 51:7*



WATCHING THEM, WATCHING US

'Those who genuinely want to help the movement should study the rich and powerful, not the poor and powerless... The poor and powerless already know what is wrong with their lives and those who want to help them should analyse the forces that keep them where they are.' (Susan George, 2004, p.211).

There is no such thing as neutral research any more - if there ever was. The role of political and social research, just like biological or electronics research, is determined by who uses it, and in whose interests it was produced in the first place. An example of this is the research collected in *Waves of Protest, Social Movements Since the Sixties*, edited by Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson (1999). The chapter by sociologist Luther Gerlach has been reprinted in, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*, edited by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt. What's the problem? This book is published by the Rand Corporation - a think tank that 'delivers a wide range of expertise to clients in need of objective analysis and effective solutions'. The clients include the US Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, and corporations such as AstraZeneca, Ford and Pfizer. Rand also shares advisors with the arms company The Carlyle Group. Hence it seems that in this case activist energy has helped this Pentagon-sponsored project to develop its analysis of activist networks. In an email to Corporate Watch, Jo Freeman suggested that Gerlach's motivation was 'doing what all academics do: looking for interesting things to write about, regardless of the audience.' Gerlach confirmed this to us: 'This is one of the things scholars do. I found Ronfeldt's ideas interesting and useful. I shared the Ronfeldt ideas with students and colleagues. This is what we do'. The goodwill of writers like Freeman and Gerlach is almost certainly not returned by David Ronfeldt, the Rand researcher who acquired Gerlach's research for the *Networks and Netwars* book. Harry Cleaver, professor of Marxism at the University of Texas, has described Ronfeldt as one of the most sophisticated opponents of grassroots social movements: 'these guys really do read our stuff seriously, not just spying on us (which they are effectively doing) but to see if they can learn something from us. If you look at Ronfeldt's book on netwar and the Zapatistas you'll see lots of references to my stuff. I've had a few exchanges with him, and I've read him, as he has read me, and I think there are a lot of parallels in what we do, though from opposite sides of the barricades, so to speak.'



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