



KLARA ZETKIN: pioneer of International Women's Day

International Women's Day — March 8th

Special feature by Lyn Beaton — pages 8&9

ACT TO DEFEND COUNCILLORS



Strike pickets outside BSC's Clydesdale works last week

Scots steelworkers fight Tory scheme

BY SIMON PIRANI

MORE than 2,000 Lanarkshire steelworkers in the BSC Tubes Division are on strike against a 'survival plan' which would mean a medieval regime of wage-cutting and destruction of trade union rights.

The Clydesdale, Imperial and Calder works are now in the third week of strike action against the plan which means:

1. A system of 'selective redundancies' where volunteers willing to leave the industry are kept on but others who

want to stay on are booted out on the management's say-so.

'That means that if you are an activist, you have no chance,' a Clydesdale steward who has been given notice told 'Workers Press'. 'It's like a hire and fire system.'

2. Wage-cuts of between £15 and £20 a week. Abolition of extra payments for working in hot, dirty or otherwise abnormal conditions. Abolition of the 'fallback bonus' paid if, for example, essential equipment is not working. A lump sum of £150 and consolidation of 2 per cent of bonus and other payments if the wage-cutting is accepted.

3. Agreed promotion lines to be replaced with a 'you get the job if your face fits' system.

4. (to add insult to injury). Union officials to campaign for a bank transfer system of paying wages, which the workforce has already made clear it does not want.

'We have ended up like this because of the settlement reached in 1980,' Clydesdale Iron and Steel Trades Confederation shop steward John Sinclair said.

'That was the start of lump sum bonuses and local negotiations.'

'This is a deal to put an end to all trade union

rights. In some parts of BSC, adverse conditions have been imposed but they managed to secure wage increases out of it.

'Here they are trying to cut wages, and we are already the lowest-paid part of BSC. Some of our boys are on rent rebates as it is.'

His colleague added: 'This is a deal to prepare the way for privatisation.'

The tubes division strikers have the official support of the ISTC. All union branches at the nearby Ravenscraig works, itself under the shadow of closure threat, are organising a strike levy.

THE LABOUR movement faces sharp lessons from the vicious surcharging of Lambeth and Liverpool councillors.

As Derek Hatton himself said last Wednesday, 'The court has accepted today that an unelected district auditor can force a democratically elected council not to carry out the policy it was elected on.'

More than that, it means that members of the labour movement can be bankrupted and barred from office — solely because of the policies they advocate. They can even be barred from standing for election.

When the working class seeks to defend its living standards, parliamentary democracy bares its claws. The weight of government, the state and the judiciary combines to intimidate workers' leaders and to silence them.

The councillors cannot be left to stand alone. Eric Heffer is right to demand that the Labour Party should pay the penalties imposed by the courts.

Dennis Skinner is also right to remind us of the Clay Cross councillors who, to this day, are feeling the effects of their 1974 defiance of Tory legislation and their betrayal by a Labour government.

BY DAVE BRUCE

training for an entire generation. Youth face a future, not merely of life on the dole, but of life without any income whatsoever.

If the anti-union legislation is designed to break the back of the organised working class economically, then the judgement on Wednesday was an opening shot in depriving it of the political franchise.

Historic gains won in the Chartist era of the 1840s and of universal suffrage finally won only in the 1920s are under threat.

Sections of the working class have flexed their muscles. The fight of the miners became the property not only of other union organisations but of the communities. Militant sections of workers have shown that they will not allow the miners to rot, forgotten, in jail or out of work.

They have begun to extend this support to other workers in battle, like the printers. These gains must not be lost.

It is right to demand that the Labour Party pay the councillors' charges. Labour Party members must fight for this. But is not enough! Remember how the Labour leaders treated Des Warren.

Time is too short and too much is at stake simply to place trust in the machinery of the Labour Party. The working class must mobilise all its resources in this battle which has acquired a real urgency.

If the councillors are left to face the state on their own, it is not just they who will lose. It will be the whole of the working class.

It is not just a question

of Thatcher being a reactionary. The government's onslaught comes from the objective requirements of capitalism.

The banks must screw their interest payments from the local boroughs. This is incompatible with the provision of services and health care to the communities.

The crash in oil prices worsens the crisis of the government and makes the payment of welfare benefits a bigger drain than ever.

Abolish

Thatcher has looted the nationalised resources (privatisation) to stem the flow and promises more to come.

This is a political struggle which brings together the whole working class. We must fight alongside every section of the class to prepare the political defence of our rights and organisations.

It is not a question simply of 'formulating demands', shouting a few slogans (General Strike) and hoping that the problem will go away.

In every part of the communities, we must devote meticulous attention to developing every aspect of this fight, to forging the unity of the class in every way.

We have to warn all the time of the dangers that the working class faces, without hesitation.

The working class can bring down this Tory government and every class-conscious worker must fight for that.

But it is imperative to fight for a principled alternative leadership to the craven class-collaboration of Kinnock and the Labourites. They have nailed their colours to capitalism's mast.



Barking hospital ancillary workers fight privatisation — May 1984



Tom King

TORIES' ONSLAUGHT ON LOW PAID

WITH their Wages Council Bill voted its second reading last month, the Tories remain on course for wiping out the last remaining legal pay and holidays protection of Britain's low paid workers.

The incredible story from the multi-millionaires who run and finance the Tory Party is that workers on £80 down to below £50 a week are 'pricing themselves out of employment'.

They aim to clear away the last legal impediment to competitive wage-bidding, i.e., jobs will go to those who will work for least money.

BY BERNARD FRANKS

Currently, nearly half a million young people, one in five of those in a job, are covered by the system.

According to Employment Secretary Tom King, when introducing the Bill last year: "There is clear evidence that the pay rates fixed for young people have been too high and prevented them having a chance of getting a job."

This was about 15-year-olds officially on £45-£56 a week and 17-year-olds earning £52-£63.

The Tories claim that 100,000 jobs will be created but everyone knows that the employers concerned will simply pocket the product of this wage-cutting.

Surprised

The only new employment will be degrading, dangerous jobs offered by cowboys and bucket shop merchants who want to pay a pittance for a week's work.

In fact, young people's wages have been falling relatively over the past period, but this has not created more jobs. Unemployment is due to the crisis of Thatcher's 'free market economy' not high wages.

For the 2 million adults who would for a time still be under wages councils their protection will be decimated, or as the Tories say 'simplified'.

All present legally enforceable cover for holi-

day pay, weekend rates, shift rates, short-time guarantees and skilled differentials will go, leaving the councils only to fix minimum hourly rates and a single overtime rate.

The legislation also seeks to repeal the 1831 Truck Act which guarantees workers the right to be paid in coin of the realm and not in goods or tokens to be used at the company shop.

Although conditions are different from the 1830s, there is still a danger of payments, or a final pay-off, being made in bouncing cheques, bankrupt stock or specially bought-in junk.

If the law is passed it will break the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention on labour protection.

The ILO states that most countries in the world now operate minimum wage protection systems 'and none to our knowledge exclude young people'.

Britain will also be the only country in Europe with no statutory fixing of paid holidays.

Such considerations do not, of course, deter Mrs Thatcher and her friends. On the contrary, they are concerned precisely to see wages here fall to levels below those of the undeveloped nations so Britain can compete on a 'free market' basis.

Trade unionists have always had strong reservations about the wages council system, with its minimum rates

set by committees of equal numbers of trade union and employers' representatives under an 'independent' chairman.

It has tended to block the rise of union membership and free collective bargaining instead of being, as originally claimed, a temporary expedient until these develop.

Minimum wages have trailed appallingly behind inflation, both in terms of time of fixing and of amount.

The inspectorate for policing the employers has always been undermanned and underfinanced.

Recent cutbacks have ensured that payments below the legal rate exist on a vast scale and are currently growing.

Class

Many wealthy employers have benefited by being able to claim that they are paying 'the legal rate' or 'above the minimum' for the shockingly low wages that they provide.

In spite of all such entirely just criticisms, the wages councils should be unequivocally defended. Tory plans are aimed at removing all blocks to slave labour, not at providing something better.

It is in the interests of every worker to ensure that the low paid and especially the young are not forced into a cheap labour pool and used to undercut all rates and conditions.

This will happen if the half-million young workers under wages councils

are combined with the half-million plus whom the government want on the £26 to £35 a week two-year Youth Training Scheme.

Already, the small, underpaying contract firms are being used to undermine direct labour systems, wages and services in hospitals, local authorities, schools and other public employments. Meanwhile short-term contract experiments are now being conducted in a variety of industries.

It is vital in these conditions to support workers in small firms fighting for union recognition and full collective bargaining rights, such as the Contract workers.

They are the other side of the coin from the print-workers who are fighting to prevent unions being smashed by employers who want to restore 19th century working conditions.

All such battles should be fought with victory in mind, but also in the knowledge that as long as capitalism exists, particularly in its crisis phase, the issues are never finally resolved. Reforms and improvements won at one stage may be taken back at another.

The wars for union recognition, improved wages and better conditions have had to be fought over and over by successive generations of working people.

Only with an end to the system of production primarily for profit can an end come to the oppression and exploitation that is part and parcel of it.

RELEASE THE JAILED MINERS

NORTHUMBERLAND

WILLIAM SMITH: Whittle — 2½-year sentence from February 1985. E44975, Durham Jail, Old Elvet, Durham DH13HU.

DURHAM

JOHN MATTERSON: Murton — Two years and three months youth custody from December 1985.

JOHN HEMINGWAY: Murton — One year and three months from December 1985.

JOHN ROBSON: Murton — One year and three months from December 1985.

ROBERT HOWE, 22, miner, affray, attempted not guilty (judge refused to allow change of plea), 21 months

ANTHONY RUTHERFORD, 24, miner, affray attempted not guilty, 18 months

JOHN ROBINSON, 21, affray, attempted not guilty, 18 months jail

GARY BLACKMORE, 19, charge affray, attempted not guilty, 2 years youth custody

ANTHONY HOWE, 19, affray, attempted not guilty, two years youth custody

WILLIAM BELL, 20, affray, attempted not guilty, 18 months youth custody

YORKSHIRE

MARTIN HODGSON: Wakefield — Three-year sentence from November 1985. Armley Jail, Leeds.

NIGEL HODGSON: Wakefield — Three-year sentence from November 1985. Armley Jail, Leeds.

PAUL WRIGHT: Saville — 18-month sentence. G76424 Kirkham Jail, Freckleton road, Preston Lancs.

CLIVE THOMPSON: Frickley — Three-year sentence from April 1985. G79348, Acklington Jail, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 9XF.

N. DERBYSHIRE

PAUL BROTHWELL: 12-month sentence.

DAVID GAUNT: Shirebrook — 2½-year sentence from December 1984. E71037, A Wing, Millers Park Youth Custody Centre, Doddington Road, Wellingborough.

KENT

TERRY FRENCH: Betteshanger — Four-year sentence from January 1985. B73383, Weald Wing, Maidstone jail, Kent

CHRIS TAZEY: Betteshanger — Three-year sentence from January 1985. A29398 Youth Detention Centre, Springfield Road, Chelmsford

SOUTH WALES

DEAN HANCOCK: Oakdale — Eight-year sentence. Gartree maximum security prison, nr Market Harborough, Leicester.

RUSSELL SHANKLAND: Taff Merthyr — Eight-year sentence. Gartree maximum security prison, Leicester.

The Wages Councils were set up under an Act of 1909 as part of a parcel of welfare reforms instituted by a Liberal government faced with the rapid rise of the Labour Party and a huge upsurge in trade union activity.

The aim was to set legally enforceable minimum wage rates and conditions of work for unorganised workers in the 'sweated trades', especially clothing and chain making. The Trade Boards Act (the name was changed to wages councils in 1945) was extended to cover many more workers.

Today there are 26 wages councils setting bottom line wage rates and holiday entitlement for 2.75 million workers in 300,000 firms, primarily in retail clothing and catering, including hotels and public houses.

Two-thirds of the workers covered are part-timers and four-fifths are women.

Although most are in small firms, many work for giant companies making vast profits out of cheap labour: multiple stores, the 'big six' breweries and international hotel chains.

The professed aim of the Tories is a gradual rundown of the remaining 26 councils (once there were 66) and immediate end to all protection for the under-21s.

Miners' leader forecasts future of unity

THE SPLIT in the NUM will eventually produce unity amongst miners, Jack Jones, Leicestershire area general secretary, told an NUM recruitment meeting in Clipstone, Notts.

'Out of this traumatic experience will evolve a better, much stronger union — especially among the youth, who are now learning where they came from,' said Jones.

In the midst of increasing dissatisfaction being expressed in UDM branches about the way that 'union' is being run, the NUM recruitment drive

BY PAUL WILKINSON

has continued to strengthen.

The success of this campaign has led to desperate measures by the NCB to stem the flow of the tide and an attempt to cut off the head of the national union by intimidation and sackings.

A confidential NCB memo from the Notts area industrial relations officer to local managers, leaked in February's edition of 'The Miner', states: 'You must be extra vigilant in the forthcoming months that you do not give the NUM any possible chance of claim-

ing that they have established recognition.'

In the past two weeks this has led to the sacking of Bevercotes branch secretary Paul Whetton for refusing to undertake not to put leaflets up or to renounce his union position.

Two miners at Wellbeck have been sacked for pinning up notices attacking massive expenditure on a visit from coal board chief Ian McGregor.

Notts area treasurer Mick McGinty has been told at Ollerton that he will be disciplined if he is

found talking to UDM members, while at Calverton a young miner has been suspended for tearing down a notice urging UDM members to 'shop active NUM members.'

Jones likened the situation to the struggle of black miners in South Africa. 'This goes even beyond Victorian values,' he said. Jones went on to call for a campaign for the next Labour government.

Speaking on the same platform, Henry Richardson, NUM Notts area general secretary, had a warning for all miners. The NCB's decision to close Bates colliery in Northumberland, despite

the Independent Review recommendation to keep it open for social reasons, proved what the NUM had been saying

Richardson also pointed out that Mansfield pit in Notts is presently losing twice as much as Bates, and many others are in the same position. The strategy is to close these pits and privatise the profitable ones, he stated.

Similarly, Jones claimed there would shortly be only two pits left in Leicestershire — Bagworth and Ellistown — and that there wouldn't be a pit left in South Notts once the new 'super-pit' is opened.



HENRY RICHARDSON

EETPU members back sacked printers

Electricians union members are mobilising in support of the 5,500 sacked News International printers and against the treacherous Hammond leadership.

Glasgow electricians and plumbers demonstrated outside Murdoch's Kinning Park printing plant last Saturday night together with SOGAT printers, many of them women, and other trades unionists.

A leading member of the 4000-strong Glasgow plumbers' EETPU branch, which is solid in its opposition to the right

wing, told the pickets: 'We are here to show that the rank and file of the EETPU support SOGAT.'

'This reactionary leadership has existed for a long time. This is just another focal point in our fight against them.'

'We must have a rank-and-file enquiry into the leadership of our union.'

The active organisation of scabbing by EETPU officials in Wapping and

Kinning Park has certainly created a new surge of hostility to the Hammond leadership.

Many electricians feel not only that their union should be disciplined by the TUC, but also that TUC leaders have already made too many concessions to Hammond.

'Flashlight', the opposition EETPU paper, reported in its latest issue

that the EETPU leadership had been found guilty of scab-herding and that the TUC 'drew back' from suspension.

It is also believed that Lionel Cann and John McGrogan, EETPU delegates to the Motherwell North constituency party, have taken up jobs at Kinning Park.

While 'Militant' supporters are being witch-hunted by Labour leader

Neil Kinnock, nothing has been said about those actively participating in scabbing. Not to mention Labour Party member Robert Maxwell, who last week announced 400 redundancies at the Scottish 'Daily Record' and 'Sunday Mail' after journalists and printers refused to print the Irish 'Daily Mirror'; work which belongs to their Manchester colleagues.

SA cargoes are blacked

TRADE UNION blacking of apartheid South Africa was reported to the AAM's national trade union conference in London last weekend.

Transport union secretary Ron Todd told 500 trade unionists at the conference that action was being taken at:

Southampton, where transport union members and seamen were refusing to handle arms cargoes destined for the racist state;

Swansea, where dockers were 'blacking' South African coal shipments; and

Portsmouth, where National Union of Public Employees members were refusing to touch South African and Namibian foodstuffs in hospital kitchens.

Todd called for the spreading of such blacking action throughout industry. An anti-apartheid week of action, April 14-20, has been called to spread the campaign.

Todd also paid tribute to the 18-month Dunne's

stores striker in Dublin who had forced a political decision from the Irish government to ban goods made by South African or Namibian prison labour.

AAM secretary Abdul Minty gave a report to the conference on the crisis of the apartheid system and Britain's responsibilities towards the South African struggle.

He pointed out that the 'invincibility' of the South African armed forces was a myth. How could they be invincible if they could not suppress unarmed workers in the black townships?

Abdul called for a minute's silence to respect the recently assassinated Swedish prime minister, Olaf Palme, who successfully campaigned for Scandinavian governments to implement sanctions against the South African regime.

A representative of the South West African People's Organisation told the conference that Britain led the western powers in giving practical support to apartheid and investing money there.

Strathclyde call for joint action

SHOP stewards in Strathclyde Region, Britain's biggest local authority, are calling on Labour councillors to adopt a joint strategy against Tory cuts.

The call was made at a rally of about 400 of the shop stewards, who represent a 90,000-strong workforce, at Glasgow's City Halls last week.

'Strathclyde should not act as an unquestioning agent for central government,' stated a document from the Strathclyde Joint Trade Union Council (SJTUC), which is made up of delegates from all Strathclyde unions.

The SJTUC wants to reach an agreement with the Labour-controlled authority on their budget strategy. Their document says Strathclyde should not comply with cuts in jobs and services, even if they are subject to selective penalties or rate-capping, and should declare policies of 'no compulsory redundancies' and 'no privatisation'.

Opening the rally, Andy Cochrane of the white-collar NALGO union said that Strathclyde had actually cut rates by 1p in the pound last year: had they not done so all cuts could have been avoided.

Rally chairman, Norman Bissell of the EIS teachers' union, said that the Tories aimed to pick off sections of workers one at a time. The SJTUC had been formed last autumn to try to overcome such divisions in the face of 'the most serious financial situation faced by Strathclyde in its history'.

Up until now, the Tories have manoeuvred to avoid a serious confrontation with giant Strathclyde. While Lothian Labour councillors faced disqualification and worse for their stand, former Tory Scottish secretary George Younger tried to prevent Strathclyde exploding with judicious phone calls to the India Street headquarters over budget decisions.

The background to the

Call for print support groups

A CALL for printworkers' support groups to be set up in Scotland was made at a shop stewards' conference in Glasgow last week.

'We are asking that these groups be set up through the trades councils,' Bob Gillespie of SOGAT told the meeting which was called by the Scottish TUC.

'We should make contact with tenants, unemployed centres — all those who supported the miners,' said Gillespie. He called for newspaper suppliers and newsagents to be leafleted.

Gillespie also called for a firm TUC stand behind the printworkers. 'If the TUC had stood together for the miners, the Tory laws would have collapsed,' he said.

A similar point was made to the conference by Willie Clarke of the Scottish NUM who asked: 'If the miners had had total support from other unions, do you think Maxwell and Murdoch would have launched their attack?'

An unmistakable air of defeatism emanated from the 'Euro-Communist'-dominated STUC leadership. 'The trades unions are helpless to do much about Kinning Park (Murdoch's Glasgow plant),' said retiring STUC president Jimmy Milne. 'Picketing is illegal'.

Just another reminder that Milne and others have abandoned the principle, decided on by the TUC at Wembley not to mention STUC congresses, to defy the anti-union laws whatever the consequences.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Public Meetings

LONDON

The Tasks of the Fourth International

Tuesday March 25

7.30pm

Conway Hall

Red Lion Square

London WC1

Speakers: Cliff Slaughter (WRP Central Committee)

Geoff Pilling (Acton WRP)

Chris Bailey (Cambridge WRP)

Chair: Richard Goldstein

(WRP London Area Committee)

Tickets 50p

CARDIFF

Why we expelled Healy

The Split in the WRP and the ICFI

The task of building revolutionary leadership

Sunday March 23rd

7.00pm

Central Hotel

Speaker: Bill Hunter (Liverpool WRP)

Ford go onto the attack

FORD workers are now discovering the extent of the betrayal by their union officials in the recent pay negotiations.

The officials recommended acceptance of the 'improved' final offer of five-and-a-half per cent, plus four per cent productivity and efficiency allowance.

This was declared to have been accepted by a majority of 1,800 in a ballot of the 35,000 Ford workers. What the officials didn't report back was that the four per cent allowance was not optional but obligatory on all employees.

Shop stewards throughout Fords have been told they had to agree management's drastic changes by March 6 or the increase and the back-dated increase would not be paid.

The workforce has been opened up to this blackmail despite having originally voted 70 per cent for strike action against the wholesale attacks on jobs and working conditions embodied in the agreement.

In a letter sent out to T&GWU members, Mick Murphy, the union's automotive group secretary, argued that the company's proposals would have to come in and they could only bargain over the payment for accepting it.

The T&GWU 'Record' for February claimed in a headline, 'Ford doubles "final" offer', and de-

scribed the revised offer as an 'unprecedented climbdown' by the company. In reality, it was a typical sell-out by the union officials, led by Murphy and James Airlie. Only three convenors backed the recommendation to accept with the vast majority of stewards opposed to it.

Company demands include 'maximum capacity utilisation' to be attained by elimination of demarcation between jobs and trades; quality control inspectors to be virtually eliminated by production workers being compelled to do their work, etc.

The union officials have been retreating in front of Ford management ever since they called off the ten-week strike in 1978 and recommended acceptance of the attendance allowance.

The fight against the closure of the foundry was abandoned despite mass meetings mandating officials to call strike action.

Castings are now brought in from South Africa with trade union cooperation. Such leadership cannot defend the jobs and conditions won by Ford workers.

Fords All Trade Unions Alliance
Public Meeting
Tuesday, March 18 —
5.30 p.m.

Marsh Green School,
New Road, Dagenham.

UNION SELL-OUT BID AT CONTRACTS

BY HUGHIE NICOL

THE National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers plans to abandon the six-month recognition strike by 100 clothing workers at Contracts Ltd in South Shields.

Strikers voted 56 to 34 against the union recommendation for a four month (!) phased return to work without union recognition and an end to the strike.

District organiser Ron Bailes first held a secret ballot. When his recommendation was voted down, he instructed no-one to leave the meeting and scurried out to phone general secretary Alex Smith.

Smith gave his orders. Bailes announced that the strike was over as far as the NUTGW was concerned. After Friday March 7, strike pay would stop.

Angry

The response was immediate and angry. The South Shields Miners Hall rocked to chants of 'Scab! Scab! Scab!'. The strikers made clear where Bailes and the NUTGW stood in relation to their six months of sacrifice and struggle.

Bailes left the meeting red-faced and beaten. A former member of the International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party) he gave up his 'socialism' for a suit and a car when he joined the staff of the NUTGW.

He once called himself a Trotskyist but now stands discredited before the workers' movement on Tyneside.

The strikers convened a press conference to announce that they would stay out and fight on. Bailes crept along to the offices of the 'Newcastle Journal' gleefully to predict the strikers' collapse.

Now they have lost official support, the strike will crumble. People should be prepared to



Contracts clothing workers picketing Harrods earlier in the strike

Shipyards' solidarity

WITHIN hours of the delegations turning out with leaflets, shipyard shop stewards at Walsend and Neptune yards pledged full support to the strikers. Further support has come from shop stewards at the William Press Oil Rig Module builders on the Tyneside.

The Parson engineering factory in Walker pledged

support and expressed deep concern at the unions's action.

South Tyneside NALGO has moved an emergency resolution to the Local TUC calling for full support for the strikers and questions the role of the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers Union.

accept the discipline of the union,' he said.

Tyneside trade unionists and the Durham miners have supported this strike with enthusiasm as they marvelled at the spirit and determination of the young girls on the picket line.

South Shields TUC convened a 'special meeting' last Thursday at the request of the Contracts strike committee who have produced thousands of leaflets to reply to the NUTGW slander campaign.

These are now circulating the shipyards and the Durham coalfield.

Clothing factories are also circulating a four-page leaflet which explains in detail the role of the NUTGW officials. Ron Bailes and Geoff Bowen have thrown every dirty trick imaginable at the strikers to confuse and demoralise them.

They started on Wednesday with a witch-hunt against alleged involvement by the Work-

ers Revolutionary Party. The plan was for a front-page article in Thursday's local press to hijack the Friday meeting with their witch-hunt.

They fouled up and it finally came out on Friday evening, followed on Saturday with another full page on the 'red connection'.

The Strike Committee's four-page leaflet is headed 'The Fight Goes On'.

'What is interesting about the Gazette's latest discharge is that the red scare story it ran happened at the instigation of full-time officials of the NUTGW.

'For people to believe the red scare they would have to accept that we, the strikers, are gullible to a point of naivety where we could be manipulated at will by the far left.

'Let us be fair the only name the Gazette was able to come up with was Hugh Nicol, an unem-

Consent

'This was the background to Hughie's involvement and he has never done anything without the full knowledge and consent of the Strike Committee and Ron Bailes.

'Following the meeting we learned from a reliable source inside the factory that the Divisional Officer of the NUTGW had telephoned the factory manager BEFORE our own meeting to tell Mr Coburn that the NUTGW was pulling out of the dispute.

'Scabs and others at Contracts Limited knew

that the union had decided to pull out of the strike before we did.

'Bowen and Smith have not even visited the picket lines. Geoff Bowen's one bout of enthusiasm during this entire strike was when he told the Gazette that we (people he has not met) were the political dupes of the "Trots", something he thought was a disease until Ron Bailes put him wise.'

The leaflet includes a petition circulating amongst the strikers before the sell-out was announced calling the union to account.

Laid off

The back page explains the proposals to end the dispute where workers would be taken back then all but 20 would be laid off with ten each week being phased in until the 16th June 1986.

Newcastle ACAS is now arbitrating between the NUTGW and the strike leaders.

Officials are fearful to face any meetings in South Shields until Friday's mass meeting — when they hope tempers will have cooled.

The leaflet concludes 'In all of the hullabaloo about red menaces, however much a spectre of the haunted minds of newspaper editors and some full-time union officials, we must not lose sight of the real enemy.'

'Let us say at once that we are prepared to try and build bridges with our union, even though we feel let down.

'The real enemy is French Connection Contracts Ltd and Stephen Marks, the Managing Director. The fight must go on. We need your continuing support.'

Year of the leap

READERS have pointed out (at some length) that the last Workers Press was dated 29th February 1986 and numbered 11 for the third time.

May we take this opportunity to apologise for this printer's error and assure everybody that this is not an attempt to slip a Leap into the year, to foist an apocalyptic General Strike into our programme or whatever.

This issue is correctly numbered 14. Thanks.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY MERSEYSIDE AREA

MARX'S CAPITAL AND THE WORKING CLASS

1986 series of lectures

Wednesday March 12
Commodities, Value and Money

Wednesday March 19
'Capital' and the working class

Wednesday March 26
'Capital' in the age of information technology

Family Lounge, Flying Picket
Hardman Street Unemployed Centre (MCTURC)
Liverpool 1

All lectures start at 7.30pm

JOIN THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

FILL IN THIS FORM AND POST TO:
The General Secretary
21B Old Town, Clapham
London SW4 0JT

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
TRADE UNION _____ AGE _____
DATE SENT _____

Monthly fund

WE have received the full £5,000 for the February Monthly Fund, and also £230.80 towards the March target. Many thanks.

From now onwards our Monthly Fund will be reported in Workers Press without comment.

Contributions should be sent without delay please to:

WRP,
21b Old Town,
London SW4 0JT.

£60,000 legal fund appeal

WE ARE receiving inquiries from socialists and trade unionists outside of the Workers Revolutionary Party about initiating support for our legal fund, and we welcome all the support you can give us.

This week we have received: Peckham £16, Edinburgh £48.20, Hull £11.60, Fords £1.20, East London lectures £11.80, Liverpool £64.95, Crawley £12.27, Scotland Road £2,

London lectures £65.60, Paddington £9, Brixton bookshop customer £4.40.

This is a total of £247.02, making a grand total of £32,657.81.

Send all donations please to:
WRP,
21b Old Town,
London SW4 0JT.

Record US trade deficit spurs protection demand

A RECORD January trade deficit has brought renewed fears of further protectionist measures by the Reagan administration.

The Department of Commerce has reported a deficit for the first month of the year totalling \$16,400 million (£11,120 million). This brings the cumulative deficit for the last three months to nearly \$45,000 million. At this rate the 1986 deficit will far exceed the record \$148,000 million of last year.

Amid mounting fears that the US manufacturing base is being eroded by imports, pressure is increasing on Capitol Hill to impose more stringent protectionist measures

BY PETER JEFFRIES

against imports from Europe and the Far East.

In order to combat such pressures Reagan is pressing for drastic reforms in the international currency sphere. They would aim to further devalue the dollar in an effort to boost US exports and curb the rising tide of imports.

Such attempted reforms will be high on the agenda of the next meeting of the International Monetary Fund when it assembles in Washington in April.

America's trade performance is even more serious given the sharp decline of the dollar over the last year. A near 25 per cent drop in the dollar over this period would normally have given US exports a considerable advantage in world markets.

For the month of Janu-

ary US imports were some \$33,000 million with exports at \$17,000 million. The largest gainer was Japan who recorded a \$5,460 million surplus with the US despite a strong rise in the yen's value since last September as a result of pressure from the Big Five industrial nations who attempted to force down the dollar as a means of correcting the yawning US deficit.

The latest Commerce Department figures show the onthly deficit with Europe at \$3,050 million while the shortfall with Canada — America's most important trading partner — narrowed marginally to \$1,700 million.

In other words the Big Five plans have clearly failed. US imports have continued to soar, fuelled by strong consumer spending — much of it financed by credit — and low interest rates.

But the falling yen has

begun to hit Japan's exporters, especially the smaller and less well placed firms.

Toshiba has warned that profits could fall 45 per cent this year — the result of the stronger yen and the fall in world chip prices.

The New Japan research institute forecast that electric machinery makers would register a more than 30 per cent drop in profits in the year ending March 31 and a more than 10 per cent fall in the following year.

The same institute estimated a fall in steelmakers' profits of over 50 per cent in the current financial year. The rising yen would, estimated the institute, bring an 11 per cent fall in the profits of the nearly 400 companies listed in the first section of the Tokyo stock exchange.

Criticism is rising in America of the way

Japan has attempted to help small exporters hit by the rising yen. Washington has warned Japan that the policy of offering state-financed low interest rates to exporters damaged by the appreciating yen may violate the subsidies code of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

A US delegation led by the Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Allen Wallis, told the Japanese last week that Washington was concerned that the programme would lead to subsidised exports which would further widen the Japan-US trade gap.

Despite these warnings, the Tokyo government is planning to offer more than \$1,000 million in loans to exporters at an annual interest rate of only 5.5 per cent.

It has also been reported that in a further move to counter the im-

pact of the rising yen, Japan's Labour Ministry is planning to subsidise those exporters affected by subsidising wages in the industries concerned.

America has declared that it will challenge those plans if it considers that they confer unfair advantages, which clearly they do.

The postwar expansion of capitalism in western Europe and Japan especially was based on the strength of American capital. It was the export of capital from the United States which provided the resources for the recovery of a shattered world economy and it was the large American market which provided the outlet for the industries of Europe and Japan.

But the strength of US capital was highly deceptive, not to say profoundly contradictory. For European economy expanded at a faster rate than did US economy and

Japanese economy grew at an even more rapid pace. That much of this expansion was due to the presence of US firms operating with the highest level of technology merely added to the irony.

It is this relative stagnation in US economy over a long period of time, the relatively slow growth in the productivity of labour which is now taking its toll.

Large areas of American industry — steel, leather goods, textiles, cars, etc — not to say a range of important agricultural products are unable to withstand foreign competition, especially competition from the Far East.

It is this lack of competitiveness which is fuelling the demands for protectionist measures against foreign goods. The latest US trade figures will only add to the mounting clamour.



A scientist from the British Museum (Natural History) examining part of the extensive beetle collection

Science News by Mike Howgate

Museum of monetarism

MUSEUM scientists are likely to be hardest hit if the recently released 'corporate plan' of the British Museum (Natural History) is implemented.

The 'plan' is in line with current government thinking and will involve the introduction of admission charges at the Natural History and Geological Museums in London, and the Zoological Museum at Tring.

It is also proposed that visiting scientists who wish to use the museums

collections for research will also be charged.

In true monetarist fashion the B.M.(N.H.) is to be made cost effective and as the scientific aspect of the museum is seen as the major drain on resources it will suffer disproportionately from the cuts in funding.

The exhibition side of things will be somewhat protected as it pulls in the punters and it is also envisaged that industry and commerce will sponsor particular exhibits.

Other areas earmarked for growth are the

museum shops, catering and publishing.

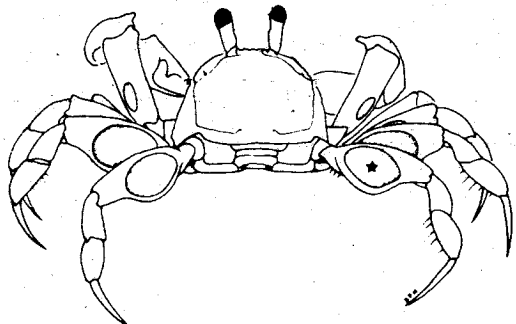
While it is proposed that more money be spent on marketing, all that faces the scientific establishment is a further 10 per cent cut in staffing on top of the near 10 per cent fall since 1983-4.

This commercialisation of a major scientific institution is in line with a parallel development in the universities with an astronomical increase in industry funded 'technological' projects and a corresponding fall in 'pure' research.

Breathtaking legs!

A GROUP of tiny crabs the size of the now defunct half pence coin has developed an extraordinary method of breathing. According to a report in Nature, sand-bubbler crabs common on sandy beaches of the Indo-Pacific region breath through their legs!

Most air breathing crabs have an expanded area above the gills within the main body of the animal which houses an air cavity and can act as a type of lung. Recent research on one species, *Scopimera inflataby* David Maitland of the University of New South Wales, came up with this novel breathing mechanism when he investigated large expanded areas of the first leg segment which had previously



The sand-bubbler crab *Scopimera inflata*

been considered to be associated with hearing.

These unique areas are very thin membranous disks called tympana, a reference to their supposed ear drum like function, which Dr. Maitland would like to re-name 'gas windows', a more appropriate name in light of their newly discovered function.

Below this ultra-thin area of shell is a large network of blood vessels similar to those found in normal 'crab lungs'. A simple experiment and the observation that the normal crab lung was absent in these forms served to confirm this idea. The experiment involved painting over the 'gas windows' with Hum-

bol paint, a difficult operation in itself as the crabs tended to scrape it off before it dries. Successfully painted specimens registered a 60% drop in oxygen uptake, while those with a double coat invariably died through asphyxiation.

The possibility that the paint may be poisoning the crabs was ruled out as double coated but perforated specimens did survive and absorbed oxygen at the rate of single coated specimens. Once the paint was cleaned off oxygen uptake almost returned to normal.

The aptly named *Scopimera inflata* literally 'inflated thighs with windows in them', is not the only species to exhibit these structures. They seem to have been evolved independently in several different genera of Sand-bubblers.

Tool use is 'not proven'

SUPPOSED cut marks on animal bones from early hominid sites in Africa may not be evidence of human activity after all according to recent research published in NATURE.

Scanning electron microscope photographs which revealed internal striations in scratch marks on bone from Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania and Koobi Fora in Kenya had previously been regarded as evidence for tool use in the butchering of animal carcasses.

While the internal striations serve to differentiate the scratch marks from marks produced by carnivore teeth, they can no longer be considered as definitive proof of human tool use. In a controlled experiment it was found that the trampling of bones by animal coming down to a lake shore or stream to drink mimicked the type of scratch marks produced on bone by stone tools. These 'pseudo-cutmarks' can be scoured by sand grains or even sun baked

clay as the bone is trampled.

While some recent butchery site, such as those of North American Mastodon from 10,000 years ago, exhibit indisputable evidence of tool use, the evidence from the much older African sites (circa 2,000,000 years B.P.) is problematic. The authors conclude that in such cases microscopic scratch features are insufficient evidence on their own to prove the use of stone tools.

What is significant in the work of this young Jamaican poet is what has written not will need... Smashing the Racist State is about South Africa, written several way to the Presidential palace gate.

South Africa round-up

SUPPORT SARMCOL STRIKERS

ONE thousand workers at British Tyre and Rubber (BTR) Sarmcol in Howick, South Africa have been on strike since May 1985 for the recognition of their union, the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU).

All thousand were sacked at the beginning of May following a legal one-day strike for union recognition. BTR Sarmcol is the only major employer in the area and has banned the MAWU members from employment, threatening as a result starvation and indefinite

unemployment.

The company refuses to negotiate a stayaway and a consumer boycott has been organised in the Pietermaritzburg area in solidarity. BTR owns among others: Pretty Polly, Cornhill Insurance and Dunlop.

Representatives of MAWU are currently in Britain and raising support. A national campaign has been mounted and workers should raise the issue of solidarity action and financial support in their organisations.

MAWU can be contacted at 4, Central Court, 125, Gale Street, 4001, Durban, South Africa.



Youth at the AZAPO funeral — a day later the angry gestures were for real

Near civil war in Alexandra



Single sex hostel in Alexandra township

ALEXANDRA, the black township closest to Johannesburg, saw last month the latest outbreak in 18 months of near-continuous upheaval and violence.

Rioting broke out after a funeral for Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO) members killed in earlier fighting.

Within four days, 24 were dead and over 300 wounded. Reports tell of casualties of a near civil war between Alexandra's youth and the Municipal council backed by hundreds of troops and police.

With a population of 100,000, Alexandra is characterised by its steep dirt roads, chronic housing shortage, and migrant workers.

The township has a solid history of resistance

to the apartheid regime: it supported boycotts against fares increases in 1940, 1941, 1943, and again in 1957.

Former prime minister Verwoerd condemned it as a 'black spot' in 1962. He planned to turn it into a hostel city with no rights of permanent residence.

The people of Alexandra successfully fought this for 17 years. This tradition is carried forward by the youth who, through the Alexandra Action Committee, have set up street committees, organised rent strikes, boycotts and strikes.

They have set up peoples' courts which hear charges ranging from political collaboration to assault, theft — even marriage disputes.

All the councillors and resident black police have evacuated the

township with their families. They believe they can never return without at best having their houses burnt or at worst facing a 'necklace' execution (a car-tyre is forced over the victim's head; the tyre is then soaked in petrol and lit).

Police violence during the rioting enraged residents. Only intervention by opposition MP Hele Suzman and Bishop Desmond Tutu stopped 30,000 Alexandra residents marching on Wynberg police station.

Police interference with medical personnel and hospitals prompted the non-racial 'National Medical and Dental Association' (NAMDA) to claim that 'pressure is being exerted on health personnel to act unethically when dealing with law enforcement officers and those injured when dealing with the unrest'.

School youth are in the forefront

SOUTH AFRICA'S school youth have been at the centre of the continuing 'unrest' that shakes the very foundation of the Apartheid regime.

Attempts to end the schools boycotts that have virtually closed down the education system in some areas for years, are foundering under the unabated repression of the racist regime's police, army and obstruction by the Department of Education and Training (DET).

Tension is also increasing between the pupils and the Parents Crisis Committee (PCC) over the latter's bid to stop pupils boycotting classes.

A PCC spokesman in describing the situation last week said, 'What is

emerging is that most primary school pupils are taking up certain issues even to the extent of disrupting secondary schools.'

'This is a new phenomenon. It is only because 99 per cent of high schools in Soweto have student representative councils that we have been able to avert serious problems.'

Recent events highlighting the schools crisis:

- DET delays in implementing agreed PCC demands have led to Soweto students boycotting examinations. One

thousand students set fire to two buses last week.

- The detention of 40 students in Bonteheuwel, Cape, under emergency regulations. More than 2,500 students attended a protest meeting after detention of their colleagues.

- The detention, also under emergency regulations, of two members of the Tembisa crisis committee and the demand by Tembisa police that the committee disband.

- The detention of three teachers in Alexandra during the height of the recent violent unrest there which claimed 24

lives. Police refuse to confirm the detention.

- The detention of pupils in Witbank after the week-long stayaway sparked off by security forces to house raids.

- Resistance to school fees and demands for free books by Kwazulu pupils in the Durban and Pietermaritzburg areas. Violence erupted when a peaceful demonstration by 3,000 Kwamashu Pupils was teargassed.

Pupils have also recently been detained in Kagiso, Jouberton, Mhlakeng near Randfontein, Mamelodi, Atteridgeville and Kroonstad.

In the Eastern Transvaal townships of Lydenburg, Nelspruit, Steelpoort and Waterval Boven, pupils have been boycotting classes after clashes with the police.

There have also been class or tuition boycotts in Eastern Cape schools. In East London's township schools teaching is proceeding 'normally' but students have ignored instruction on when and where to register and teaching is proceeding at venues chosen by them, while new temporary schools built by the DET are empty. Almost all schools were burnt out during violence last year.

In the six months between July last year and February this year 2,106 youth under the age of 16 were detained under the emergency regulations.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
Demonstrate your solidarity with the
WOMEN OF NAMIBIA &
SOUTH AFRICA

Picket the South African Embassy
12-2pm, Saturday 8 March,
Trafalgar Square

- Say 'No' to the execution of South African patriots
- End the illegal occupation of Namibia
- Apartheid No! Sanctions Now!

Convened by Anti-Apartheid Women's Committee; ANC Women's Section; SWAPO Women's Council

For further information contact: AAM, 13 Mandela St. London NW1 0DW. Phone: 01-387 7966

London's housing problems

By Bridget Dixon

Crisis in Newham

Councils' planning power under the Tories

THE HOUSING and Planning Bill soon to become law is the latest attack on the rights of local councils to have a say in what is built in their areas.

The Bill tells councils to sign away their planning rights in certain areas to be called 'Simplified Planning Zones'. Because the government expects that many local authorities will refuse, the Environment Minister has the power to designate the zones himself.

The Minister of the Environment won't need to scour the country looking for where to put the new zones. Any frustrated property developer who wants to build profitable offices or 'high-tech' factories where the local council has other ideas — homes for example — can ask the Minister to make the area a simplified planning zone.

Since its election, this government has systematically attacked planning, making a free-for-all for the developers. They abolished Development Land Tax — which developers loathed because they had to pay out some of the profits they can make simply by getting permission to build a new scheme.

Speed up

The Department of the Environment told local councils in no uncertain terms in 1980 that they must speed up planning applications and that they must cut back the changes they insist on in designs, especially aesthetic criteria.

When Lambeth and the GLC opposed a massive office block on the South Bank which acquired the nickname 'The Green Giant', Heseltine, who was Environment Minis-

ter in 1982, stepped in and used Special Development Order powers to overrule them, without even waiting for the developer to appeal.

In the past, councils have been able to get roads, old peoples homes and a variety of community facilities by making planning permission conditional on developers putting something into the area. The Tories issued a circular saying councils must not use this 'planning gain' system.

Permission

New rules will also mean that the system of 'use classes' will change. When a building changes use substantially, the council has to give permission.

Already there are problems — for example, a chemist's shop can become an antique shop with no need to ask the council. But the amended categories will mean food shops could turn into betting shops or takeaway food shops, without concern for the social needs of the community.

Small businesses will be allowed in residential areas and there will be less control over what industries are doing.

The Enterprise Zones set up in 1981 have already shown that developers can make huge profits in areas where planning controls are negligible. In inner city areas, Urban Development Corporations have taken planning rights away from the elected local councils altogether and given them to a body appointed directly by the government.

The sweeping powers of the new Bill mean that councils lose their very over profitable, but unnecessary, ugly and dangerous developments.

RONAN POINT, a tower block in Newham, East London, partially collapsed in 1968 following a gas explosion. Six people were killed.

Later this year, the block will be scientifically demolished. It took a long fight by the Newham Tower Block Tenants Campaign to have the building, and its eight 'sister' blocks, evacuated. Now only 36 out of the 1,000 flats have tenants.

But this is not the only estate with problems. Families living in James Sinclair Point, a 23-storey block built in 1972 next to Queen's Market at Upton Park, live with a serious fire hazard.

There are 70 high-rise buildings needing structural repair, total cost £30-£40 million. And none of them is socially acceptable.

The last five years have seen three tower block suicides and at least one child fell to her death.

Newham's tenants have produced a thorough and disturbing report on the crisis in the borough, which raises issues which affect other areas too.

The Newham campaigners launched their report at a meeting of over a hundred. The mood of the meeting was unmistakable — the tenants are on the offensive.

Vi Brooker organises the Tenants' Association on Queen's Terrace.

'We have a list of repairs to flats as long as your arm,' she said. 'We

would like a few simple things like a noticeboard; we would like somewhere to meet.

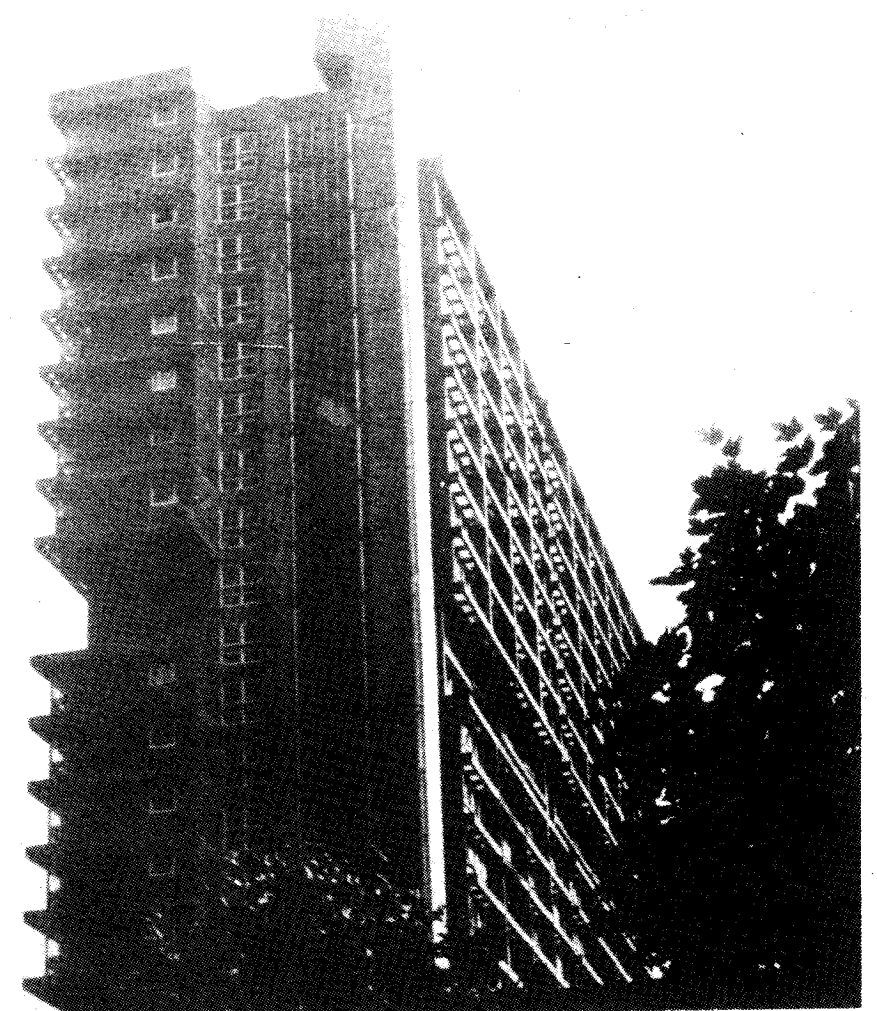
'We know there is not much money to go round for every estate in the borough that needs re-modernisation. But we are pleading a special case.'

If the launchpad for the campaign was the special problems of the high-rise 'prisons' that is by no means the end of the problem.

Every family rehoused from the tower blocks means that another of the 1,680 homeless families stays on the waiting list.

Newham has special problems. There is a sizeable elderly population. One household in five is a single parent.

Unemployment is



James Sinclair Point in Upton Park . . . a serious fire hazard

around 17 per cent, and the average wage for those working is about £20 a week less than the all-London average.

People need council homes but Newham council's plans to build homes with gardens have been devastated by the government.

In 1981 the Tories set up a quango called the London Docklands Development Corporation which seized nearly a fifth of the borough's land, and handed it to private house builders.

The cheapest homes cost £23,000. Local people can no longer afford to

live in the borough.

Newham council asked to spend £71 million on its Housing Investment Programme in 1986-7. The government's response — to cut it back to £22 million.

Projects already started will use all but £2 million of that so, although the council wants to solve its housing crisis, it can't.

Last year they built 276 new homes. They need at least 600 a year to have any hope of cutting the waiting list.

If they managed 400 a year, in two years time they would have no land

left, because of the building land seized by the LDDC.

In London as a whole there are 240,000 families waiting for council housing. There are billions of pounds worth of outstanding repairs. On average, every council home needs £5,000 spent urgently and this rises staggeringly for flats in high rise blocks, on the government's own figures.

Newham's Housing Crisis is available from the Federation of Newham Tenants, 332 Lonsdale Avenue, London E.6, price £1 including postage.

New Bill threat of mass evictions

MASS EVICTION of council tenants so their homes can be sold to private companies is threatened by the Housing and Planning Bill. Shelter's Tim Shotton told a packed meeting of Tower Hamlets Barkantine estate tenants last week.

Their flats overlook the Isle of Dogs 'enterprise zone' where property developers are building prestigious speculative schemes. One is the massive £8.5 million Canary Wharf project, where an old dockside is to become an office centre dominated by skyscrapers.

Residents are afraid that the developers will



THERESE SHANAHAN

want to move onto their estate next, recent improvements like entry phones and new foyers have made them more attractive to private owners.

In this area, said councillor Therese Shanahan,

who lives on the estate and chairs the Housing Committee for District 5, which covers Poplar and the Isle of Dogs.

'We believe that the council will cave in to blackmail. There are 5,500 properties in the district. We had a survey done and it showed that £30 million needs to be spent on them.'

'If the council sells two blocks on St John's estate, the government may let them borrow enough to do up the blocks next door.'

Tower Hamlets council has already sold the Waterlow estate in Bethnal Green to Barracks, a private company. The council has also sold the Parkside estate on St John's estate

A vital clause of the new Bill makes it easier to privatise estates which have already been renovated. Angry Barkantine tenants have launched a campaign to stop the council implementing it.

Clause 5 means that tenants can be evicted simply because the council wants to sell their homes with 'vacant possession.' All it needs is the 'thumbs up' from the Environment Minister.

Offers of alternative accommodation are likely to be in residential estates. As there is a need for the council to tenants in advance, tenants won't even have time to make their own arrangements.

Councils will have nowhere to put homeless families.

Perhaps most galling to those evicted will be the provision for cash hand-outs to the firms who have taken over their homes. A total of £10-20 million will be available in 1987-88 for 'Urban Regeneration Grants'.

The Bill gives bigger discounts to individual tenants who want to buy. It makes it easier for councils to sell flats. It also encourages them to estate management but to cut the council's share.

The Bill is being debated through its second reading, the question being asked — will the government really do this? The answer is no.

COMMENT

By Charlie Pottins

Spare us the moral lectures!

Our editorial comment on Mr Sean Matgamna's letter last week said: 'We do not know, for example, about alleged funding of the WRP, by the Libyan authorities.' I don't know about any 'Libyan money', either. (Certainly none of it came my way!) What's more, I don't care about it. What is so terrible about Libyan, or other Arab money, as distinct from other kinds, anyway? Why do people like Sean Matgamna get so worked up about it?

The Libyan Arab Jamahariya, which has striven to raise its people, and the Arabs generally, from imperialist servitude, underdevelopment, and poverty, is seen as an enemy, understandably, by US and British imperialism, and by the Zionist State of Israel. Gaddafi's policy has included support for national liberation struggles and left-wing movements elsewhere. This naturally enraged Libya's enemies all the more.

There are aspects of Libyan policy I would certainly criticise myself, such as Gaddafi's support for Idi Amin, and his attempts at times to usurp the PLO's rightful place as the Palestinian people's chosen leadership. But when Libya gives economic and other aid to Nicaragua, for example, fending off US aggression, can any socialist oppose this? Would Matgamna demand a 'labour movement investigation', as he did against the WRP?

If any Libyan money did indeed reach the Workers' Revolutionary Party or its press in the past, then I for one would have welcomed it. Notwithstanding all the faults and real crimes of Healy and his clique, and not forgetting their atrocious defence of the murder of Iraqi communists, which is an issue we will have to deal with fully, the existence of the daily News Line was a potential asset to the workers' movement, and its coverage for instance of the Lebanon war was excellent.

The capitalist media hacks were bound to pounce on a 'Libyan gold' story, combining anti-Arab racism and anti-communist witch-hunting. But what was Matgamna's interest, other than his hatred of the WRP? It's all very well him moaning about libel actions etc., but whatever the pros and cons of such methods, the fact remains that it was Sean Matgamna and 'Socialist Organiser' who set about organising an anti-socialist campaign against the WRP in the first place, not the other way around.

Now he complains that the WRP made an 'amalgam' between SO and the BBC, following the attack on this Party and its press in the BBC 'Money Programme' in 1983. Well, what was so different about what Matgamna said and what the capitalist media said? Only that Matgamna had been saying it longer, pushing the 'Libyan gold' story before the media picked it up; and that far from distancing himself from the right-wing and pro-Zionist attacks at the time, he endorsed them and went further, smearing the Party as 'antisemitic' and even 'pogromists'.

Does he really think all this will be forgotten, just because we've got rid of Healy? Or does he expect us to accept such vicious slanders and incitement as honest polemic, or all in the sectarian game?

The Workers' Revolutionary Party will continue to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in their homeland, and to defend Libya against imperialism. Our support is not based on any 'Arab gold' — which in any case never reached our self-sacrificing membership nor corrupted their revolutionary dedication — but on basic socialist principle. As Lenin said, the 'socialist' of an oppressor nation who fails to give unconditional support to the struggle of an oppressed nation is no socialist at all, but a chauvinist.

On that test, we are prepared to be judged as against Matgamna's rightward crawling group or anyone else. There were distortions of principle under Healy's leadership, there were betrayals, and there were crimes committed by that leadership against the working class and revolutionary principles. We are fighting to overcome all this openly, in front of the workers' movement, which is the only 'court' we recognize. We are not concerned with bourgeois 'public opinion', — which is where Matgamna's talk of 'Libyan gold' etc. is always addressed, — but with the principles and needs of the working class movement, and of socialism.

We recognise that much still remains to be done, many issues remain to be clarified. We are ready to discuss with others, and to listen to what they have to say. But we are also entitled to expect of other organisations and tendencies the same honesty in approaching their own history and outlook. And until you do that, Mr Matgamna and others, please spare us your moral lectures.

BY LYN BEATON

THE beginning of this century saw women in many capitalist countries campaigning for their rights.

They fought for the right to work and to organise in trade unions for better conditions, for the right to vote and to join political parties, for higher education and improved health care and welfare services.

Women were becoming conscious of the need to challenge their oppression under capitalism and many were drawn to socialism.

In December 1908, the American Socialist Party recommended that its branches set aside the last Sunday in February 1909 to demonstrate in favour of women's suffrage.

By 1910, the last Sunday in February had become recognised by the women in the Socialist party as 'Woman's Day'. A 'Spe-

cial Women's Day Section' of the party's paper said:

'The Socialist Party is organised for the purpose of obtaining political power for the working class and at present the method by which we are trying to obtain this result is through the ballot.

'We women have no ballots. As women, then, we seek the ballot in order to be more efficiently equipped in our efforts to obtain economic security and freedom.'

Women in Europe too, had been organising; the main focus of the battles seemed to be obtaining suffrage and better working conditions.

Women of the Second International had been working in their own countries and recognised the need to bring this work together.

A Second International Conference of Socialist Women was held in Copenhagen immediately before the 1910 Congress of the Second International-

To deny women their historical heritage does not just deny their strength today, or does it mean that we simply have a one-sided view of history. It means that history itself is distorted, for history is the interaction of men and women struggling within, and to overcome, the class forces which bind them.

March 8 has become recognised throughout the world as International Women's Day. It is a day set aside to celebrate the struggles and the victories of women throughout history and a day for women to put forward their demands.

To celebrate IWD Workers Press will publish a series of articles in the near future to show the strength and importance of women in some of the great struggles against capitalism.

al and was attended by women from seventeen countries.

They unanimously passed a resolution calling for the declaration of an International Women's Day.

The resolution was moved by Klara Zetkin who had been active in the German trade unions and the Socialist Part of Germany (SDP). She was a member of the Bookbinders' Union in Stuttgart for 25 years.

She also played an ac-

tive part in the German Tailors' and Seamstresses' Union and became its provisional international secretary in 1896.

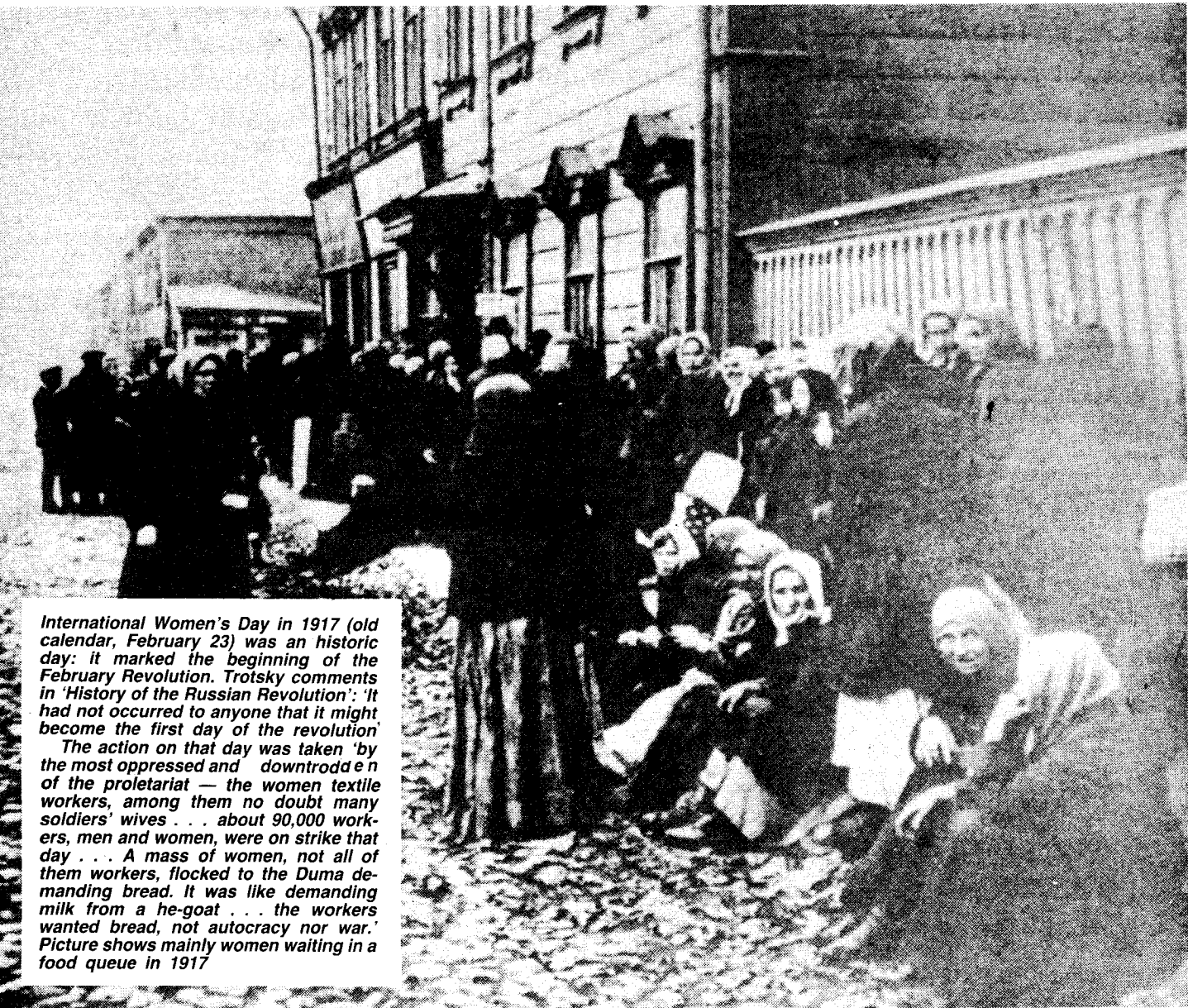
In Germany at that time, unions were very male-dominated. It was illegal for women to join any political party. Zetkin worked to unite men and women in trade unions and to give women political legality in the SPD.

In 1884, several women in Berlin tried to circumvent the law by setting up an Agitation Commission to provide a centre for trade union and SPD activity. Other cities followed this example but the centres were all banned in 1895.

In the same year Zetkin was elected to the national executive of the SPD and new methods to circumvent the laws against women's political legality were initiated.

In 1908 German women won the right to join political parties and thousands of women who had recently joined trade unions flooded into the SPD.

A year earlier, in 1907,



International Women's Day in 1917 (old calendar, February 23) was an historic day: it marked the beginning of the February Revolution. Trotsky comments in 'History of the Russian Revolution': 'It had not occurred to anyone that it might become the first day of the revolution'

The action on that day was taken 'by the most oppressed and downtrodden of the proletariat — the women textile workers, among them no doubt many soldiers' wives . . . about 90,000 workers, men and women, were on strike that day . . . A mass of women, not all of them workers, flocked to the Duma demanding bread. It was like demanding milk from a he-goat . . . the workers wanted bread, not autocracy nor war.' Picture shows mainly women waiting in a food queue in 1917

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

story

Zetkin had taken the initiative in convening the first international conference of socialist women. Attended by 59 women from fifteen countries, it decided to create an international organisation of all socialist women's organisations.

The women's movement was divided between those who simply wanted more recognition for women under capitalism and those who wanted capitalism overthrown.

Differences

These differences were reflected at the first conference. On the key issue of the vote for women, the Austrian, Belgian, British and French delegates argued that the demand for 'restricted suffrage' was more 'realistic' than a demand for universal suffrage.

What they meant by 'restricted' was that the vote should only be given to those with property or a certain income whereas Zetkin and the Russian delegate Alexander Kollantai argued that suffrage must be given to all.

Zetkin strongly criticised the 'bourgeois feminism' behind the appeals for restricted suffrage, despite these differences, the conference passed strong resolutions that socialist parties of all countries have a duty to struggle energetically for the introduction of universal suffrage for women and that 'socialist women must not ally themselves with the bourgeois feminists, but lead the battle side by side with the socialist men.'

The 1910 conference vote was endorsed by the whole Second International Congress. It stated:

'In agreement with the class-conscious, political and trade union organisations of the proletariat of their respective countries, the Socialist women of all countries will hold each year a Women's Day, whose foremost purpose it must be to aid the attainment of women's suffrage.'

Entire

'This demand must be handled in conjunction with the entire women's question according to Socialist precepts. The Women's Day must have an international character and is to be prepared carefully.'

Although the original resolution focused on the special issue of enfranchisement for women, IWD quickly came to represent all of the political and social demands put



In 1888, hundreds of women workers at the Bryant and May matchbox factory struck work, and won the right to organise in a union. This picture shows the boxing room in the East London factory at that time.

forward by women. It was celebrated in the US and several European countries in February 1911.

Later that same year the Second International Conference of Socialist Women called for a reaffirmation of the day and proposed March 8 in commemoration of a large clothing workers strike which had taken place in America in 1908.

Gradually more and more countries observed IWD. In Russia in 1913, IWD was held for the first time — six days early because of a fear of interference by the police. Celebrations took place in six cities: in St. Petersburg so many people came to the meeting that the large hall, which held more than a thousand, overflowed on to the street outside.

Unlike the German situation, women had always been part of the Russian trade union movement. In the early years of this century they organised many strikes and their demands were very advanced and focused on the special needs of women workers.

Demands were made for pregnancy leave, for half-pay during confinement leave, for relief from carrying heavy weights during pregnan-

cy, for two one-hour breaks per day for nursing mothers, for a policy against the firing of pregnant women and an end to a policy of not hiring married women.

On IWD in 1913, the Bolshevik newspaper 'Pravda' commemorated the day with a special six-page issue and, at the St. Petersburg meeting, one of the main speakers, a textile worker, Ianchevskaya summed up the feeling of the assembly by saying: 'The women workers' movement is a tributary flowing into the great river of the proletarian movement and giving it strength.'

Militant

IWD became a regular and very militant display of the strength of women workers in Russia. Each year involved meetings, marches and rallies and often led to confrontation with the police who made mass arrests.

On March 8 1917, women textile workers decided to call a general strike against the advice of all political parties. The textile workers called on women standing in bread lines to join.

When they discovered there was no bread, women began to smash the bakeries and poured

into the city centre. They made makeshift banners calling for 'Bread'. A great mass of women stormed across the Neva bridge and thronged the streets.

Over the next few days the movement grew in size and spirit and was soon invading army barracks to seize guns and calling on male workers to join them. By March 12, Czar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate. The Provisional government which replaced him became the first government of a major power to grant women the vote.

After the October Revolution of the same year, IWD was declared a public holiday in the Soviet Union.

In China, March 8 was first observed in 1924. A number of demands were raised: Down with imperialism, down with the warlords, fight for women's liberation, equal rights for women in employment, education, wages and participation in politics, protect child labourers and pregnant women, no child brides, no polygamy, no housemaids, no concubines, no prostitution.

These demands reflect the problems faced by women in China at the time and the way they were tackled by the early

Chinese Communists.

It seems that IWD was first celebrated in Britain in 1926, the year of the general strike. After that, celebrations seemed to have been sporadic but mainly involved women from the Communist Party and the Women's Co-operative Guild, who set up meetings and demonstrations linking specific concerns of women with various important topical themes — mainly round anti-fascist work and anti-war protests.

In Britain after World War II, IWD became institutionalised by the bourgeoisie. Probably in an attempt to cut off the anger which was developing against women who had been elevated to new careers during the war and were now being thrown back to their old, menial jobs.

In 1946 'Women's Own' ran an editorial which urged women to get involved in IWD and said:

'Any sort of share in a communal effort of this kind gives one a sense of "belonging" and if we aren't sitting at the Central Halls Westminster there is no reason why we shouldn't be at the village or townhall Sweetcombe-on-Calm helping to express the faith which we as women feel in a world of peace.'

In the 1950s, when women were being urged to stay at home and find fulfillment as wives and mothers, IWD became a very low-key event. Sedate meetings were called by the National Assembly of Women calling for unity among women on the basis of their desire for peace, and concern for their children.

This had nothing at all to do with the spirit of IWD as conceived by the women of the Second International.

Rumblings

However in the late 1960s the rumblings of the international crisis brought with it a new wave of women's activism, reflecting, as had the earlier movement, two distinct strains: bourgeois feminism fighting for more access to the capitalist cake for the middle-class and socialist women working within the trade unions and working-class movements for better conditions for women workers.

IWD was rediscovered and re-activated in this period by women around the world. In Britain, demonstrations were held around the country in 1971 which proclaimed the

arrival of the new movement in Britain and demands were formulated for the day.

Since then it has been celebrated annually, but perhaps the best IWD seen in this country was the rally held last year in Chesterfield in celebration of the strength and inspiration of the women involved in the coal dispute of 1984-85.

The rally was attended by thousands of women from all over the country, many of whom had never partaken in any political activity before the onset of the year-long strike. These women had fought side by side with men to defend their communities and in doing so had asserted themselves as women.

International Women's Day reminds us that the struggles of women have come a long way but we still have a long way to go.

In the current crisis of capitalism, with the attacks of the Tory government bent on destroying the working class, it is important that we develop a programme and an effective series of demands to ensure that the enormous strength and energy of women is not mis-directed away from revolutionary struggle.

LETTERS to the Editor

The Editorial board of Workers Press welcomes letters on any topic from all our readers. Please address them to The Editor, Workers Press, 21b Old Town, London, SW4 0JT. Please try to keep your letters short — they have much

more chance of getting printed. While we try to print letters as they arrive, we reserve the right to edit letters to give everybody a chance. Where letters have been edited, this will be indicated.

Plan for aid to poor countries

RECENTLY, I heard a record which was played along with a video at 'Live Aid'. It started me thinking again about the 'Live Aid' programme last summer.

Although an enormous amount of money was raised by millions of people for the starving people of Ethiopia, people continue to die and before very long there will be another famine.

Bob Geldof has said himself that a lot of the money has gone down the drain. I don't want to knock, in any way, the sacrifices or feelings of the people who gave, many of whom made real sacrifices. Youth particularly responded, showing that they do care what is happening to people in other countries.

What do we do next year? What do we do the year after? Famine isn't brought about by natural causes or by God. It doesn't come about because of lack of money. It comes about as the result of capitalist production and distribution and the history of imperialism in the colonial countries.

We have food mountains all over Europe while people are starving because the multi-nationals and big food producers are not there to feed people but to make profit.

Imperialism developed these African countries to produce crops to serve the capitalists of the 'mother' country. They distorted

and broke up their own production of food, and they took their land.

Is charity the answer to starvation in Africa and other former colonial areas? Is it the answer to starvation, unemployment and poverty in the Western world? No!

It seems to me that the answer is in an agricultural programme for these areas with irrigation projects, the building of roads etc. and the advance of technology.

These areas need things like modern implements, tractors, trucks, clothes etc. In Britain we have factories which used to produce such necessities. Millions who used to work in them are now on the dole.

They could work for Africa and take some of their produce in exchange. It needs an international plan to get it started, with credits to enable the Africans to begin. Who could produce such a plan and implement it? Not the multi-nationals, not the capitalists, only the working class.

If the trade unions are to do their duty to the unemployed here and to the starving people of Africa then they have to draw up such a plan linking all these masses together.

There is enough experience, knowledge and skill among trade unionists to draw up the plan in detail, in collaboration with trade unions, and national li-

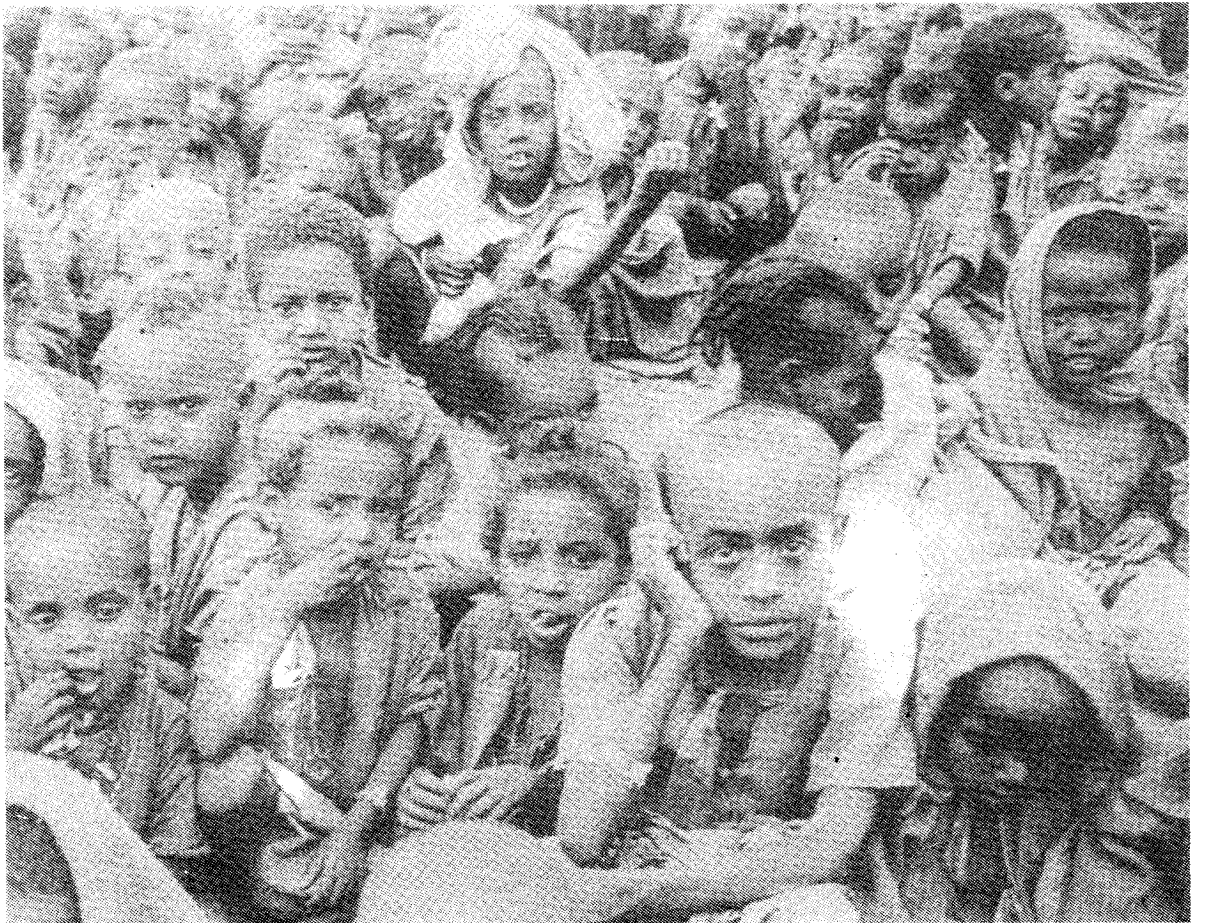
beration movements in Africa

How would such a plan be carried through. Only by struggle and determination. Only by workers' strength and control, only by men and women, unemployed and working, exerting their power over governments and capitalists.

Surely we should demand such a plan. The youth that supported Bob Geldof and his Live Aid programme would also support such a plan. They could help the Africans but also for the first time some of them would have work which they could feel was useful.

P.S. I would like readers comments.

Phyllis Maginnis
Toxteth



Children at the Korem feeding centre in northern Ethiopia

Healy's group is politically schizoid

Who are the Trotskyists?

My letter concerns a struggle to get to grips with the philosophical and political degeneration of the party, not just from Healy himself but by Healy's co-thinkers and collaborators.

I say this because no one bureaucrat, no matter how degenerate his thinking or practice, can exist without supporters. Stalin was chosen by the bureaucracy not the other way round.

The point I would like to raise and answer concerns the statement made by Cde Slaughter at the London meeting where he said the 'evidence against Hansen was only circumstantial'. But having said this, no more on this point was elaborated on.

I then learned from the pages of the SWP of America publication that a letter has existed since

1939, and in 'revisionist' circles quite readily available. The letter states that Trotsky himself knew of Hansen's involvement with the GPU and in fact encouraged it, with the intent to secure information upon the GPU activities in America.

If Hansen was set up by the IC of which Healy was a leading light, then why?

And if it is true I feel all documents must be revealed to the workers of the world.

For if this question is merely glossed over as 'circumstantial evidence' and left at that I have to ask the question when was the movement Trotskyist and just who are the Trotskyists?

Yours seeking the truth,

P. Watt, Portsmouth

OFF-THE-CUFF remarks made in recent months by the Healyite group are very revealing.

'History is made in the class-war, not in the bed-room' (Mitchell); 'All morality is bourgeois morality,' (de la Tour); 'If Healy is a rapist, we need more rapists,' (C. Redgrave); 'I am neither for or against corruption,' (another Redgrave gem).

These remarks reveal a profound dualism — in fact they are politically schizoid.

The personal is split from the social; morality is split from socialism and attached exclusively to the bourgeoisie; sexuality is split from the rest of human social existence.

Healy himself in his recent diatribe in 'News Line' refers to Cdes Slaughter and Banda as carrying out a 'police job'. You see, Healy's politics are quite simple really: if you're not with him, you're with MI5 or



Mitchell



Redgrave



Healy

the CIA. Here is another dualism: you're either a Healyite or a policeman.

In an earlier article, Cde Obank referred to the split between mind and body that Healy's sexual abuses revealed. We've all heard of Nero fiddling while Rome burned: Healy's mind was spinning sub-Hegelian fantasies while his body was abusing female comrades.

And now some of the Healyites are accusing

Cde Slaughter and other comrades of 'contemplating' reality instead of engaging in practice. I refer to Healy's mournful little pamphlet, 'Leninism 58 years on', page 9:

'What is important for the student of dialectics is to be able to contemplate philosophically the material unity of the world as matter in motion.'

Come on, O'Regan: you accuse Cde Slaughter of

being in 'the contemplative dead end of the isolated individual thinker,' ('News Line' February 12). Where is your beloved Guru?

The other evening, a Healyite camp-follower called on me, and we had a short ill-tempered argument. In the course of this, she said that 1986 was the year of 'the British insurrection'.

When I questioned this,

I was told I wouldn't know a real worker if I saw one, and that the 'real' working class were ready for insurrection. This is where Healyism ends up: in pre-programmed schema that are fitted onto whatever the current political situation is.

I've heard a lot of talk about 'the pressure of imperialism' resulting in the degeneracy of Healyism. This is a bit of a euphemism. Healyism is an expression of utmost fear and hostility to the working class. That's why Torrance can say of young girls that they're 'rubbish'.

Healy himself has been in his head so long he can't even face the allegations of sexual abuse in his recent 'News Line' article. He just refers to 'the moral issues', and leaves it at that. And then he accuses Cde Banda of splitting history from logic! What about your own history, Healy?

Into the dust-bin with this skulking political degeneracy! For the regeneration of Trotskyism and the Fourth International!

Barry Forder
Tooting

Loyalist terror leaves state forces 'powerless'



THATCHER

THE long-awaited Loyalist revolt against the Anglo-Irish deal took to the streets of the north of Ireland last Monday amid looting, intimidation and widespread terror tactics.

In Lurgan, 240 textile workers, mainly women, were hurriedly evacuated from their factory as Loyalist gangs torched the building.

Throughout the Six Counties there were reports of road blocks to ambush workers who attempted to defy the strike ultimatum.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary, for all their history of brutality and terror against the

nationalist population, were apparently unable to meet appeals for help from those who objected to being forced to toe the Paisley-Molyneux Unionist line.

Even more interesting was the very low-profile approach of the British army. In spite of bands of masked and armed men patrolling the streets, the army was nowhere to be seen.

It would seem that in spite of the much vaunted Anglo-Irish accord, there was an unspoken agreement between the army top brass and the Tory government to let the Loyalists 'take over'.

Northern Ireland Secretary Tom King did utter a few words of con-

BY SARAH HANNIGAN

demnation, saying it was a 'sad day' for Ulster but, in the Six Counties context, it means little.

His words carry even less weight when it is recorded that off-duty members of the Ulster Defence Regiment — officially armed and paid for by the British government — were manning barricades in some parts of the province.

In the aftermath of the day of protest, former Unionist hard men Ian Paisley and James Molyneux issued a statement condemning violence and intimidation.

They are anxious to try

and regain the leadership of the 'Ulster says No' campaign which they fear they may have lost to the para-militaries and the Ulster Clubs which have mushroomed in the province in recent months.

Next stage in the campaign will be an indefinite strike during the summer — if these sections have their way.

Others are pinning their hopes on the civil disobedience programme of ufto pay rates; a number of Loyalist-dominated councils have refused to set a legal rate.

It remains to be seen how they will be dealt with — no doubt Lambeth and Liverpool councillors will

be watching with interest.

In fact, a week previously, Belfast council refused to set a rate in contempt not only of the Westminster government but also of three High Court appeal judges.

Yet there has been no shock, horror, crisis or witch-hunt: Neil Kinnock has not threatened to expel anyone or even condemn 'violence'. There are different rules for Labour and Unionist councils.

It should be noted that on Kinnock's only 'flying' visit to the North of Ireland he met these same Unionist leaders, but refused categorically to meet elected Sinn Fein leaders.



PAISLEY

Bus chiefs get tough on eve of poll

ONE thousand nine hundred London bus drivers and conductors balloted on Thursday in each of the 58 garages on the issue of all-out strike action starting on March 24.

The proposed strike is in support of the Transport and General Workers' Union London bus Committee's call for suspension of the tendering out of routes to private companies and against the increase in one-person buses and the close of five garages.

Only two days before the garages met to vote on the strike call, the

chairman of London Bus Ltd, John Telford-Beasley, informed the union, in response to their 1986 wage claim, that management was giving three months' notice to terminate the main agreement covering the wages, hours of work, sick pay and severance pay of London busworkers.

In a drive to save £500,000 by the end of March, local management have been told not to cover the duties of bus

crews who are off sick, resulting in gaps in bus services with the public left standing at the bus stops in the cold and rain.

Figures published by the T&GWU this week show that in spite of massive reduction in the number of staff employed, there has been a 10 per cent increase in the number of busworkers assaulted on duty.

The gaps in bus services resulting from man-

agement-organised cuts must result in more bus crews being open to assault because of inadequate services.

Bus crews in the Croydon area staged lightning strikes last weekend over the assault on a driver resulting in his losing an eye.

Organisations representing passenger pressure groups have already complained to London Buses as the reduction in

the levels of services, and public meetings are planned to organise joint action between those who work on London's buses and those who rely on the bus services to be able to move about.

The T&GWU officials have coined the slogan:

When it comes to bus cuts, London Transport leaves you standing — the public in the bus queues, the bus workers on the dole queues.

Twisted knickers at the News Line

BY DAVE BRUCE

THERE seems to be a program bug in the Healy rump's 'Apple' typesetting system.

'News Line' Monday March 3 reports the assassination of Nablus mayor Zafer al-Masri and ends the piece:

'Al-Masri was one of the 'moderates' being cultivated by Hussein and Peres to form an "alternative" PLO.

'Al-Masri's death is a warning to any other would-be collaborators.'

Next day, they report that, 'More than 50,000 people attended yesterday's funeral of Zafer al-Masri, the assassinated mayor of Nablus.

'Huge crowds chanted nationalist and pro-PLO slogans as his body was carried through the streets.

'The funeral turned into a massive show of strength for Yassir Arafat's Al Fatah movement.

'Mourners denounced Jordan's King Hussein who recently broke off the joint PLO-Jordanian peace initiative'.

On day one, the man is a Quisling who has met his just deserts. On day two, he is a martyr of the Palestinian cause.

The Mitchell school of cynicism lives on. Truly today's newspaper is tomorrow's rubbish.

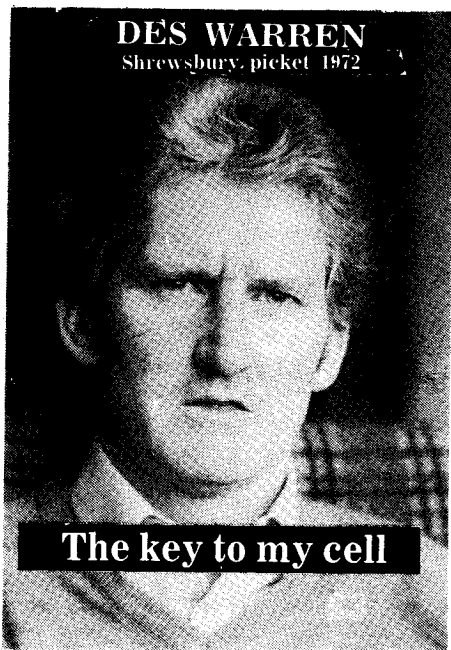
The struggle of the Palestinian people remains a beacon for revolutionaries the world over — not a pretext for a cheap pretence at 'inside' knowledge.

The following excerpt from 'Israel and Palestine Political Report' (published in Paris by anti-Zionist Jews) merits thought.

'On January 19

... Peres was interviewed on Dutch television and asked about his willingness to talk to the PLO... Peres went on to say that, "We are talking to true representatives of the Palestinian people," declaring that Israel's chosen talking partner was the newly-appointed Nablus mayor, Thamer al-Masri... 'The wily Dutch TV reporters immediately contacted al-Masri and asked for his comments. Al-Masri, a true diplomat, responded vaguely and then added, "However, nothing can be done without the agreement of the PLO, the only true representative of the Palestinian people." The Peres effort to bypass the PLO was thus revealed to international audiences.'

It seems the only man Peres fooled might well have been a News Line reporter.



DES WARREN
Shrewsbury picket 1972

The key to my cell

Vital reading for all trade unionists

Get your copy now from New Park Publications bookshops or write to: 21b Old Town, Clapham, London SW4 0JT

£3 + 65p p&p

ORDER NOW!

from New Park Publications

THE MINERS' STRIKE
1984-85
IN PICTURES



The News Line

Proud record of the year-long miners' strike — the best of the pictures from the daily coverage by News Line

£5

+ p&p £1.20

2ND EDITION — WITH MORE PICTURES

- 16 full-colour pictures
- 252 black-and-white pictures

A highly professional picture record of the strike; it firms up the old adage that one picture still equals a thousand words... they leap out from the pages, proclaiming the sheer unadulterated joy of being alive at a time of momentous struggle.

The Miner — journal of the NUM

Order your copy now by sending this form with £5 payment (plus £1.20 if you want it sent by post)

I would like copy(ies) of 'The Miners' Strike 1984-85'

I enclose £..... (£5 per copy + £1.20 p&p if required)

Name.....

TU branch/organisations.....

Address.....

Complete and return to: New Park Publications Ltd
21b Old Town, Clapham, London SW4 0JT



STALIN



SHOSTAKOVICH



EISENSTEIN

Stalin's hatchet man haunts Moscow again

ONE OF the most hated figures of the Stalin era was honoured in the Soviet press last week, sending a chill wind up the spines of many of the Soviet people.

Huge articles appeared in 'Pravda' and 'Izvestia' celebrating the 90th birthday anniversary of the birth of Andrei Zhdanov — Stalin's leading hatchet-man in purges of Party and intellectual life, and in running the post-war Cominform as a tool of Stalinist power-politics.

The 27th Soviet Communist Party congress opened exactly 30 years after Khrushchev's famous 'secret speech' to the 20th congress, confirming much of what Trotskyists had always said about the crimes of the Stalin era, the purges, frame-up trials and state-organised murders. But not a word appeared in the Soviet press to recall this anniversary.

Taken together, the rehabilitation and the omission must be raising fears. The party's central committee Institute of Marxist-Leninism held a celebration of Zhdanov's birthday. Had either Marx or Lenin been around in Zhdanov's day, they would certainly not have survived his purges.

The period 1946 to 1948

when he was at the height of his powers is remembered with horror and disgust as the 'Zhdanovschina', when the cult of Stalin and Great Russian chauvinism reigned supreme, and everybody from party philosophers to music composers had to submit — or else.

Zhdanov first gained prominence as Stalin's protege in 1935, replacing the murdered Sergei Kirov as head of the powerful party organization in Leningrad.

The following year, sixteen leading Bolsheviks, including Zinoviev, were framed in the first of the infamous Moscow show trials, accused of running a 'terrorist centre' directed by the exiled Trotsky. Zhdanov shared the 'honour' with Stalin of being one of the 'conspirators' alleged targets, according to the prosecution.

Attack

In the subsequent attack on Bukharin and Rykov, in 1937, it was Zhdanov who was to the fore in denunciations. Then in 1939, after thousands of loyal communists had been deported, tortured or murdered, Stalin decided temporarily to call a halt and Zhdanov made a hypocritical speech denouncing local officials for 'going too far' in their zeal for the purges!

Much of the suffering endured by Leningrad's population under siege and famine in World War II has been blamed on Zhdanov's failure to

make adequate preparations.

In his major speech in the city afterwards, he said nothing about the Leningrad workers' suffering and heroism, but spoke only of the 'genius' of 'comrade Stalin' in supposedly organizing Leningrad's defence.

It was in August 1946 that Zhdanov, now in charge of Agitation and Propaganda, summoned writers to a meeting, where he bitterly attacked the popular humourist Zoshchenko, accusing him of slandering the Soviet people as 'stupid and primitive', and of 'poisonous hostility to the Soviet regime'. He characterised the writer's career as twenty-five years of 'political hooliganism'.

Then he turned on the famous poetess Anna Akhmatova, calling her work 'the poetry of a crazy gentlewoman dashing backwards and forwards between her boudoir and her chapel.' The new arbiter of Soviet culture declared 'Half-nun and half-harlot, that's what she is.' The 'Zhdanovschina' had begun.

Soviet literature was not obliged to 'make room for tastes and morals which have absolutely nothing in common with the moral standards and qualities of Soviet people', Zhdanov declared.

He quoted his master, Stalin, as saying the Soviet writer must become an 'engineer of hu-

BY CHARLES POTTINS

man souls'. The old Marxist idea that a writer's first job is to tell the truth was clearly out — not to say dangerous!

Akhmatova and Zoshchenko were expelled from the Writers' Union, — in effect, forbidden to write. Magazines were closed. Then it was the turn of the film industry, as the Stalinist leadership denounced 'films without ideological content'. The great Soviet directors Pudovkin and Eisenstein were singled out, the latter for having allegedly slandered... the regime of Ivan the Terrible!

Maybe Stalin and his cronies felt Eisenstein's film on Czar Ivan was slyly getting at him! But the bigger issue involved was the chauvinism adopted by the regime, which increasingly meant not only depicting Soviet Russia in the most glowing colours, but pre-Revolutionary Russia too.

It was under Zhdanov's guidance that Soviet publications began insisting that every scientific discovery or invention had been made by a Russian first. This insistence on Russian supremacy occasioned humour abroad, but was less amusing for some of the other Soviet nationalities.

Whereas Lenin had called Czarist Russia 'a prisonhouse of nations', Soviet textbooks now began praising the 'progressive' side of Czarist conquests and forced 'assimilation' — that is, cultural oppression of minorities.

Some entire nationalities had been denounced as 'traitor' after the War, and others learned they were less valued than Great Russians. Now their writers and teachers had to beware charges of 'bourgeois nationalism', etc — other than Great Russian nationalism, that is.

Those Soviet peoples with international links were especially suspect in this chauvinist wave, and the Zhdanovschina soon brought with it the revival of a particular Russian nationalist tradition. Certain writers and intellectuals began being denounced in the press as 'rootless cosmopolitans'.

Murder

In case readers did not know what this meant, or what the ethnic background of those accused was, the papers supplied their 'real', i.e. 'Jewish' names. The new wave of antisemitism between 1948 and 1952 brought the state murder of almost all the leading figures in Soviet Jewish culture.

Even after his death in 1948, Zhdanov had a role to play. The infamous 'Jewish doctors' plot' cooked-up by Stalin in 1952 had as its scenario an international conspiracy to kill Soviet leaders, and the arrested and tortured doctors were supposed to have confessed that Zhdanov was their first victim.

Leading Soviet philosophers had been attacked by Zhdanov for 'exaggerating the influence of Hegel' on Marx — yet

another example supposedly of 'kowtowing to the West', as Zhdanov called it. For musicians, the chauvinist policy at first meant the highest praise, — it was said nothing abroad could compare.

But then when Stalin decided he was dissatisfied with Soviet composers' work, Zhdanov became an expert on music criticism too. Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian were among those denounced for 'formalist perversions, anti-democratic tendencies which are alien to the Soviet people and their artistic tastes'.

The Zhdanovschina did not stop at the borders of the Soviet Union. The combination of hard-line Stalinism and national chauvinism was exported via the Cominform under Zhdanov's leadership to other Communist Parties, such as the French and British, which were instructed not only to praise everything Russian but to seek out the 'patriotic forces' in their own countries who might stand up to US imperialism.

The British Stalinists' concoction of folk-song, flag-waving and anti-American, anti-German chauvinism, polluting many an Aldermaston march once they'd decided to join (initially they supported the British Bomb), can be traced at least partly to the Zhdanovschina. So can the French CP's support for the Gaullist nuclear 'force de frappe'.

It was Zhdanov's particular job as head of the Cominform to drill the East European parties into line against the Yugoslavs in 1948, ending any argument with 'We possess information that Tito is an imperialist spy.'

'Comrade Zhdanov could brilliantly analyse the complicated questions of political economy, philosophy and culture', 'Pravda' has declared in its eulogy. This re-enthroning of Stalin's ideological henchman must raise speculation as to how long it can be before the great 'genius' himself is fully resurrected.

Interviewed recently in the French CP daily 'L'Humanite', Gorbachev declared: 'Stalinism is a concept made up by opponents of communism and used on a large-scale to smear the Soviet Union and socialism as a whole.'

He also claimed there were no political prisoners in the Soviet Union, and that 'we do not put people on trial for their convictions'. But added, 'any state must protect itself against those who try to subvert it'. You see, there are no 'political' prisoners, — they are all 'criminals' and 'agents'.

Gorbachev is being billed currently as a 'reformer', and has even used the expression himself. But then again, the Moscow trials and the great purges were preceded by the most beautiful democratic Stalin Constitution of 1936, and accompanied by Popular Frontism and international betrayals.

LIVERPOOL UNDER THE HAMMER



Liverpool — It All Came Tumbling Down: a Photographic Commentary on Liverpool through the eyes and lens of Freddy O'Connor. Published by Brunswick. £2.95.

BY MARIA SLOANE

photographs and maps. Unlike the glossy pictures of the main buildings in the city centre, taken for the benefit of the tourist trade, O'Connor concentrates on the working class areas where the ordinary 'Scousers' lived.

Now the bulldozers are busily destroying many of the old communities. In some cases, that is not a bad thing.

In 1790 Liverpool had 2000 cellars which provided homes for 700. It goes a long way to explain why there were so many diseases.

Nevertheless, Liverpool people look back with nostalgia at the old areas they were brought up in, and O'Connor's book is a bestseller.

As a young Liverpool lass brought up in Toxteth, I can see there is always something being knocked down around town. Many of the places O'Connor photographed were gone before I saw them, and it seems there is more green grass and bare land than anything else.

All credit to the author for capturing these pictures just before, or as the bulldozers do their work.

FREDDY O'CONNOR spent twenty years photographing different parts of Liverpool. After a career in the merchant navy, he worked as a docker, bus driver and taxi driver, with ample opportunity to get to know the changing face of the city.

There are 76 pages of

Roads to ruin

Motorway Madness: Roads and their Impact on the Natural Environment. By Charles Secrett and Victoria Cliff Hodges. Friends of the Earth.

A DAMNING indictment of the Department of Transport's road-building programme has been published by the Friends of the Earth.

Wildlife and plants are threatened by noise, as well as pollution from gases and minute particles of lead and other poisons.

A mile of motorway can consume as much as 26 acres, and the routes are chosen with little or no concern for the damage they do to the natural beauty of the countryside, or the irreplaceable species of plants and animals.

The report details the damage to 110 specific 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest' which will be damaged or destroyed by roads already built or planned.

The report stresses that the relentless logic of the roads lobby rides roughshod over these scientific considerations which have long-term implications.

Agricultural profit has already given a battering to wildlife through intensive farming and the cutting of trees, and the book is a plea for government collaboration with the conservationists.

Song of Nicaragua

BY ESTELLA SCHMIDT

'THE Nicaraguan revolution is the result of all the revolutions in Latin America and the Third World — It was today, 19 years ago, that Camillo Torres, one of the many heroes of the revolution died in the mountains.

He was a priest and guerilla fighter and we would like to pay our homage to him . . . we respect all those like him, ordinary people who identify themselves with the revolution . . .

With these words, Carlos Majia Godoy introduces one of the many powerful songs he performed in the Nicaraguan show in which he appeared in a two-week season with the Ballet Folklorico Nacional for the first time ever in Britain, at the Shaw Theatre, London.

Carlos is a national celebrity, a singer whose songs were banned by the Somoza regime and inspired by the revolutionary struggles of the Nicaraguan people.

In one of his best known



one of his best known songs 'Nicaragua Nicaragua' (little Nicaragua now you are free I love you even more) he expresses the pride and enthusiasm which the Nicaraguan people felt at having freed themselves from Somoza's tyranny. He tells us that this spirit is still alive today when the country is under siege, engaged in a desperate war against the US backed Contra guerillas.

In two songs he also salutes all those heroic comrades who gave their lives to the revolution: Augusto Sandino, the 'father of the revolution', Carlos Fonseca, and all the thousands of workers, women and children.

Following the death of Sandino, popular resistance continued, culminating in the formation of the FSLN (Sandinista Libera-

tion Front) which overthrew Somoza in 1979 and provoked cruel and savage acts of murder and destruction on the part of the National Guard.

The damage due to the war was estimated at around 5 billion US dollars. Out of a population of under 3 million people, 60,000 died in the last 52 days of the war, 250,000 fled their homes and 50,000 were orphaned. The Nicaraguan people were left with a country in ruins and in huge economic crisis. Despite enormous difficulties over the last seven years, great advances have been made in the rebuilding of the economy.

Children have access to free education, clinics and health centres have been built, peasant farmers have been given land of their own, trade union membership has

risen from 27,000 to 260,000.

Women are playing an active role in society and have their own organisations, and the number of people unable to read and write has dropped from over 59 per cent to just around 12 per cent.

With the appropriation of political power, there was a corresponding democratization of cultural activity reflecting 'the participation of individuals at all levels of society'.

What has been happening in Nicaragua should be of great interest to us: a country freeing itself from a history of oppression by a near feudal oligarchy, from US imperialism and the power of the multi-nationals.

At the same time the discovery of their own means of expression is part of their own liberation.

The national objective is to return to the unwritten history of the people, eclipsed by colonialism and Somoza's rule to rediscover authentic Nicaraguan culture.

All this is part of the government's 'popular education programme'. As Ernesto Cardenal, the minister of culture, said 'The culture has, in the new Nicaragua, to develop the revolutionary consciousness and it also has to go hand in hand with our people in our economic transformation.

'And it has to serve in order to overcome the division between intellectual work and manual work — our art will have to interpret the daily happenings of the revolution — we have already seen this for example with Carlos Majia Godoy and his brothers and with many other important revolutionary artists:

'Art in Nicaragua has been acting as interpreter of the revolution. Our people have resisted cultural genocide in the same way

it resisted military genocide'.

The new Nicaraguan culture started in the anti-Somoza movement to 'recover our heritage and cultural dignity' at a time when there was total cultural dependence on the US and Somoza had control over TV, radio, and even the record industry.

Carlos started singing largely influenced by popular folklore, he performed in slums and villages. Soon the songs became more and more political, like songs attacking the National Guard or the squandering of aid sent after the 1972 earthquake.

Although his work was banned under the Somoza

regime, his songs were still heard thanks to a clandestine distribution system, with tapes and records smuggled in from Costa Rica.

In 1974, he was briefly arrested, along with Rosario Murillo, after they had started an underground cultural movement. They were released 'because there was an instant, popular demonstration and that's when we realized what an effective weapon we had — so we kept on singing'.

Since then, almost everyone of his songs speaks of the people in struggle — his war songs, those on Guittara Armada, in which he musically teaches guerillas how to make contact bombs or strip and assemble guns.

Harsh words

The Battlefield. By Milton Smalling. First Class Publications, £2.95.

MILTON SMALLING writes poetry in a way which is harsh rather than lyrical, adaptations of speech rather than obscure.

What is significant in the work of this young Jamaican-born poet is what has inspired him. For he writes not only of the oppression of

black youth at the hands of a mass-unemployment racist society and the state forces, but about international issues.

The final poem in this, his third published volume, is called 'Collective Strength', and it addresses everyone who will one day have to make a political stand and will need their workmates.

'Smashing the Racist State' is about South Africa, he has written several

poems about the struggles in Latin America, and there is a powerful topical poem called 'Philippines New Peoples Army.' It ends:

'They welcomed the fighters with open arms.
Fireworks lit up the skies.
Children danced in the streets.
Flags flying everywhere
And posters pointing the way to the
Presidential palace gate.'



**DEFEND TRADE UNION RIGHTS!
SMASH ANTI-UNION LAWS!
RELEASE JAILED MINERS!
RE-INSTATE SACKED MINERS!
NO SCAB LABOUR SCHEMES FOR YOUTH!**

CONFERENCES

Organised by the All Trades Unions Alliance (Industrial section of the Workers Revolutionary Party)

SCOTLAND

Sunday May 11th, 2.00pm
Stirling Miners' Welfare,
Stirling.

NORTH EAST

Saturday April 26th, 10.00am
28 Lime Street (under Byker
Bridge)

MIDLANDS

Saturday April 26th, 11.00am
International Community
Centre,
Mansfield Rd,
Nottingham.

WALES

URDD Centre,
Wind Street,
Aberdare
Sunday April 27th, 3.00pm

Please fill in the form below if you wish to attend.

Please send credentials for the ATUA conference.

Name

Address

Organisation (if any)

Please enclose 50p for each credential required

More than a number

Len Harding: Born a Number. First Tuesday, ITV Network, 10.30 pm, Tuesday March 4, Yorkshire Television. Directed by John Willis. Produced by James Cutler.

SEVEN years ago, Len Harding caught the imagination of television viewers when he appeared in the controversial documentary about ill-treatment at a maximum security unit, 'Rampton: The Secret Hospital.'

He had spent 34 of his 35 years in institutions and had arrived at Rampton in Nottinghamshire after being diagnosed a psychopath.

We last saw him soon after his release from eighteen years in Rampton. He was alone and

TV Review by Mick Daly

tearful in a bedsitter.

Now he has published his autobiography, 'Born a Number', and featured in the 'First Tuesday' programme on ITV.

Len's story exposes a savage regime of brutality, mental and physical torture and corruption.

Labelled

Rejected by his mother and labelled mentally retarded, Len Harding spent his early life in a succession of children's homes. Leaving his boarding school for educationally backward children with little more than the clothes he stood up in, the sixteen year old Len Harding was alone in a world he could scarcely understand.

He lasted just nine months in society. He was rapidly caught in a down-

ward spiral which led to mental hospital, a conviction for manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility - and Rampton.

At first he did not know why he was there, and that he was a prisoner, under Section 60 of the Mental Health Act 1959. On arrival he was advised:

'You don't answer back at any time and you don't question anything you see. Don't make any close friends among your fellow patients if you want to have an easy ride and get out some time.'

Len's nightmare is over. He was transferred to Eastdale, a pioneering rehabilitation unit which gave him the confidence to make a fresh start. He is a qualified football referee, got a job as a hospital porter, passed his City and Guilds, became

an author, and after living in an institution where even film shows were segregated, has married.

But success for Len is 'just being an ordinary member of society'.

A preface to Len's book by Larry Gostin and William Bingley sums it up:

'Where praise is due, it is given: where Len Harding experienced happiness, he says so; but when pain, brutality and inhuman treatment were his lot, he is not afraid to relieve it.'

Balanced

'His unemotional and extraordinarily balanced account enables the reader to begin to comprehend the lives and experiences and, above all, the sense of powerlessness of people who, like Len Harding, are consigned to a system which appears to be designed for the benefit of nobody, least of

all the people it is supposed to help.'

The 1979 television programme which probed the ill-treatment at Rampton won an Emmy for John Willis and James Cutler, the director and producer. The dossier of evidence they produced led to prosecutions against 23 people on 90 charges. Seven were convicted, and one jailed.

The government's Boynton Report recommended no less than 200 changes in the way Rampton was run. Its findings were accepted by the DHSS, the Home Office, the British Medical Association, the Prison Officers Association, and parliament, yet none of its major recommendations have been implemented.

One charge nurse, convicted of grievous bodily harm to a patient by breaking his jaw, has got his job back.

Len Harding cam-



Len Harding

paigns with MIND, (the National Association for Mental Health), the National Council for Civil Liberties, and PROPAP, (Protection of the Rights of Patients at Rampton).

He says in the film: 'I am convinced that Rampton should close - in everyone's interests.'

'Born a Number' by Len Harding is published by MIND at £2.95.

Torture showcase

Film Review by Tom Scott Robson

THE EYES OF BIRDS made a profound impact when it was shown at the 1983 London Film Festival.

On Thursday March it can be seen on Channel 4 at 9.30 p.m. Not to be missed.

Gabriel Auer's film is a minutely observed recreation of life in a prison for political detainees - the ironically named 'Libertad' (Liberty) prison in Uruguay.

Auer shows life prior to, during and after a visit by the Red Cross, who came to investigate alleged 'violations' of prisoners' rights (torture).

He focuses on the special 'skills' routinely practised in Libertad - from the firing squad to sophisticated forms of mental torture designed to extract false confessions.

On visiting day, a woman is turned away at the main gate for wearing a red jumper. Red is forbidden in Libertad because it implies passion and revolution.

A young girl of ten or so visits her father with a portfolio of freshly made paintings. The severe-looking female warden confiscates those that break prison regulations, like the one showing a bird in flight.

'Why can't I paint a bird?' she asks her father when they meet later. 'Because it's free,' he explains.

Next visit she brings a new collection of paintings. Her father lingers over a landscape of green fields and leafy trees with thick trunks.

'What are those strange things stuck in the trees?' he inquires, smiling.



'They are the eyes of birds' she replies

'They are the eyes of birds,' she replies.

Interviewed in November 1983, Auer explained that his interest had been aroused by a short article in 'Le Monde' in June 1980.

'It was a small item announcing the departure of a special Red Cross delegation which had just completed a special investigation there. I had been to Uruguay many years before and knew it had become one of the most repressive dictatorships anywhere. So I began my own investigating.'

Auer and his collaborators dug deep and their

attention to detail is amply demonstrated. They spent 18 months researching Libertad prison, the overall political situation in the country and the International Red Cross. They accumulated over 30 hours of interviews.

'Before embarking on the screenplay, we interviewed most of the former inmates of Libertad who had emigrated to Europe after their release - that part was easy. Obtaining information about the Red Cross, however, proved to be much harder because their delegates are sworn to secrecy.

Many sincere, well-in-

tioned people work for the International Red Cross all over the world and much of what they accomplish is invaluable. But leading members are accountable to no-one and they operate in complete secrecy.

In the final analysis, the presence of the Red Cross is merely a device enabling us to get to know Libertad and its inhabitants, most of whom seem to be members of the Uruguayan intelligentsia: journalists, musicians, brain surgeons, etc. Hardened trade union militants and leaders of the Tupamaros guerilla movement were housed

separately in an army barracks.

'Libertad was ultra-modern in its day,' explains Auer. 'They started building it in 1972 but when the military seized power in 1973, work was speeded up. They needed it urgently to accommodate the growing number of political detainees.'

'Apart from a special prison in Trelew, Argentina, Libertad is still the most up-to-date prison in Latin America. Delegations from some of the most reactionary regiments in the world make regular visits to observe and learn new skills.'

Drama of Orange & Green

7:84 Theatre Company Scotland, **BENEATH ONE BANNER**, by Sean McCarthy.

'BENEATH One Banner' is a play about a miners' strike in Roslin, near Edinburgh, in 1865, and about the Earl of Roslin's coal company's use of strikebreakers from the south of Ireland.

Sean McCarthy's play is subtitled, 'A Drama of Orange and Green: the Divisions and How They Are Kept Going,' but it is both more and less than that implies.

It is more because for most of the play McCarthy deals with a particular event, evoking not just bigotry and division but also solidarity, integrity and the possibility of unity against the employer.

This part of the evening is sustained by fine writing, beautiful humour, and a nice balance between naturalism and symbolism which occasionally threatens to be heavy handed.

A moving story of the love of a blind Protestant girl for a crippled Catholic boy is cleverly interwoven with the unfolding of a social and historical situation. The Scots miners, striking for an extra shilling a day, 'huddle on the hillside' but 'are na' slaves and lackeys'.

The Irish interlopers come from necessity, recruited with misinformation. 'Hunger, need and fixed bayonets have driven us here. In your country's name, we've been robbed of the right to exist.'

In the background is the coalowner, ruthlessly manipulating with scabs, spies and the state and planning murder to prevent the workers uniting. But just when you are getting immersed and reflecting on unostentatious but real affinities with O'Casey and Brecht, 'Beneath One Banner' makes a surprising turn.

It avoids any danger of lapsing into pretentiousness and ends in a pastiche of quick-change self-parody which has the audience rolling in the aisles.

Here I think the play achieves less than the sub-title promises. It is difficult to see what McCarthy is saying about how the divisions 'are kept going'. There is a fatalistic air about the ending which I found finally disappointing.

The last part also provides the mainly excellent cast (the Irish parts are particularly well done and written), with some challenging moments. They seem to lose their way for a period until it becomes clear that the change of style is deliberate.

As popular entertainment, it is a great success - surely one of 7:84 Scotland's best. And it should spark off some lively discussions about Irish history as the 70th anniversary of the Easter Rising approaches.

My main reservation is that I think there is an even better play in there somewhere.

Terry. Brotherstone

LETTERS

ART REVIEWS IN WORKERS PRESS

THE letter in Workers Press (January 27) entitled 'In Defence of Bourgeois Art' raised many points, not least about my review on the recent German Exhibition at the Royal Academy.

The question is what role should be played by art reviews in the Workers Press and should there be reviews at all.

In the past, art reviews in our paper were bland, unquestioning, watered-down versions of the bourgeois press, an issue I took up with the then editorial board. I received no adequate reply.

After the split, the so-called art reviewers went with the Healy gang. Their latest articles seem to be lifted from the publicity available at, for example, the Joshua Reynolds show at the Royal Academy with no comment to interest Marxists.

An art review must in content reflect the theoretical struggle going on in the party and the objective conditions of the class struggle.

Lenin put forward a resolution in 1920 saying: 'Marxism has achieved its important place in world history as an ideology of the revolutionary proletariat by not altogether rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois era, but, conversely, by acquiring and assimilating anything which, in more than 2,000 years' evolution of human thought and human culture had proved valuable.'

By this he did not mean unquestioning acceptance of bourgeois culture, not a defence of bourgeois art, but critical argument, examining, differentiating and adopting what is commensurate with the intentions of the proletarian revolution.

Trotsky also insisted that the working class must master all the culture of the past, otherwise we will not build socialism.

How do we review bourgeois art exhibitions? Apart from Trotsky's 'Art and Literature' there has been very little Trotskyist work on art published since the 1920's.

Aspect

The exhibition on German Art was one of the most important shows for Marxists in recent years. I focussed on a particular aspect — the work of three artists, George Grosz, Rudolph Schlichter and Otto Dix.

This was for several reasons, firstly their work, mainly portraits of their friends and acquaintances, among them Bertolt Brecht, the communist playwright; Ivan von Lucken, a poet who killed himself in the Nazi regime; dramatists, writers and intellectuals who all had to flee or were killed under Hitler.

The portraits epitomised history captured in a moment on canvas. They all had working class backgrounds and Grosz and Schlichter were among the first to join the Communist Party. They formed a group known as the Red Group, Union of Communist Artists of Germany. Although Dix was not a member his work was a great influence on them.

Whether this group was formed before or after the 'success' of Stalin's call for so-called proletarian art I have not yet ascertained. However, George Grosz had visited Russia for five months where he met Lenin, who is said to have admired his graphic propaganda work and he attended a meeting addressed by Trotsky.

Yet on his return his work began to lose its bite. It is known that he was shocked by conditions in Russia (also Lenin was very ill when they met) but more and more it seems that the stultifying effect of Stalin's increased bureaucratisation and policies on art was the underlying factor.

The German Communist Party supported Stalin against Trotsky with historic consequences.

The quote in my article was from 'Class and Art' a speech by Trotsky on May 9, 1924 on party policy in the field of imaginative literature. It is a record of Trotsky's struggle against Stalin on the question of 'five kopek art'.

The repercussions of Trotsky's defeat were the complete demoralisation and isolation of some of the most committed and talented artists, not least the reaction of Grosz, Schlichter and Dix. Trotsky was replying to Raskolnikov who had said that political writing and poetry should form one whole.

For my purposes I used this to include art, i.e. painting, as the creative processes in all the arts have many common bonds.

He replied to Raskolnikov that: 'At first sight this reasoning seems irre-

futable. Actually, it is an empty abstraction. At best it is a pious but unreal wish for something good.

'Of course it would be splendid if we had, to supplement our communist political writing, the Bolshevik world outlook expressed in artistic form. But we haven't, and that is not accidental.

'The heart of the matter is that artistic creativity, by its very nature, lags behind the other modes of expressions of a man's spirit, and still more of the spirit of a class.

'It is one thing to understand something and express it logically, and quite another thing to assimilate it organically, reconstructing the whole of one's feelings, and to find a new kind of artistic expression for this new entity.

'The latter process is more organic, slower, more difficult to subject to conscious influence — and in the end it will always lag behind. The political writing of a class hastens ahead on stilts, whilst its artistic creativity hobbles along behind on crutches.'

To belittle the struggles of Grosz, Dix or indeed any artist to reflect the world just because of their subsequent positions or statements would be wrong. We are not interested in bourgeois art history theories but in re-examining history so that it can be used as a tool in the hands of the working class. Art has to be demystified.

Whether Beckman, Picasso, Kirchner et al are the most important artists of the century is irrelevant. These arguments are for the bourgeois art historians

who change their opinions with the dirty washing.

'The history of art has been consistently distorted in the same way as any history. The arts have been hijacked and misrepresented until they have lost any relevance to most people's everyday life.

Yet pop music, films and videos are assimilated into the lives of the working class. Art has also a part to play. As I see it, the responsibility of the art reviewer is to break through the stranglehold that art historians have on the arts and try to provide the working class with every ammunition. Trotsky writes again in 'Art and Literature':

'Keeping on a plane of scientific investigation Marxism seeks with the same assurance the social roots of the "pure" as well as of the "tendentious" (or political, KO) art.

'It does not at all "incriminate" a poet with the thoughts and feeling which he expresses, but raises questions of a much more profound significance, namely, to which order of feeling does a given artistic work correspond in all its peculiarities?

Role

'What are the social conditions of these thoughts and feelings? What place do they occupy in the historic development of a society and of a class? ... The investigation may become complicated, detailed or individualised, but its fundamental idea will be that of the subsidiary role which art plays in the social process.'

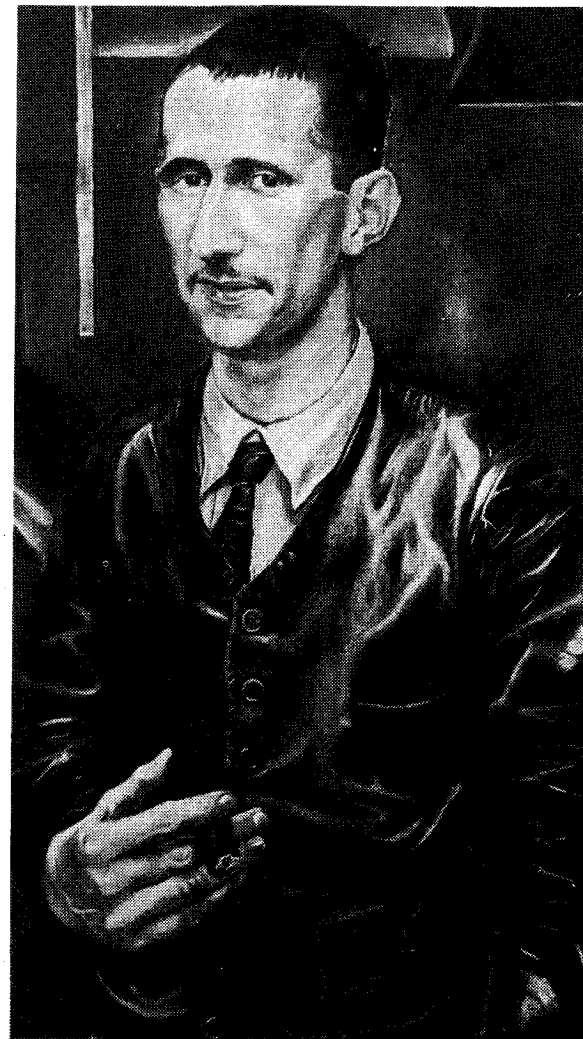
And again: 'A work of art should in the first place be judged by its own law, that is, by the law of art. But Marxism alone can explain why and how a given tendency in art has originated in a given period of history; in other words, who it was made a demand for such an artistic form and not for another, and why.'

There were some fair comments on some of my statements in the article, not least my oversimplifying of the nature of the Degenerate Art exhibition.

However, I hope to have clarified some of the other points. What is needed is for all comrades who are concerned with the nature of the past reviews to come forward with their own analysis to enrich and add to our knowledge of the misrepresentation of bourgeois art.

Kathy O'Brien

This letter has been slightly cut — Editor



Portrait of Bertolt Brecht by Rudolph Schlichter

Workers Press READ IT REGULARLY!

WORKERS PRESS leads the fight for Trotskyism and Marxist principles in the labour and trade union movement nationally and internationally. WORKERS PRESS is committed to tell the truth and uncover corruption in the workers' movement.

WORKERS PRESS gives the best and most thorough coverage of industrial, political and economic news, letters, arts, leisure — at a price everyone can afford, every weekend.

Workers Revolutionary Party

LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE MARXIST MOVEMENT

A continuing series of lectures
7.30 — 9.30pm

1). Friday 14th March The Legacy of the Second International	3). Thursday 3rd April The Permanent Revolution
2). Friday 21st March Bolshevism and Menshevism	4). Friday 11th April The Third International 1919-22

Lecturers will include: Tom Kemp, Geoff Pilling, Cyril Smith, Bob Archer and Bill Hunter.

**Friends Meeting House,
Euston Road, NW1**

All lectures start at 7.30pm Ticket: 60p

LOCAL DELIVERY delivered to your door every weekend.	POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION telephone 01-720-2000 for details.
Name	
Address	
Amount enclosed	

POST TODAY

Complete and return to: Workers Press, 21b Old Town, London SW4 0JT.

Warning of cut in youth benefits

YOUNG people face cuts in social security exceeding £250 million, MPs were warned this week by Youthaid, the national youth employment charity.

Government cuts in benefit for young people and their parents have so far reached £150 million. Youthaid warns of a further £100 million cut.

After April 1988, when the Social Security Bill comes into effect:

- 95,000 young people aged 18-24 will lose more than £8 a week;

- 5,000 young people under 18 will lose more than £14 a week;

- £40 million will be cut from young people's housing benefit, and some young people will lose more than £11 a week.

Using official figures, Youthaid calculations show that the government has already taken £150 million away from young people and their parents.

Ten cuts over seven years have ranged from withdrawal of £3.90 from unemployed young people living at home, to last year's board and lodging regulations which imposed appalling hardship on 85,000 young people.

The new Social Security Bill will take the total in cuts to £250 million with an age barrier of 25.

Single childless claimants under 25 will be deemed to need less and their benefit will be £6.60 a week less than older people.

Eighteen to 24 year olds living independently who now get £29.50 a week supplementary will only receive £24 under the new scheme.

They will also have to pay all their water rates and 20 per cent of their domestic rates, making a total average loss of £8.55 a week.

Single householders under 18 will lose even more, since they will receive only £18.20 income support; their benefit could fall by over £14 a week.

Armagh jail protest today

Protests against strip searching of women in Armagh prison will be held throughout the north of Ireland this week-end.

Women will picket the jail itself on Saturday. They point out that since 1982 there have been 3,000 strip searches on a prison population which has never exceeded 35!

A spokeswoman for the prisoners said last week that strip searching is continuing unabated, despite claims to the contrary by Stormont Minister for Security, Nicholas Scott.

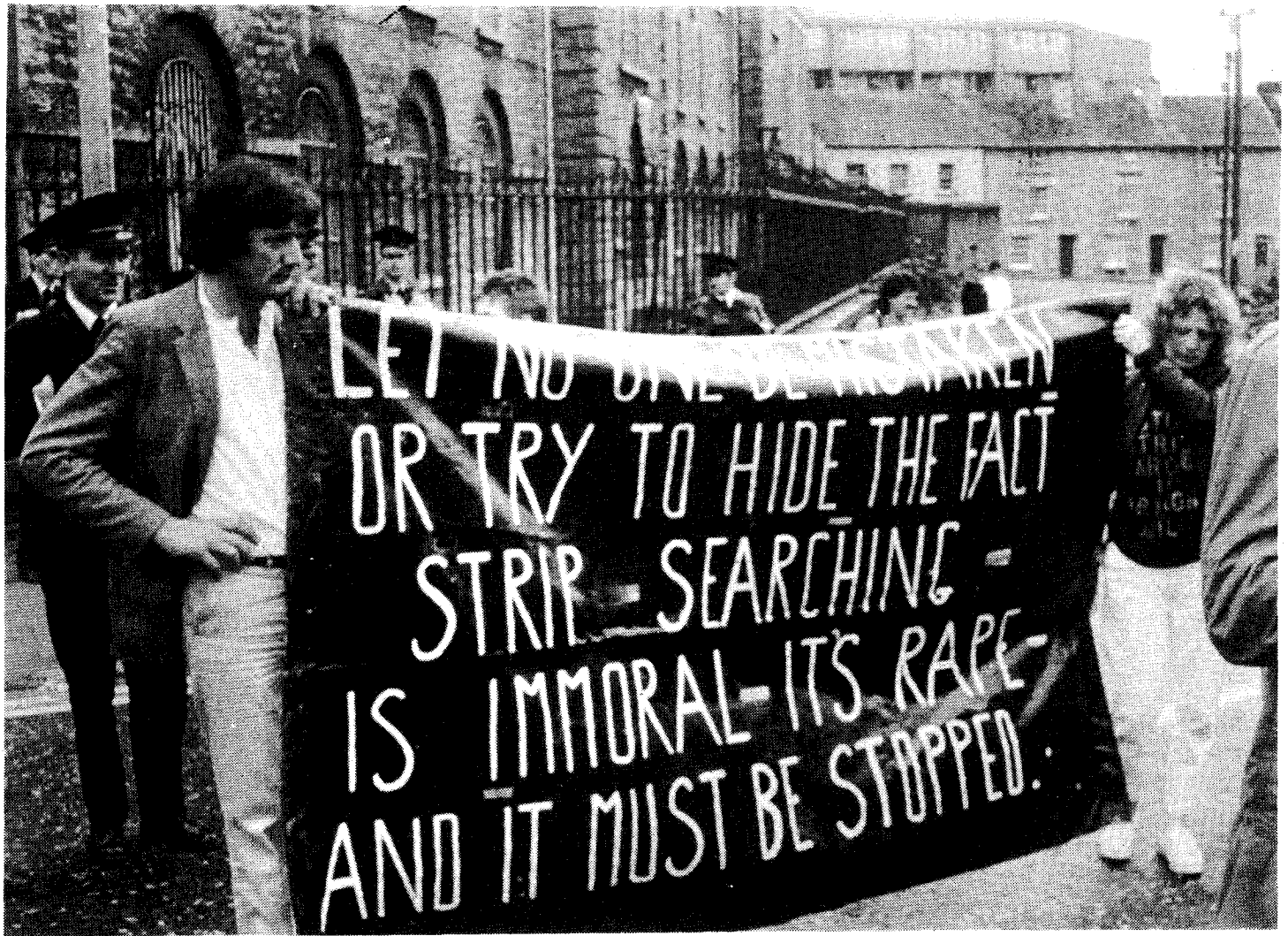
She said: 'The decline in statistics is due to only one factor — the steady decrease in the prison population during the last two years.'

'All entering or leaving the prison, for any reason whatsoever, continue to

be stripped completely naked — no-one is exempt from this practice.'

She continued: 'During the month of January there were 45 strip searches conducted in the prison. Among those subjected to this harrowing experience were two young pregnant women — one of who was serving a mere seven days for non-payment of a fine, and the other a remand prisoner who will continue to endure strip searching weekly until her case is heard.'

The spokeswoman added that strip searching could not be justified on 'security grounds' and challenged Scott to produce evidence that security had ever been threatened or contraband had ever been found 'that deemed it necessary to employ such a devastating measure as strip searching.'



Protestors picket Armagh jail against strip searches

STRIP-SEARCH REPRESSION

BY CHARLIE WALSH

SINCE July 1985 Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson have been held on remand at Brixton prison, London on conspiracy charges. They have on average been strip searched 50 times a month.

On November 18 they were told that henceforth the folds of their bodies could be probed. This is a side of British repression against Irish political prisoners which has been practically ignored by the capitalist media in Britain.

Michael Fisher, the women's lawyer, speaking at a recent meeting against strip searching in County Hall, said the degrading treatment of the women seemed too 'sensitive' for the media to report.

He also remarked that it seemed odd that women are subjected to strip searching to a far greater degree than are male prisoners facing similar charges.

The women spend 21 hours every day locked up in their cells. When they try to register complaints the governor says she can choose not to record them — and so she does not.

Ken Livingstone, Leader of the GLC, also speaking at the County Hall meeting said he had called for talks with the Home Secretary Douglas Hurd. 'This is a horrifying issue and must be seen in the context of the British police state we are living in,' he said.

Of course it must not be forgotten that since November 1982 the women in Armagh jail in the north of Ireland have been subjected to strip searching.

Irish Prisoners Appeal (IPA), an organisation set up to fight for the rights of Irish political prisoners in British jails, claims that in Armagh in the period between November 1982 and October 1984 an average of 24 women were strip searched 1,899 times. Most of them were on remand.

Barbaric

In both Brixton and Armagh metal detectors are available but the prison regimes persist with their degrading strip searching of women. In Armagh, if and when the women resist these barbaric atrocities, male screws are used to hold them down.

In addition, Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson have both endured 115 body searches a month which has involved prison warders putting their hands down inside the women's trousers.

These practices do not

seem to have any limits as can be seen from the fact that in October 1985 after Martina Anderson had undergone a gynaecological examination she was strip searched afterwards.

Both women have an exercise 'area' measuring 36 paces one way by 12 paces the other: their exercise is always done in the presence of three screws with dogs. A roof is now being built over their tiny 'exercise yard' and the women have refused to use it in protest.

Allegedly because the women are category A prisoners they are checked every 15 minutes at night. A flap is lifted up allowing light into their cells which wakes them up and, as is the intention of the prison regime, they are denied a proper night's sleep. If this is not mental torture, then what is?

Isabelle Anderson, a sister of Martina, and Nina Hutchinson, of IPA, both claim that the strip searching is preventing the women from preparing their defence.

By the time their cases come to court in May they will have undergone these barbaric practices for ten months. The pretext for their degrading sexual harassment is security.

In a letter to Michael Fisher, their lawyer, in January Home Secretary Douglas Hurd said: 'Unfortunately strip searching is essential to detect contraband which

can be concealed about the body very easily and cannot be detected by other means.'

The women are to challenge the strip searching in the High Court claiming it amounts to assault and harassment and that the Brixton prison staff are exceeding their lawful duty.

Rule 39(1) states that: 'Every prisoner is searched when entering into custody and subsequently when the governor thinks it necessary'. It is this last clause regarding the governor's discretion which they will also challenge.

Degrade

IPA points out that strip searching — contrary to the propaganda of the Home Office that it is a security measure — has nothing whatsoever to do with security but is rather a means by which to intimidate, humiliate and degrade which amounts to torture and sexual harassment.

The IPA further claims that the strip searching goes on because the government has a policy of harassment towards Irish political prisoners in British jails.

As a result of the constant harassment and deprivation, the women's physical and mental health has been affected, they say. The women's lawyer feels that this will seriously affect their chances of a fair trial.

Because of the serious situation, he urgently wants to bring a case before the High Court in an effort to stop these disgusting practices, so that the women can put some thought into their defence instead of solely trying to maintain their sanity.

Because of the cost of taking a case to the High Court, in the region of £10,000, the IPA is appealing to friends and supporters of the women to send donations to Irish Prisoners Appeal, National Westminster Bank, Brixton, London SW9, Account no. 02478951.

Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to Irish Prisoners Appeal or money can be sent to Irish Prisoners Appeal, c/o Lambeth IBRG, 245A Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London SW9 8RR.

IPA has made the valid point that the outcome of this test case will affect the human and civil rights of people in custody for decades to come.

Apart from cash, which is desperately needed, IPA asks people to write to the women in Brixton, to write to their local MPs, to pass motions at their Labour Party, trade union branches and trades councils, calling for support for the two prisoners. Their address in Brixton is: Ella O'Dwyer, D25135, Martina Anderson, D25134, HM Brixton Prison, Jebb Avenue, London SW2 5XF.