



New Zealand prisoners do nothing says National party November 5, 2006

Figures released by Simon Power, law and order spokesman for the National party, show that the New Zealand Labour led government lets 81% of all prisoners not do any work while in prison. Newspaper, Sunday News says that some Christchurch prisoners have been given a barbecue for good behavior.

Simon Power's figures show that of the 7,612 prisoners only 19% (1,470) of them took part in Corrections Inmate Employment during 2006. But in 2005 it was at 23% and in 2004 it was at 26%. He says that the prisons with the least amount of inmates working are: Rolleston with 8.6%, Mount Eden with 8.7%, Rimutaka with 11%, Christchurch Women's with 13.5% and Dunedin with 13.8%. Mr Power said: "These figures are an appalling indictment on this Government's approach to prisoner rehabilitation and preparing them for release."

"In May, Corrections Minister Damien O'Connor announced a strategy that he said would help in 'significantly increasing the number of prisoners in work and training. But a week later this was shown to be nothing more than window dressing when the Budget increased funding for prisoner employment by a measly \$336,000 – up 1%."

"They have cut funding [on the

Corrections Department] by 27% since 2001/02, from \$46.5 million to \$34 million."

Mr Power blames the low work rate on the big prison construction budget of \$490 million. "There would have been more than a miserable \$336,000 extra to spend on effective rehabilitation and work schemes," he said.

"[Mr O'Conner] seems happier to spend \$11 million on landscaping four new prisons and allow prisoners to sit around playing Playstations and Xboxes on their flat-screen TVs than he is about helping them get better prepared for when they are released."

"Prisoners should be doing meaningful work, training or study while they are in prisons, and I imagine the public would agree," Mr Power added.

Mr Power, commenting on the barbecue, said: "These people are in prison because they were found to be in serious breach of the law. The victims of their crimes will be grossly offended by the idea that they are being rewarded for anything. This is the just the latest in a long line of incredibly bad decisions made by the Corrections Department over the past year and taxpayers have had enough."

Bevan Hanlon, president for the Corrections Officers Association, said: "The Mobsters getting a BBQ was a 'joke". (Christchurch Prison) staff are reporting the smell of dope every day. Mobsters are threatening staff on a daily basis and there appears to be

high cellphone use (mobile phones are banned in jail). So what happens? They are given a BBQ."

401st Guy Fawkes celebrated in parts of the Commonwealth November 5, 2006

November 5, is Guy Fawkes Night. On this day, 401 years ago there was an attempt to blow up the British parliament.

Since that time, Guy Fawkes day is celebrated by bonfires, fireworks and the parading of effigies called "guys".



Violent reaction of sparkler.
Photograph by Gabriel Pollard.

The event is not only celebrated in the United Kingdom, but other Commonwealth countries including New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland, Bahamas, Saint Kitts and formerly Australia.

Britons celebrate a national day of thanksgiving that the Gunpowder plot did not destroy their king and parliament. But as tradition goes, the oppression that Roman Catholics felt

was always de-emphasised.

This year sees rising opposition to the traditional fireworks and bonfires celebrations. A smog warning has been issued for London on the 5th and British Labour MP Barry Sheerman called for the event to be scrapped.

Remember, remember, the 5th of November

The Gunpowder Treason and plot;
I know of no reason
why Gunpowder Treason
Should ever be forgot.

—*Popular British rhyme in memory of the Gunpowder Plot*

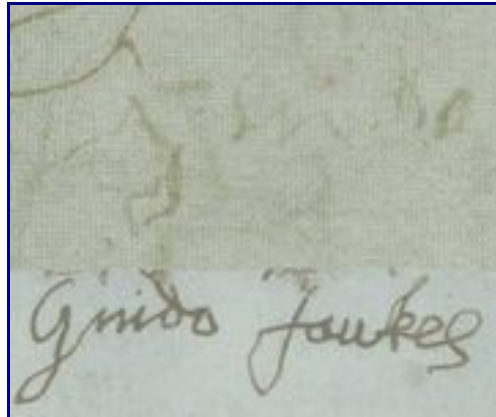
The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was a failed attempt by a few radical Roman Catholics to kill King James I of England, his family, and most of the Protestant aristocracy in a single attack by blowing up the Houses of Parliament during the State Opening. The conspirators had then planned to abduct the royal children, not present in Parliament, and incite a revolt in the Midlands.

The plot occurred during the long-running religious battle that followed King Henry VIII's break from Rome in 1534.

Far from helping their fellow Catholics avoid religious persecution, the plotters put many loyal Catholics in a difficult position. Before this period Catholicism had been associated with Spain and the Inquisition but after the plot it also became thought of as treasonous to be Catholic.

Fawkes was hired to do the "dirty work". He entered the Roman Catholic faith at the age of nine, when his mother married a Roman Catholic after the death of his father. As a soldier who went to war in the Netherlands, Fawkes was noted for bravery; he was one of the last to hear

of the plot, and rushed into it before knowing the details.



Here is the November 10th, 1605 trembling signature of Guy Fawkes confessing to the treason, and admitting the names of the conspirators after several days of torture. A nominal trial ensued on January 27, 1606, at which the sentences had already been predetermined. On January 31, Fawkes, Wintour, and a number of others implicated in the conspiracy were taken to Old Palace Yard in Westminster, where they were hanged, drawn and quartered.

The plot was actually planned by Robert Catesby, whose father had been imprisoned for refusing to convert to the Anglican Church. He started his planning two years previously in 1603. But he needed money and ammunition, which forced him to confide in at least 13 people. One of these was Francis Tresham, a brother-in-law of Lord Monteagle, and a member of the House of Lords

The plot failed when one of the conspirators warned his brother-in-law not to attend the House of Lords, who, in turn, set off the alarm that resulted in the ringleaders, including Guy Fawkes, being captured and executed.

Record amount of fires during New Zealand Guy Fawkes November 6, 2006

There were a record amount of fire calls during Guy Fawkes night, the festivities had emergency services stretched to the limit, a spokesman for the NZ Fire service said that it was "like driving through a war zone." Despite this, no major structure fires were reported.

Preliminary numbers show that the amount of minor fires reported amounted to 1,729 between the period of October 27 and November 5. For the same period last year, 2005, there were only 1,632. Last year's numbers were also record setting at the time. Over the Guy Fawkes weekend, November 4 - November 5, there were 784 reports of fires. The actual numbers will be released soon, as the false alarms and multiple reports are separated out. A safety campaign by the NZ Fire brigade advising the public to call 111 on the suspicion of any fire is expected to have increased the number of calls per incident. Discussions on the NZ volunteer firefighter's mailing list suggest that the majority of bad behaviour occurred in urban areas.

The New Zealand police had to report to 423 reports of disorder in the top half on the North Island alone and in just seven hours. There was a fight which involved 40 people, in Whitianga; police were called to break up that fight and were also called to stop youths from getting fireworks from a shop. Also, in Tauranga, police were called to a fight party of 200 youths at 1.00 a.m. In Mount Albert, Auckland, police were forced to retreat and wait for reinforcements during an incident.

In Wellington, New Zealand, the police had to make 39 arrests,

including assaults, disorderly behaviors and liquor ban breaches. The police said it was as bad as New Year's Eve. "It was as busy as New Year's Eve. It was one of the busiest nights we have had this year," Sergeant Maggie Windle said, "Alcohol was a big factor in a lot of the arrests and a lot of the offending. We were dealing with the bulk of this mass disorder."

Remarkably, the St John's Ambulance Service reported only one serious firework related injury; a stabbing following an incident involving fireworks.

Mike Hall, chief executive/national commander of the New Zealand Fire Service, said: "The unfortunate result vindicates his call for a retail ban on fireworks, made last month. Despite warnings and a safety campaign, and even with parts of the country being much wetter than they were last year, firefighters were still called out more times than ever. That means that firefighters cannot respond as quickly as they would like to genuine emergencies, and thousands of volunteers across the country are needlessly called away from work and family commitments."

The Government had previously warned the public that a ban on the public sale of fireworks would be enacted if behaviour was deemed unacceptable over the Guy Fawkes season.

Opinion polls indicate that the public is divided 50:50 over permitting the sale of fireworks, or wanting to see fireworks restricted to public displays or licenced operators. Mr. Hall said "the public are also sick of the danger to themselves, property and pets posed by misuse of fireworks, not to mention the late-night noise and mess associated with people letting off

fireworks indiscriminately. The lack of a major fireworks-related fire or fatality at the weekend was pure luck."

Allegedly Dunedin students were burning furniture in the streets.

Marian Hobbs, Member of Parliament, said that she has put in a bill to stop fireworks to be used by the public: "I'm not saying ban fireworks. I'm not a killjoy. But it does give us powers to stop what is dangerous, time-consuming and expensive. We have to make a start and put our foot down on this."

New Zealand study finds circumcision cuts STD infection rate November 7, 2006

A new study released by Christchurch researcher from the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, David Fergusson, shows that "substantial benefits" come from a circumcision, a baby boy having his foreskin removed.

Mr Fergusson said that the rate of sexually transmitted diseases is halved due to circumcision, even after accounting for the amount of sex partners, unprotected sex and their family background. "Circumcision also reduces the risk of transmitting HIV and the incidence of urinary tract infections."

The report, which was published in the international scientific journal *Pediatrics*, took 25-years to complete as it followed 510 males from birth until they were 25-years-old.

"The public health issues raised by these findings clearly involve weighing the longer-term benefits of routine neonatal circumcision in terms of reducing risks of infection within the population, against the perceived costs of the procedure," Mr Fergusson

said.

However the American Academy of Pediatrics has described the current study as "complex and conflicting." The American Academy of Pediatrics opposes the practice, which is why in the US the circumcision rate has been falling since 1999.

In New Zealand, only between ten and twenty percent of all males are circumcised, which is one of the lowest rates in the world. Circumcision is the normal practice in Samoa and Tonga and also among Jewish and Muslim men.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians said in 2004, "There is no medical reason for routine circumcision of newborn boys."

The current study has made some health specialists reconsider their stance on the issue. "People feel passionate on both sides, but I'm going to recommend that we take another careful look at this," said Jay Berkelhamer, US Academy of Pediatrics president and professor of pediatrics at the University of Florida.

Edgar Schoen, who has reconsidered his stance on the issue, he said: "The academy's opposition is irresponsible. The benefits of circumcision far outweigh risks, and doctors should be telling parents that."

"Even if it does bring down sexually transmitted disease, cutting normal tissue of an unconsenting minor is a human rights violation," said Marilyn Milos, from anti-circumcision group, National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC).

Possible new stadium in Auckland for 2011 rugby world cup

November 7, 2006

Ministers are considering a new stadium for Auckland's waterfront instead of an enlargement to the existing Eden Park.

Trevor Mallard, Minister for the Rugby World Cup, said: "Today a Cabinet committee has discussed the options and I hope to be able to announce a decision later this week or next." He declined to comment any further.

According to the New Zealand Herald, the new stadium will cost around NZ\$700 million compared to a \$320 million upgrade of Eden Park. The Herald said that Mr Mallard, the Auckland City Council and Helen Clark, Prime Minister of NZ, all prefer a new stadium. "The decision is vital in order to deliver a world-class stadium which complements and enhances the city's conference and major event-hosting potential, and which will also drive Auckland's aspirations to be a world-class city," Mr Mallard said.

Ms Clark said: "A site that is not surrounded by residential housing is an attractive proposition but the critical issue will be practical limitations." She added: "Cabinet would not be hurried into making a decision."

However Ports of Auckland (POA), owners of the waterfront land, said that there will not be a stadium before the 2011 Rugby World Cup. Geoff Vazey, Managing Director, said: "It simply can't be constructed in time and the risks of pushing it through would be overwhelming. Before any land could be set aside for a stadium, the port would need an alternative site to

conduct its business and it would be 2009 before building could even start. A decision made a couple of years ago would have been needed."

Michael Cullen, Finance Minister, said that it would be possible to build the stadium, despite what critics are saying: "a number of sources have told us the stadium could be built by 2011." No decisions have been made on the stadium proposal and he would not speculate on how the project could be financed.

The team analyzing the venues for the 2011 world cup said that it will need its report-back date extended by at least three weeks, possibly four. The delay is due to the need to assess technical and logistical matters.

Gordon Moller, Auckland architect whose company designed the Auckland Sky Tower, said that he doesn't "believe a waterfront stadium is the way to go for the Rugby World Cup. An Eden Park upgrade makes more sense than a waterfront venue built from scratch and what is planned there is outstanding. New Zealand has a limited ability to fund infrastructure in large projects. Even Australia now has difficulty funding and filling stadiums it built for big events."

New Zealand police want more taser stun guns

November 8, 2006

New Zealand police are asking when they will be able to get their hands on the new gun in the arsenal of police weapons, the taser stun gun. This call comes after the police Commissioner, Howard Broad, at a parliamentary select committee today, said: "Frontline police report that Taser stun guns have been a valuable addition to their crime fighting arsenal and officers are keen to see them widely deployed."

However Mr Broad said that tasers are not going to lead to police being fully armed all the time, "I do not believe at this point that the circumstances in New Zealand warrant the general arming of police."

Chester Burrows, Member of Parliament (MP) for the New Zealand National Party, suggested: "Police were gradually losing their ability to engage in dialogue in tense or hostile situations and Mr Broad admitted that was a concerning trend. Such situations were becoming more dangerous for police as weapons became more commonplace in the hands of criminals. Fighting with someone now has that added risk." Mr Broad said: "The expectation is that the use of the tasers will result in fewer assaults on police officers in the districts where the guns are being trialed"

Mr Broad said there is "overwhelming support for tasers from those carrying them and the rest of the force was anxious to follow suit."

Since the tasers were introduced on September 1, 2006, only two of the 180 tasers issued had been fired. Even though assaults on police were increasing. The tasers had been unholstered 20 times, four of those times further action was unnecessary, 13 were resolved when the laser sight was pointed at them and one other time the taser hadn't been fully drawn when the situation was resolved.

Anti-taser campaigners, which includes some MPs, say that death can occur from the use of the taser, which has happened overseas. But an earlier Wikinews report showed that the deaths only happened because of the fall to the ground when immobilized by the taser, not the taser itself.

Location of 100 icebergs near New Zealand known November 8, 2006

About 100 icebergs that are floating about 260 kilometers south of Stewart Island, New Zealand, were, according to the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research oceanographer Mike Williams, from A-43, a superberg that in May 2000 broke off from the Ronne Ice Shelf. The group of icebergs have traveled a total distance of 13,500 km.

The A-43 measured 167 km long and 32 km wide. But when it moved into Scotia Sea, southern Atlantic, in January 2005, it broke apart further then measuring 51 km long and 21 km wide, and had also gained a new name, A-43A. NIWA believes that the A-43A then travelled 13,500 km around Antarctica, landing near Auckland Islands and Stewart Island ending its journey. "Based on A-43A's last recorded position, and assuming it travelled the shortest possible route around Antarctica, we calculate an average speed of 0.9km/h or about 21.5 kilometres a day," Dr Williams said, "Somewhere along the way, A-43A has broken into smaller pieces."

The A-43A spent five years drifting east in the Antarctic Circumpolar Current.

The A-43A is now heading towards the Chatham Islands, passing Mid-Canterbury on the way.

Dr Williams said: "Despite its size, the monster berg is probably riddled with holes and catastrophic failure could see it "just fall to pieces" relatively quickly, Dr Williams said. The flotilla would probably drift about 300km up the east coast of the South Island before veering back out to sea." In the next ten days the icebergs could be visible from the Otago coast, "There is

an outside chance they might be spotted from the mainland provided they broke up into smaller icebergs."

New Zealand students able to use txt language in exams November 9, 2006

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has announced that a shorter version of English known as txt language will be acceptable in the external end of year exams. Txt language is where words are shortened for easier mobile phone usage, e.g. txt is for text, lol is for laugh out loud, brb is for be right back, etc.

Txt language has been approved if the marker can see that the paper "clearly shows the required understanding", however the NZQA still advises not to use it. Bali Haque, deputy chief executive of NZQA, said: "Students should aim to make their answers as clear as possible. Markers involved in assessing NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) exams are trained professionals, experienced in interpreting the variety of writing styles and language uses encountered during the marking process," Mr Haque is confident that marker will understand txt language.

Educators and students alike are divided saying that it will be easier and others saying it could damage the English language.

Mr Haque said that if the marking schedule said that good language use is needed then txt language will be penalised.

Debbie Te Whaiti, president of the Post-Primary Teachers' Association, said: "The authority's new stance reflected the situation in the classroom. Individual teachers are grappling with [txting] every day. However, teachers would have

concerns if text slang became an acceptable everyday written language in the classroom."

Year 11 student at Avonside Girls High School, Cathy Adank, said: "Most students would be surprised to hear text language was acceptable in some exams. That's great. You'll just be able to get your ideas out quicker. It's so much faster; you can get through the exam faster." But her close friend, Harriet Prebble, disagreed, "I think it's a terrible idea. When you start progressing in the world, people judge you on the written language, and spelling things incorrectly seems sloppy and lazy and gives a bad impression." However both girls did agree that the use of txt language damages the overall spelling of the users.

Denis Pyatt, principal of Papanui High School, said: "While I would not encourage students to use text abbreviations in exams, I am excited by the language developments. I think text messaging is one of the most exciting things that has happened in a long time. It is another development in that wonderful thing we call the English language. Society has to adapt to change and I think ultimately text messaging could help resolve one of the strangest parts of English, which is its spelling, though I think it will be some time before text spelling is formally adopted."

Lincoln High School NZQA officer, Stephen Rout, said: "[I] will not be recommending text speak to his students. I would advise students to use proper English rather than text abbreviations. Students need to be able to write and understand full English and I would encourage our students to do that."

Lynda Harris, chief executive of the Write Group who help people develop

their English skills, said that her staff are worried "about students being allowed to write in text abbreviations."

This decision comes over a week later when the Scottish Qualifications Authority also allowed txt language.

New Zealand's alcohol purchasing age not to be raised **November 9, 2006**

In a conscience vote last night, Wednesday, parliament decided that the alcohol purchasing for New Zealanders will not be raised to 20 but instead will stay at the current age of 18.

The vote was 72-49 with the noes as the majority, a conscience vote is where the individual Member of Parliament (MP) votes instead of the party and their policies.

The bill was brought before Parliament with the intent of placing the drinking age back at 20 following its lowering to 18 in 1999. It was first drafted by Matt Robson of the NZ Progressive Party, and was then taken on by Martin Gallagher from the New Zealand Labour Party.

However, the Labour-led government is being attacked for interfering with the liquor purchase age bill. Before the debate on the bill, two ministers who are against raising the age, justice minister Mark Burton and associate health minister, Damien O'Conner both announced that they would fully review the sale/supply of liquor to people below the age of 18, regardless of whether the bill were passed or not. The review will most likely look at how many off-licence outlets there are and increased law enforcement of the drink age. Mr Burton said that he did not pre-empt the bill voting, he said: "It was important to ensure all options

were on the table before the vote. What we are saying is you can have confidence that if the bill doesn't proceed there will be an alternative vehicle for addressing the issues immediately thereafter."

Many MPs said that it was unorthodox to intrude in such a manner in the voting process. Leader of Jim Anderton's Progressive coalition and supporter of the bill, Jim Anderton, said: "Making a last-minute plea to MPs is not to be fooled by the promise of the unnecessary review. This is the review you have when you want to give parliamentarians a soft option. We do not have that luxury. And I hear that sigh of relief in many places, 'oh gosh you've got a review so we don't have to make a hard decision'. Well this is the place for hard decisions and this is where the buck stops."

Christopher Bishop, a spokesman for the Keep it 18 campaign, said: "We welcome the Government's moves to review the supply of alcohol to minors in the likely event that the Sale of Liquor Amendment Bill is defeated today. Raising the drinking age is never going to work as a way of dealing with New Zealand's drinking culture. It is a simplistic and knee-jerk solution – a legislative sledgehammer."

Chester Burrows, National MP, said: "My experience is I've seen too many pissed young people, raped young people, assaulted young people."

Wayne Mapp, National MP, said he favours a split age, 18 and 19-year-olds are allowed to drink in pubs but not to buy alcohol at liquor stores until they are 20. "They [the two who introduced the review] should have waited till Parliament decides, rather than trying to dictate," he said.

Gordon Copeland, United Future MP, who also preferred the split age, said he had "no doubt the move would influence the way people voted. It was a most unfortunate interference."

Simon Power, National MP, said: "It [the bill] is inconsistent. It requires peculiar legal definition and will make life more difficult and harder for the police to enforce."

Ron Mark, New Zealand First MP, said: "Are we going to do something, or are we going to do nothing?" asked New Zealand First list MP Ron Mark. "We can at least let this bill go through to the next stage."

Ross Bell, spokesman for the Drug Foundation, said: "Not only is such a review too narrow, it also seemed to pre-empt the outcome of Wednesday's debate. A cynical person might think the announcement gave MPs an excuse not to support the bill. That review has already been looked at by the Law and Order Select Committee, and what is needed is a review of price and availability of alcohol."

However it has been suggested by the select committee previously researching the drinking problem in New Zealand that there is little hard evidence 18 & 19 year olds are buying alcohol for minors, with the largest problem instead being the purchasing of alcohol by parents for their children.

New stadium in Auckland for 2011 rugby world cup preferred by NZ government **November 10, 2006**

The New Zealand government has said that it prefers building a new stadium at Auckland's waterfront to host the grand final of the 2011 rugby world cup, instead of upgrading Auckland's current stadium, Eden Park.

The preference was made public by the Honourable Trevor Mallard who is the minister for the rugby world cup that will be hosted in New Zealand in 2011.

The new stadium hasn't yet been confirmed and is awaiting November 24, which is the date when the Auckland council will give the government their views on the two options available to them; waterfront or upgrade.

According to Mr Mallard the waterfront will cost altogether around NZ\$497 million compared to the cost of an upgrade of Eden Park of \$385 million. However that pricing is only based on concept drawings at this point in time. The government will provide half of the funding for the waterfront stadium but they will only provide funding for the Eden Park upgrade if it was considered to be for regional purposes and not a national stadium.

Mr Mallard said: "The government has decided that a waterfront location is the option that can most meaningfully contribute to the Government's vision for Auckland as a truly world-class, international city. This has been a finely balanced call with little difference between the two options in terms of cost and construction timelines. Advice from the experts shows that both can be delivered on time."

The greatest concern facing the government is if they will be able to build the new stadium in time but construction will be in December 2007 to be finished by 2010, and also investigators said that it would be possible. "We have had advice from Australasia's leading stadium designers, engineers, architects and construction experts. There is a unanimous view that the waterfront

stadium is a challenge, but eminently achievable," Mr Mallard said.

"In making its decision, the government believes that a sports stadium has the ability to contribute to the identity of Auckland and New Zealand. A national stadium will be as much a focal point of Auckland's landscape as Rangitoto or the Sky Tower. We also believe the construction of an iconic facility such as this will help drive Auckland's aspirations for the development of the waterfront and CBD."

Referring to the upgrade of Eden Park, Mr Mallard said: "One of the greatest concerns is that its application for consents has unacceptable uncertainty as to the timing and outcome of the consents within the construction time available. There is also risk around the lack of flexibility in a residential area around construction times, should delays or problems with construction arise."

The government will also need to pass a special bill that will enable them to build the required options because of consent issues.

The government had also considered these following options: Eden Park (various options), CBD waterfront (various options), North Harbour Stadium, Manukau Harbour (adjoining Westfield station), The former Carlaw Park, Mt Smart Stadium, Avondale Racecourse, The Auckland Domain and Jade Stadium.

Fastest "zorb" ride set by New Zealanders November 11, 2006

The world records for longest Zorb ride and fastest Zorb ride were both broken in New Zealand, Thursday.

The record was set first by Steve Camp, who rolled 570 metres in a

Zorb, twice the previous record. Keith Rolver then set the speed record, rolling 50 kilometres per hour for a distance of 2.2km; a police officer from the local force tracked the speed of the Zorb. Both records were set on hills at Matapara Farm near Rotorua.

The records were verified by Angie Willocks, an adjudicator for Guinness.

A Zorb is a plastic ball, three metres across. Participants roll down slopes inside of them, somewhat like hamster balls. The makers of the Zorb product introduce the experience as a being "Where all your dreams are realized (as long as you dream of rolling down a hill inside a giant plastic ball)."

As he climbed out of the Zorb, Camp commented "That was one helluva awesome ride."

Rolver exclaimed "WOW! What an incredible experience! Man that was so fast... water every where and an unbelievable sensation of speed!"

According to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, "the activity has been shown in episodes of Wildboyz, Celebrity Fit Club, Road Rules, The Amazing Race, and Globe Trekker, as well as the Jackie Chan film Armour of God II: Operation Condor."

The records were part of worldwide attempts, to commemorate the second annual Guinness World Records Day. Guinness officials were on hand to monitor attempts in Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, USA, China, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Germany and France.



Photo of a zorb in action.

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