

KEN SARO-WIWA MURDERED

THE EXECUTION of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his comrades by the Nigerian dictatorship on 10 November shocked and angered millions of people throughout the world.

Only hours before these millions were calling for clemency. But ten days after their sentence at a rigged trial, with no right to appeal, they were dead.

These executions were a barbaric act deliberately carried out to strike fear into the hearts of all those who demand the most basic human rights — clean air, land and water.

It was an act of terror against political prisoners, trade unionists, and those in exile organising against the dictatorship. It is meant to be a warning to students living abroad to keep out of socialist politics.

But General Sani Abacha, like all dictators, is surrounded by weak, faunting and money-grabbing sycophants, with no personal strength and no support from the millions of poor people who are becoming more and more an organised threat to his rule.

It is his own fear that he tries to foist on others with this act of ruthless barbarism carried out in behalf of the multi-national oil companies.

The Nigerian dictatorship may have put the rope round the necks of these nine brave fighters, but who gives him the confidence to act? Who are the real murderers?

■ The British government has continued to supply arms to the Nigerian government despite its known brutality. British commercial interests are at stake. In the first seven months of 1995 Nigeria sold £77 million worth of goods to Britain, but British exports to Nigeria were £250 million.

■ With 24 per cent of the shares, the British-Dutch petroleum multi-national, Shell, is the second largest shareholder in Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Limited. The Nigerian Government holds the largest share, and the French company Elf and the Italian Agip are also shareholders.

Profit

In the drive for profit, the water, the rich farmlands and the rain-forests have been polluted by the leakage of crude oil. The mightiest protest by the poor people trying to eke out a living has been greeted with violence by the dictatorship and the oil companies.

The people do not have the most ordinary amenities — clean water, roads, electricity. Yet lowering over the dark, unlit villages stand the oil refineries, lit by their own generators and

BY THE EDITOR



Protesting Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution. Ken campaigned against pollution of Nigerian oilfields by Shell for which he was murdered by the state last week

well supplied with clean water and plenty of food for the managers.

■ In 1990, when the Etche people peacefully demonstrated against Shell, the company called for police protection. The infamous Mobile Police Force (MPF) was sent in — 80 people were massacred and 496 homes were destroyed.

■ In 1992, the MPF was sent into villages in the Gbarkan oil-field. They shot 30 people and beat 150 others.

■ The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (Mosop) issued a bill of rights. In addition to compensation for the loss of oil from Shell, Mosop called for self-determination for Ogoniland. After a mass rally in 1993, 2,000

people were killed, 27 villages were burnt down and 80,000 people were forced to move away altogether.

■ In 1994-95, the Nigerian oil workers' union took strike action, not only about inequalities at work, but about the pollution and the poverty of their people. The leaders are still in jail.

■ Ken Saro-Wiwa had become the most prominent spokesman for Mosop. He was in prison when four chiefs were killed during a riot in the Ogoni community. But he and his eight comrades were charged with incitement to murder. They were put on trial, sentenced and put to death. Spontaneous protests are being brutally put down by the Nigerian police.

Despite all this, the British government included Nigeria as one of the countries to which it is safe to return people applying for asylum.

On 23 October, Abdul Onibiyo, a member of Lambeth UNISON, was deported to Nigeria, and so far this year only one Nigerian has won asylum rights.

Cynically

Now representatives of the Commonwealth (what common wealth?) meeting in Auckland have cynically decided to 'expel' Nigeria. They are giving them two years to repent!

They are not going to implement sanctions or prevent the continuing rape of the country by

Shell. Last Tuesday, Shell announced that it would press ahead with fresh investments in Nigeria.

One leader in Auckland deserves special mention. Nelson Mandela refused to appeal for the lives of the condemned prisoners. What do the millions of people around the world who campaigned for his release from Robben Island think about that?

It is only the working class that can come to the aid of the Nigerian workers and peasants. It means a fight against 'our own' government and the building of an independent international socialist party.

Immediately a delegation of trade unionists should go to Nigeria to visit the imprisoned trade

unionists and political prisoners. All possible links must be made with the workers' and human rights movement.

There must be an international campaign for:

■ The release of all political prisoners.

■ The cessation of the export of arms to the Nigerian government.

■ The right to asylum of all economic and political refugees from Nigeria.

■ A boycott of Shell, and a concerted effort to convince those working for Shell to join and fight for a trade union to represent all workers in whatever country they are employed.

THE FUTURE OF MARXISM

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Next lecture, 23 November: 'The historian's tale: the persistence of history and the necessity of Marxism' (Terry Brotherstone)

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MORE history books are published than ever before, yet there is probably less common understanding of why people do, or should, study history — or of *what* history they ought to study.

Historians on the whole laughed at Francis Fukuyama's response to the collapse of the Berlin Wall: 'the end of history'. Yet, beneath the ever more sophisticated detail of much of their work, there often lurks a very similar conception.

Studying history is a 'luxury', pronounced the now ennobled Margaret Thatcher. Yet her governments were uniquely interventionist in trying to prescribe how history should be studied in schools.

Some notion of Marxism lay behind the boom in social and labour history in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Marxism is now orthodoxly pronounced 'dead', but nothing is put in its place.

What should we make of this mess?

Advance notice:

10th Anniversary Workers Press Meeting

Saturday 9 December, 10.30am — 4.30pm
University of Westminster, 35
Marylebone Road, London
Baker Street tube

Workers Press

Scargill and the need for a new socialist party

ARTHUR SCARGILL'S call for the formation of a Socialist Labour Party to replace 'New Labour' is one that deserves the widest discussion within the labour movement — in which the miners' leader occupies a unique position.

For he was the only trade union leader prepared to lead an uncompromising fight against the state and its anti-trade union laws throughout the 1984-85 miners' strike.

And it was Scargill who rightly took up the fight against the plans of Blair and his circle of advisers to dump Clause Four and to break the link between the trade unions and the Labour Party.

That is why his influence extends far beyond the now severely diminished membership of the National Union of Mineworkers.

* * * * *

BEFORE discussing the contents of Scargill's proposal it is necessary to be clear about the background against which he has declared for a new working-class party.

The Labour Party leaders make it clearer every day that, if they form the next government, they have no intention of implementing any reforms in the interests of the working class.

Quite the opposite: they are straining every sinew to prove to the bosses that they will carry out every attack against the working class that the crisis of the capitalist system demands.

Last week Gordon Brown committed Labour to what in effect is a US-style work-fare programme for young unemployed people. This week Tony Blair says that the minimum wage will be settled only with the agreement of big business, and that even the almost worthless 'social chapter' of the European Union treaty will be implemented only if the employers agree.

The Labour leaders have stressed

repeatedly that for them the welfare state as a system of benefits open to all on the basis of need is a thing dead and buried.

* * * * *

IN OTHER WORDS, we are faced with a 'reformist' Labour Party that no longer promises any reforms! It no longer promises them, because it can no longer deliver them.

The crisis of the capitalist system, internationally and in Britain, is so severe that it can no longer afford to grant any further concessions to the working class and sections of the middle class.

Capitalism must strive to take back all the major concessions that it has been forced to make in the past.

Last week, the French government was discussing how the system of welfare benefits in that country could be slashed. The same attacks on the 'postwar settlement' are underway in every major European country.

* * * * *

IN THIS situation there can be no return to 'old Labour' — to the sort of party that took office at the end of World War II.

In his call for a new party Scargill makes many correct criticisms of the Blair-led Labour Party: its dropping of Clause Four, its refusal to promise to restore the National Health Serv-

ice, its sharp swing to the right on the question of retirement pensions, etc.

But at the same time it is a call deeply imbued with the notion that the old Labour Party can be restored to full health and vigour.

■ Scargill suggests that once upon a time the Labour Party was socialist. It was, he says, a Parliamentary Party set up 'to give expression to a Socialist political agenda in the House of Commons'.

This is not the case. The Labour Party was established with one purpose: to represent the interests of the trade unions in parliament and in particular to secure the repeal of the anti-trade union laws and judgements which had been imposed on the movement at the end of the last century.

Only later, in the aftermath of 1917, was Clause Four inserted, in a cynical move to prevent the exodus from the party of those who were attracted by the October Revolution in Russia.

And as a quid pro quo individual membership of the party was established in a move designed to weaken the influence of the socialist groups within the party.

■ Despite his sharp criticisms of Blair and company, Scargill holds what are clearly reformist views about the capitalist crisis. He claims that 'a Labour Government could solve unemployment — even within a Capitalist society overnight, pro-

vided it introduced a four-day working week with no loss of pay, banned all non-essential overtime, and introduced voluntary retirement on full pay at the age of 55.'

'It is', Scargill says 'economic insanity to pay out £10,000 per year to keep a worker unemployed whilst half that amount would eliminate unemployment straightaway.'

But if this is so, if the ruling class could save money, why don't the Tories introduce precisely these measures? The question answers itself.

■ Scargill's statement is cast in exclusively nationalist terms. There is not a mention of the collapse of Stalinism and its implications for the working class and socialism.

The only point at which he strays beyond Dover is to launch a nationalist and reactionary attack on the European Union which comes from the worst of Little Englander, if not anti-German traditions in the British working-class movement.

■ Scargill seems to think that a party shorn of Blair and company with Clause Four restored meets the needs of the working class today. But there can be no going back to that situation.

* * * * *

THIS is only a first response to Scargill's conception of a new socialist party for the working class.

Workers Press has raised the need for such a party for the last two years and more and if Scargill's announcement widens the audience for such a discussion this can only entirely positive.

Workers Press is sponsoring a conference in Manchester on 24 February 1996 at which this very question of the need for a new socialist party will be discussed (see advert for 'Crisis in the labour' conference below).

We invite everyone in the Labour movement interested in discussing this issue not only to attend the conference but to help in its preparation.

No Frontiers/The Rain Trust present a Bosnia fund-raiser

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The Animals/The Yardbirds

Wednesday 6 December, doors open 6pm, London Astoria, 157 Charing X Road, London WC2. Tickets £9.50 advance/£11.50 (£9.50 concessions) door. Astoria box office (0171-434 0403, credit cards 0171-434 0404). By post enclosing SAE from The Rain Trust, c/o Janice Findlay, 52 Deptford Broadway, London SE8 4PH. Cheques payable to 'The Rain Trust'. Part of the proceeds to go to AIDS/HIV support and rape counselling.

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Manchester Town Hall

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Transatlantic solidarity boosts dockers

BY DOT GIBSON

THE 500 sacked dockers got a tremendous boost last week when the International Longshoremen's Union (ILU) of America stopped the 30,000-tonne 'Atlantic Conveyor' from docking in the port of Liverpool.

John Bowens, president of the ILU's East Coast sector, told shipping company Atlantic Containers that his union would 'take a dim view' if the vessel went to the scab port.

Atlantic Containers has given Mersey Docks and Harbour Company two weeks to get the port in a fit state to receive its ships otherwise it will pull out of Liverpool altogether.

After receiving information that 'Atlantic Conveyor' had been turned away from Liverpool, the captain of a cargo ship, owned by ABC, a shipping company mainly working the Australia line contacted the dockers' shop stewards to find out the situation in the port.

But only one week earlier the Liverpool 'Daily Post' reported:

'The port of Liverpool's biggest vessel is to return next week for the first time since the start of the unofficial dockers' strike.'

'The arrival of the 36,000-tonne 'Atlantic Conveyor' will mark a milestone in efforts to get back to normal working since the 400 [500] dockers were sacked in late September.'

'Port operators the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company have recruited replacement staff who are being trained ready for the return of prestige transatlantic services.'

Now the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company admit that even if 'Atlantic Conveyor' had docked in Liverpool they didn't have the skilled labour to handle the cargo!

The shop stewards are used to the company's disinformation and will not allow it to knock them off course or undermine the principled stand taken by the 500 dockers they represent. Their latest statement says:

'In the six weeks of the dispute the Mersey Docks and Harbour

Company have remained silent — afraid to debate the issues. They have been condemned by the chairman of Radio City as acting like 18th-century mill bosses. They have been condemned by church and political leaders throughout Merseyside. But most of all they stand condemned by the people of Merseyside.'

'After six weeks the 500 dockers stand more united than ever. We have the support of our wives, partners and families. Above all we have YOUR support — the support of the people.'

'We thank you for that. We know our fight is your fight. We know you want us to win. And we have this to say to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company — WE WILL WIN — 500 MEN WILL BE REINSTATED.'

Shop steward Mike Carden was in Ireland with a delegation speaking to dockers, shop stewards and union officials in Dublin and Belfast.

'A donation of £1,000 was handed to us, and support groups have been established in both cities,' he said. 'The dock workers gave us certain undertakings which can be of great assistance to us.'

Jim Davies, secretary/treasurer of the shop stewards' committee said that financial donations and collections were

pouring in and a further 5,000 copies of 'Dockers Charter' had been ordered from the printer.

But the most important thing was 'the solidarity action of the International Longshoremen of America in stopping the "Atlantic Conveyor".'

On 3 November, the 'Liverpool Echo' announced: 'Port bosses are in line to scoop nearly £700,000 profit in a shares bonanza', adding fuel to the fire burning

throughout angry Merseyside.

■ 'Dockers Charter', 50p (20p for unwaged) can be obtained from Jimmy Davies, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS. CASH WITH ORDER. P&P must be included: 1 copy 20p; 5 copies 50p; 10 copies £1.

Orders above this must be arranged — telephone: 0151-207 3388 or 0191-222 0299.

Kiev fares boycott

Transport workers, students and passengers unite

From Pavel Slutzky in Kiev

PASSENGERS and public transport workers in Kiev, Ukraine, have united in action to demand improvements in the service and better wages and conditions for the workers.

Massive refusal to pay fares on buses and trolleybuses was tolerated by the government. However there has been an attempt to control this boycott. Now the protest has hardened.

Passengers impede the inspectors and actively help each other to get past inspectors without paying their fare.

Real mutinies have taken place inside buses and trolleybuses. Kiev university students are giving out leaflets advising people how to organise the confrontations with inspectors.

They also call for free student travel passes financed by the city and have called a meeting outside the Kiev Soviet in support of this demand.

The Free Public Transport Union of Kiev (SPROT) supports them and the union and students have issued a joint declaration about their struggle.

The drivers themselves have made public their protests at the terrible state of the vehicles that impedes the service and about

problems concerning their wages and working conditions.

New members are now joining SPROT to take part in this fight against the public transport enterprises.

But they find themselves in a fight with the 'official' union and face intimidation, defamation and repressive measures.

So far only 10 per cent of the public transport workers are members of SPROT, but its dynamic campaigning, and the meetings it organises despite being forbidden, are a pole of attraction for the most exploited sector of public transport.

From the outset a financial blockage has been in operation by the bosses towards SPROT. Either they do not pass on the union dues deducted from wages, or they simply do not make the deductions. In some cases they just continue to pay deductions to the 'official' union.

Moreover the 'legal' requirement of a worker who applies for membership of SPROT is that he/she must personally present a resignation letter to the official union.

This tortuous procedure is consuming the workers' patience. They are organising themselves into groups and resign en bloc.

Growing tension points to the real possibility of a strike.

SPROT has already started a solidarity campaign among other Ukrainian unions — e.g. the Miners' Federation — and among some deputies for Kiev and Ukraine.

But bus workers are not the only ones in fighting mood. Since October there has been a general increase in resistance and popular discontent.

On 19 October 15,000 workers from VPK industries marched towards the centre of Kiev.

On 25 October there were similar protests in the majority of big cities. These were organised by the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Socialist Party of Ukraine and other groups.

Messages of support and repudiation of the arbitrary actions and legal obstacles against members of SPROT, and those wishing to join SPROT, would be most welcome, especially from public transport workers and students to:

Ukraina, Kiev, UI, Narodnogo Opolchenia 14, Trolleybus Depo No. 3, Zosulia Vacilly P., Direktor Silchenko Vitaly A, Nachainik (SPROT organiser): Anatoly Riabov; and, Ukraina, Kiev, Tramway Depo No. 5 im, Kracina, Okolnichii Nikolay G., Direktor (SPROT organiser): Baydo Bekaury.



Supporters of Bosnia gathered at St Martin's-in-the-fields to remember those who have died fighting fascism in the past four years in the Balkans last Sunday, 12 November

Photo: Marg Nicol

'We all act together'

Freedom Network protests against executions

BY HELENA FOX

THOUSANDS of young people, shocked and angry at the execution of Nigerian human rights campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his comrades, are carrying out protest actions throughout the country.

Ian Freeman of 'Reclaim the Streets' said that direct action at

the Nigerian embassy had led to 30 arrests.

Those arrested have been charged under Section 4a of the Public Order Act 1977, one of the amendments made by the Criminal Justice Act in 1994 — this is its first use,' he said.

If the case comes to trial we will be calling an expert on Nigerian politics and because of the nature of the charge we will subpoena the Nigerian ambassador and embassy staff.'

Ian explained that the main purpose of his group is to campaign to clean up the streets and rid them of the lethal fumes from petrol engines. But this leads to actions against inhumanity and injustice, which means standing up against the multi-national companies in defence of human beings — like the Ogoni people against Shell.

'We take part in "Critical Mass" in which thousands of cyclists assemble on the last Friday of every month at Waterloo and ride together to a different destination making special appeals on current issues.

It wouldn't surprise me if this month our appeal isn't the boycott of Shell for its attacks on the environment and its silence over the executions,' he said.

'Earth First' is another group which is picketing Shell petrol stations in Oxford, Leicester, York, Cambridge and other towns.

In Brighton and Eastbourne 'Justice' is organising the picketing. This group has a newspaper called 'Schnews'.

At the Shell petrol station in Evelyn Street, Deptford, south-east London, young people from 'Time and Space' joined those from the 'Freedom Network', 'Reclaim the Streets', and some (old) members of Workers International. A significant number of drivers were convinced of the boycott and many a vehicle sounded its horn as it went past.

Today 'Greenpeace' is organising national protest actions and all the groups will join in.

'That's the good thing,' said Nick from 'Time and Space'. 'We are all concerned and we all act together.'

Unemployment bad for health — official!

BY PETER GIBSON

ANY threat to your employment prospects is bad for your health, confirms the Epidemiology and Public Health department at University College in the British Medical Journal.

The ongoing survey of 10,308 civil servants started in 1986. It covered a wide range of grades from office-support staff to permanent secretaries.

One group of 666 professional and technical staff faced a long period of uncertainty starting in 1988.

By 1994, 43 per cent of them were out of work. Of those in work, 52 per cent considered their jobs unsafe or insecure.

This BMJ report has been given much greater significance than previous reports coming to the same conclusions on the effect of employment uncertainty on

health. This is because the data is of high quality.

These findings are relevant to the privatisation of public services and other industries.

The report maintains that women suffer more 'psychological' symptoms than men, but that men exhibit physical problems related to psychological stress.

Even if the threat never materialises there is a detrimental effect on your health and that of your family.

And there was a recent report that showed that if you work more than 48 hours a week there is double the danger of heart attack.

But job insecurity and long hours is just what this economic system wants and needs to get the working class into line.

So to improve our health prospects needs us to end this economic system.

London underground workers: the fight remains ahead!

BY AN INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

THREE weeks of talks and the threat of strikes produced an agreement between the three rail unions — RMT, ASLEF, TSSA — and London Underground Limited.

RMT press officer, Laurie Harris said that the deal gave some protection to workers employed in sections of London Underground about to be privatised, and 'tremendously watered-down' the proposals on part-time labour.

None of the present employees will be made part-timers as was first proposed.

He said: 'London Underground was desperate to avoid a strike. They saw that the union was able to recruit members, and the outcome of [London Underground's] legal action was a judge's ruling that if people want to join a union in a dispute that is their right — they do so with their eyes open.'

Whatever agreement has been reached today, there should be no illusions. The fight remains ahead. Privatisation and massive cuts threaten not only London Underground workers, but the travelling public.

Although 'some protection' has been agreed for present employees, those coming into the industry in the future can expect to be taken on as part-time casual labour.

The lives of the thousands of people who travel on London's underground system every day are in the hands of these workers.

Never has it been so vital for joint committees of transport workers and passengers to be set up to fight for the right to a safe and cheap public transport run by workers with proper wages and conditions.

The way forward for the public transport unions is to build such solidarity committees against privatisation and cuts in services, safety standards and workers' jobs.

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Inside left

ANL examined

On 10 November 1991, Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) led a big demonstration against racist attacks in the East End of London. The same weekend, at the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) conference, the central committee reported on rising racism, and the emergence 'for the first time in over a decade' of a 'specific fascist group'.

Criticising the way others fought racism and fascism, the report made a proposal for the SWP to change course. But two months later, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was launched, with Labour MPs and MPs of publicity.

A recent pamphlet, *Anti-Nazi League, A Critical Examination**, says SWP leaders were under pressure after fascist attacks on members, and worried because AFA (led by people the SWP had expelled) was successfully mobilising young people. Some SWP members believed that with the demise of the Communist Party their party should be asserting leadership.

SWP leader Tony Cliff discussed ANL's revival with close colleagues, and announced it at a meeting in Stoke Newington, north London, before his central committee decided anything.

There was a race against rivals in the Anti-Racist Alliance. ANL publicised other people's victories, invented its own. The stated broad aim of fighting fascism — 'Never again' — concealed the narrow, competitive objectives of the SWP-pointed leadership.

Jim Kelly, remembering the ANL's earlier incarnation in the 1970s says: 'The anti-fascist struggle... became a membership recruitment campaign. We were cynically used and conveniently dumped.'

Mark Metcalfe suspects 'ANL Mk2' will be dropped as the SWP rediscovers wages militancy. He says the SWP made no real assessment of racism and fascism.

Both authors criticise the SWP for leading young anti-fascists back into Labour. This pamphlet, and the struggle it deals with, deserve more attention than I can give here.

The authors write from experience. Their viewpoint isn't necessarily ours, but it is relevant to any discussion on the working class's need for a new party.

*Published by Colin Roach Centre, 56 Clarence Rd. E5 8HB, £1.

Left challenged

RECENTLY back from a Workers Aid convoy to Bosnia, James Tait of Edinburgh has challenged some people on the 'left':

Imagine a gang of Combat 18 members... had burned out the house of one of your neighbours 'cos he was Asian, what would your response be?

Would you... turn your back on him saying: "Well, look, I know it's a nasty business and all that, but there's no easy solution. Anyway, the guy's politics leave a lot to be desired — I mean, I think he might be a Muslim and you know what politicians they are. And listen, I'm calling for the police to stop him raping his daughter — doesn't that realise the police are just agents of capitalism?..."

If you want these people to become socialists, then get yourself in a convoy... show some real solidarity... We must be fighting now for the UN to get out, for the embargo to be lifted, and for the rights of refugees to settle in peace. Anything less than that is just a lie.

Letter in *Fight Racism, Fight Fascism* (October/November), Charlie Perrins

South Africa an

The ANC-dominated government of 'national unity' has been in office in South Africa for the past 18 months. Millions of workers had high hopes in the government, hopes that have been cruelly dashed. Workers Press spoke to a worker from the Durban area about these experiences and the lessons to be drawn from them.

WP: Can you say something about the present struggles of the South African workers?

The Government of National Unity, which came into office in February, was trusted by most of the working people of the country. This was because it was dominated by the ANC. It had promised many things, like housing, jobs, education. So the people expected that as soon as the government came to power it would deliver these promises.

That is why, when the election came, most of the workers voted for the ANC. Soon after this, the first thing the new government did was to award themselves big salaries. They bought big houses and cars and then forget about their promises to the masses.

Since then people began to ask: what is happening? Then the ANC told them: it's not possible for the government to deliver its promises because there is no money.

As far as education is concerned, initially every child was to get a free education from first year up to standard age, that is from five onwards.

To the surprise of many, this was changed, and the government declared that only first year children, that is those aged five, would get free education and even then only for those who cannot afford to pay; those children whose parents are working have to pay for even this. After that there is no free education.

As far as health is concerned, only children up to the age of six would get free care, after that you have to pay.

In the case of housing, many people are living in the squatter camps,

and this is where the ANC got most of its support in the election.

But after the election, many things have changed. The government again said it was not possible to build houses, everybody who wanted a house would have to pay for it. Those in work were promised a subsidy.

In fact people were given a site and then had to go to a bank to apply for a loan if they wanted a house. But for people not working this is impossible because they have no security.

Many are therefore still in their old life in the squatter camps. In the areas where houses are being built they are match-box buildings, which are too small even for a family of three. But even these dwellings are very expensive; they are built by private contractors, working for profit, and are not under government control.

WP: Can you say something about unemployment?

There are 6 or 7 million people out of work today. It has not gone down since the new government was elected. Many have been out of work for several years and many factories are threatened with closure since tariff barriers were relaxed and many firms find it cheaper to buy goods from countries such as Japan, and China, Bangladesh and India.

Labour and raw material costs are lower in those countries. So the textile industries, for example, are closing factories and the motor industry is being badly hit because of car imports. There is no immediate solution to this.

There has been the widespread introduction of the contract system



The ANC-dominated government has said it's not possible to build houses

where workers are employed for a short term and then they can be sacked. Workers are employed by agencies who say we will send for you when required. In fact they are used as strike-breakers, as scab labour.

WP: What is the general attitude of ordinary people towards the government after such experiences?

After the past 18 months most workers are now very disgruntled. There were many strikes soon after the ANC-dominated government came to office.

The first strikes of significance were in the supermarkets in Durban and other areas.

The union demanded a pay increase and most hoped that they would be supported by the government who they thought wanted to narrow the gap between the wages of white workers and those of black workers.

But the management immediately locked the strikers out, and when they tried to picket, the Minister of Police, Sydney Mafumati, former assistant general secretary of COSATU, sent in the police to crush the strikers. As you know dogs were used against the pickets and many

Health crisis in Eastern

South Africa's health system is in crisis. The worst conditions exist in the former homelands like former Transkei (Eastern Cape). There 7,000 nurses went on strike. Most were sacked by the provincial government. The following is based on an appeal put out by the National Nurses' Forum

EACH day that passes further prejudices the health care to the community of over 1 million in the ex-Transkei region.

The central Government of National Unity has supported the actions of the Eastern Cape provincial government in sacking the striking nurses and remains adamant that none of the issues can be dealt with now.

President Nelson Mandela has encouraged nurses to resign and seek work elsewhere.

All other provincial governments have issued threats to dismiss any nurses who embark on solidarity action with former Transkei.

The Forum is calling upon organised nurses across the world to publicise its plight and send material and other solidarity. Worldwide, nurses have been victims of public-sector cutbacks for too long. It is time to stand together.

Background Grievances

AFTER years of oppression, stagnation of conditions and apartheid disparities, Transkei nurses organised protest marches in April 1993. In October 1992, parity of public-sector employees in Transkei with the rest of South Africa was agreed.

Some nurses had not received any increases since 1986 and some had been on the same salary scale for ten years. When parity was not accorded to nurses, they went on strike.

A negotiating committee spent two years on nurses' problems. The old cabinet passed a resolution agreeing to promotions retrospective to April 1992. These have not been implemented. Nurses protested in November 1993 and wanted to strike in April 1994.

Nurses' grievances were raised with the government and the Transitional Executive Council (TEC). Problems included fraud and delays in payments emanating from the health administration.

Nurses formed their own union in the region and engaged in discussions over recognition.

The health department used all the old tricks of the previous bureaucracy and dragged talks out over months and delayed signing an agreement. They have used every device, underhand and otherwise, to sidestep negotiations with elected nurses' representatives.

A LIST of grievances was sent to Mandela on 28 July to appeal for fairness and transparency including the following demands:

- All categories due for promotions to receive them, especially those employed in the period 1990-92.
- Nursing assistants to be remunerated as in the Special Auxiliary Services document.
- (On a wide scale there is no provision for specialised auxiliary services. Nursing assistants play a fundamental role in preventing a total collapse in health care. Sometimes there is only one doctor servicing two hospitals at the same time!)
- Transport for nurses on a par with other government departments. Nurses to be protected from taxi violence.
- Security for patients and nurses: clinics and hospitals to be adequately guarded.
- Danger allowances for exposure to diseases.
- Nurses to be involved in all levels of running hospitals and clinics.
- Improved working conditions — clinics, instruments, medicine supplies and other facilities.
- (Needles have to be re-used several times or until they break. Lack of medicines leads to deaths that could have been prevented. 'Normal' conditions at hospitals and clinics are themselves a health risk!)
- Provision of complete uniforms.

■ Funds for nurses' salaries and conditions not to be redirected for other purposes. Extra appropriate funds to be sought.

■ Night duty allowances and overtime pay.

■ To protest the unilateral disbanding by the regional health ministry of a committee set up to deal with nurses' problems. The regional ministry claimed the committee was not in the public interest.

This committee vigorously put nurses' grievances on the agenda of the health ministry. Stability was achieved at hospitals and clinics. Even Supreme Court cases were won by nurses.

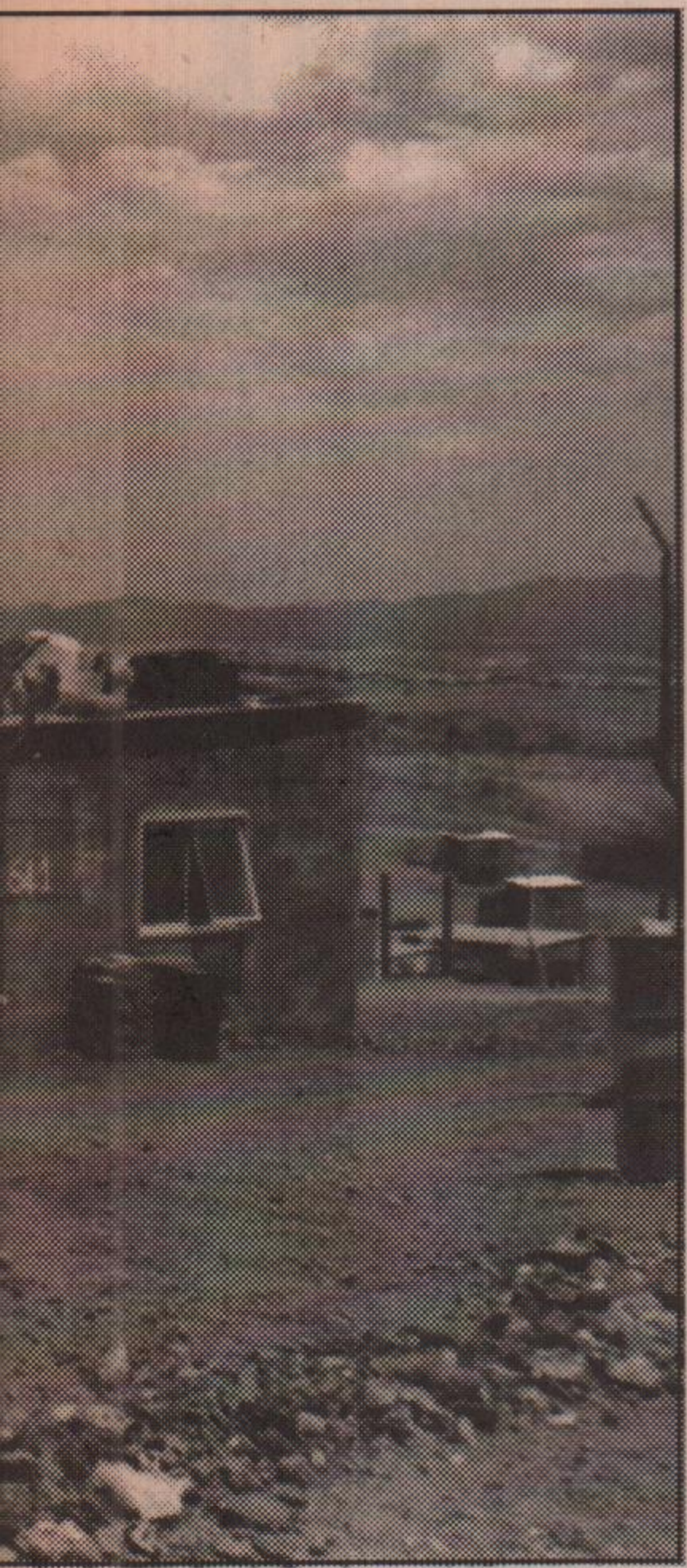
Currently the ministry is in contempt of a Supreme Court order to pay monies due to nurses. They appear to be dragging out proceedings in the hope that the nurses run out of finance for legal expenses!!

Strike

UNDER the new Public Sector Labour Relations Act passed by the Government of National Unity it is a criminal offence for nurses to strike, carrying a sentence of up to one year's imprisonment. This was passed without negotiations.

Many nurses went on strike nationally in September after government unions claiming to represent nurses signed a wage agreement for a 5.25 per cent

and the working class



...ses, people would have to pay
...were bitten and others arrested. This
...was a shock for many workers.

There were also other strikes such
...as those in the hospitals. In this case
...most were fighting for better work-
...ing conditions and the removal of
...many of the well-paid directors of
...the hospitals.

The union that represents them
...sided with the employers and the
...minister of health. Workers set up
...their own hospital workers' forums
...because they believed that the union
...was no longer on their side.

They challenged the minister of
...health with breaking promises made
...during the election. But the govern-
...ment and the leadership of COSATU

n Cape province

...increase with the government.
... (Inflation at the time was running at
... just under 114 per cent.)

All these unions signed without
...consulting nurses or getting man-
...dates from them. This was the last
...straw.

All over the country nurses set up
...their own interim structures, now
...the National Nurses' Forum. Work is
...already far advanced to set up a new
...independent nurses' union.

On 18 September, nurses delegates
...from all provinces met the minister
...of health, Dr Zuma. He undertook to
...raise grievances with the cabinet.

The cabinet rejected the nurses
...concerns, stating that there were no
...funds available and problems could
...only be addressed in the 1996-97
...budget. National negotiations on this
...would start on 3 October.

The 5.25 per cent 'increase' was
...backdated to July, not April as is
...usual.

A national programme of action
...was agreed which included a
...national strike by 28 September, fol-
...lowed by further protest action.

Due to the particular situation in
...the ex-Transkei, including wide-
...spread support from the community
...there, a full strike would commence
...on 28 September.

The strike started in the ex-
...Transkei involving 7,000 nurses at 30
...hospitals, 264 clinics and three health
...centres. The regional health ministry
...refused to recognise any democrati-
...cally elected structure. It even
...refused to recognise the National

used propaganda against them, say-
...ing they were neglecting patients
...and so on.

Under this pressure the strikers
...were forced back to work.

WP: What is the situation with
...COSATU, the official trade union
...organisation?

The alliance between COSATU and
...the ANC became very noticeable
...after the ANC was unbanned. But
...this alliance was never agreed or dis-
...cussed at shop-floor level.

When the negotiations between
...the ANC and the government of de
...Klerk took place most workers
...thought that the COSATU repre-
...sentatives who attended did so on
...behalf of the workers and that they
...would take up the demands of the
...workers, especially the Workers'
...Charter.

This was a Charter that called for
...full trade union rights, the right to
...strike, the right to work, the right to
...a living wage, freedom of association
...and expression. But only the union
...leaders were present at these talks;
...there were no representatives from
...the rank-and-file.

WP: What is the situation concern-
...ing the law and the trade unions?

When workers decide on strike
...action they have to go to the Conci-
...liation Board to try and resolve the
...dispute. If it is not resolved, there
...has to be a strike ballot.

The employers still have the right
...to sack workers who are balloting.
...The employers have the right to lock
...out, while picketing is highly
...restricted; picketing has to be far
...away from the factory, because the
...government wants the employer to
...be able to bring in scab labour.

If workers, even two, are found
...discussing strike action while on the
...employer's premises, that employer
...has the right to dismiss them and

they can be brought before the
...courts.

WP: I understand the government is
...repatriating people. Can you tell us
...about this?

Soon after the ANC came to office,
...Buthelesi was given the post of Min-
...ister for Home Affairs.

Now a policy of repatriating peo-
...ple from other African countries —
...Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique,
...Namibia, Angola, etc. — is underway.

Many of these people fled from
...persecution, and many helped to
...shelter members of the ANC during
...the armed struggle.

Especially in the Transvaal, all
...these 'foreign' people have been told
...they must get out of the country.
...Many have been expelled, others
...have been falsely accused of drug
...trafficking.

This has stirred up conflicts,
...because many black South Africans
...blame these 'foreigners' for the bad
...conditions under which they are liv-
...ing. This is being deliberately
...encouraged by the government.

WP: Can you say something about
...the role of the South African Com-
...munist Party in the present govern-
...ment?

When the SACP was unbanned,
...many had illusions that it repre-
...sented the vanguard of the working
...class.

Most of the people knew little of
...the SACP. The party leadership was
...changed with Chris Hani being
...appointed as general secretary. He
...had been prominent in the military
...struggle and was very popular.

But again people were surprised
...when they found that the SACP was
...involved in negotiations with the
...government and that it had no inde-
...pendent programme for the working
...class. They told the workers that
...they must first fight for democratic

demands and only after that for
...socialism. This was a two-stage
...theory. It was the SACP who really
...masterminded the negotiations with
...the government and they were
...responsible for proposing most of
...the compromises which the ANC
...accepted.

It was the SACP that was really
...behind the idea of the Government
...of National Unity. As far as the
...demands of the working class are
...concerned nothing has been fought
...for or even raised by the SACP.

The late Joe Slovo, leader of the
...SACP, was minister of housing, and a
...leading SACP member is currently
...deputy minister of defence.

In the case of its actual organisa-
...tion, it is difficult to know whether
...the SACP still exists. I've been told
...by friends that the SACP has called
...meetings in the townships and only
...the officials have turned up.

When workers are on strike and
...they hold a demonstration you may
...still see a flag of the SACP. Apart
...from this they are almost anony-
...mous.

WP: Are there any signs of
...revolt in the ANC or the SACP
...about the policies of the leadership?

The ANC is having big problems in
...mobilising the militant young peo-
...ple in the townships. The structure
...of the ANC was in the past led by
...young people who had great expec-
...tations in an ANC government.

They did not, for instance, think
...that Natal would in effect be given to
...Inkatha. They did not think that de
...Klerk would have a powerful posi-
...tion, as vice-president, in the govern-
...ment.

Since the ANC has moved to the
...right, and told these young people
...that the struggle is over, many have
...become very disgruntled or indiffer-
...ent to politics. But others are look-
...ing for parties that will accommo-
...date them as militants.

WP: Can you say something about
...the situation in Natal?

The ruling party in Natal is Inkatha.
...This was really the result of a deal
...with the ANC. Inkatha's leader,
...Buthelesi, was given a post in the
...government.

It was Buthelesi who pushed for
...the federal system, with Natal and
...the other provinces to be given
...greater powers. Elements in the ANC
...were opposed to this, but leaders of
...the National Party, for their own
...reasons, were in favour.

The ANC retreated and said that
...the provinces would be given
...greater powers.

Previously there were only four
...provinces in South Africa — Cape
...Province, Natal, Transvaal and the
...Orange Free State. When the ANC
...came into office this was increased to
...nine provinces, seven of which are
...under the control of the ANC.

ANC leaders were put in charge of
...these provinces and they are
...demanding greater power for them-
...selves. In this way they have joined
...with Inkatha. Mandela has said that
...he is even prepared to consider the
...possibility of a white homeland.

On the basis of the ANC's retreat
...Inkatha decided to enter the elec-
...tions. They won the election in Natal,
...but many believed that this was as a
...result of ballot rigging.

Since the start of this year about
...3,000 people have been killed. Since
...the violence started around 10,000
...people have been killed. Many
...thought when the ANC-dominated
...government was elected the violence
...would end. But it has continued, with
...60 or 70 people killed every week.

COSATU is neutral in the case of
...this violence. Trade unionists who
...are supporters of Inkatha look upon
...COSATU as part and parcel of this

violence and see it as completely tied
...up with the ANC. That is why
...COSATU cannot possibly help bring
...an end to this violence.

WP: How do you see the answer to
...this problem?

If COSATU broke its alliance with
...the government and became a really
...independent organisation it would
...help unite the workers of Natal, and
...maybe bring about peace.

At the moment the working class
...is not clear why they are fighting
...among themselves, killing each
...other. That is why we must demand
...that COSATU breaks with the gov-
...ernment. But the only lasting peace
...will come when the working class
...has its own party, with its own inde-
...pendent programme.

WP: Just to go back to what you
...were saying earlier. I believe you
...live in one of the townships. Could
...you give a brief picture of what
...conditions are like there?

The conditions in most townships
...are terrible. There is often no run-
...ning water system, no sewerage; in
...some cases there is no electricity but
...this is now beginning to be installed.

Toilets consist of holes dug in the
...ground and covered with earth. We
...were told that this situation would
...only be temporary and things would
...soon improve. But it remains.

People say: how can this govern-
...ment defend this unhealthy system?

In the townships, because of the
...many problems, committees have
...been formed and they are often very
...active, with support from many
...ordinary people. We have street com-
...mittees, up to area committees. They
...discuss what is needed, how crime is
...to be fought, how the workers' politi-
...cal demands are to be fought for.

They don't belong to any political
...parties and this is of great concern to
...the ANC in particular, precisely
...because they do not control them.
...They have tried to discourage them,
...but I am happy to say that they are
...growing.

WP: You spoke of the need of the
...working class for its own independ-
...ent party. Can you say something
...about this?

We have a government which
...embraces all political parties,
...whether right or left. Some claim to
...represent the working class — the
...SACP for instance. But the working
...class, from shop-floor level upwards,
...have no representation.

That is why we demand that
...COSATU break away from the gov-
...ernment and that there be democ-
...racy within the unions.

But the working class need their
...own party, one which is going to be
...led by the working class itself and
...fight for the interests of the working
...class and for socialism. At the
...moment there is a good prospect for
...that kind of party.

Members of the civic associations,
...which contain many who are outside
...the unions, see the need for their own
...independent representation. I think
...that this independent representa-
...tion of the working class will be
...Marxist, will be socialist.

WP: Do you see this is as just a
...South African question?

This is an international issue. When
...we are talking about overthrowing
...the capitalist system we have to
...unite with the working class in other
...countries. So it is not an issue of the
...South African working class, but the
...working class throughout the world.

I looked for 'Sambo' and found J1648

The dark winding road through the Adirondacks... guided me past lake after lake, high summit after high summit... A few minutes after I had left Schroom, I took a dirt road that seemed to lead south-east toward my destination... Soon I realized that I had in all probability taken a wrong turn and I looked eagerly ahead for human aid.

It seemed to have materialized in a lank, middle-aged fellow in overalls and black shirt, who was hoeing dispiritedly at a stony patch of earth near the road...

'Can you tell me how to get to Bolton's Landing?' I said.

He stopped work, leaned on his hoe, and regarded me solemnly.

'Well,' he said, 'if I was going to Bolton's Landing, I wouldn't start from here.'

I laughed, but his weather-seamed face did not change expression.

'There must be a way,' I said.

'Take the next turn left. That'll bring you into Padan-Aram. Ought to help some.'

THE ABOVE is taken from Carl Carmer's *Listen for a Lonesome Drum: A New York State Chronicle* (Cassell, 1936), an account of the author's wanderings in the rural hinterland of New York state, between the Hudson river and Lake Ontario, and of the doings and sayings of the folk he met there.

Carmer was a college teacher with a deep interest in the lives and lore of backwoods Americans. Some older readers may have come across his better-known *Stars Fell on Alabama* (Lovat Dickson & Thompson, 1935), memorable for its vivid account of African-American music-making in a domestic setting.

My extract from his later book is the earliest appearance in print, so far as I know, of the 'joke' which has so troubled some readers of Workers Press and whose point has, I fear, been completely misunderstood.

It would be interesting to see Paul Henderson's evidence for his assertion that this 'joke' 'pops up in many places... and the list is almost endless' (Letters, 11 November). No doubt Paul is right, but it would be helpful to know what sources he has consulted in reaching this conclusion.

My own research, necessarily hurried and limited, has found this 'joke' in two standard works of reference.

It appears as J1648 in Stith Thompson's magisterial *Motif-index of Folk-literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends* (revised and enlarged edition, Copenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955-58), vol. IV, p.133.

It is summarised there as follows: 'Do not start here. Man asks directions to a certain place. Native attempts to give directions, then in disgust says, "If I wanted to go to —, I wouldn't start from here."'

J1648 also appears, with much the same summary, in Ernest W. Baughman, *Type and Motif-index of the Folktales of England and North America* (The Hague, Mouton & Co., 1966; Indiana University Folklore Series no. 20), p.309.

In both of these authoritative works, J1648 is classified under the general heading 'The Wise and the Foolish' and under the sub-heading 'Clever practical retorts'.

And here is the point, as the quotation above makes abundantly clear. The 'butt of the humour' is not in fact the local rustic but the educated stranger who is having his leg pulled.

The local inhabitant certainly has 'more than a dash of guile' —

PERSONAL COLUMN

Paul is quite right there. But it is he who is the 'wise' one; it's the 'person from the dominant class' (in a manner of speaking) who is briefly made to look 'foolish' in the face of a 'clever practical retort' by the po-faced local.

Paul drags the "Sambo" stereotype into his letter by the hair of its head. There is no justification for reading that stereotype into J1648, as must be tolerably clear from, for instance, the illuminating section on 'Folk Humor' in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore*, edited by Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1973).

Of course, many jokes can be given a maliciously racist edge. J1648 can be turned into an anti-Irish joke, or an anti-Limerick joke, or, in Hull, an anti-Hessle-Road joke.

This depends, of course, on the teller's intention. There is no reason to suppose that Dot Gibson had any intention of denigrating 'the man in Limerick' (Workers Press, 28 October).

I must say I don't envy those readers of this paper who, seeing a centre-spread devoted to news of an important upsurge in the class struggle, sweep aside all other considerations and possible responses and narrow their vision to five lines which could offend only those determined to find offence.

It seems to me what there is 'no place [for] in a revolutionary socialist paper' is humourless 'political correctness' that ignores the forest in favour of a misconceived onslaught on one particular harmless tree.

And is Paul's letter not itself a striking example of what he deplores: 'paternalistic "care" for those who clearly are incapable of looking after themselves'?

Those 'grunts' again

IT APPEARS that I did Gillian Shephard an injustice when I interpreted her statement 'Communication by grunt is not good enough' as an attack on regional dialects ('Starting hares and chasing "grunts"', 28 October).

I had assumed that the secretary of state for education had in mind what has lately come to be known as 'Estuarine' English, i.e. the dialect spoken by the younger generation of dwellers in east London, Essex, and elsewhere in the Thames estuary.

The most prominent feature of this dialect is the widespread use of what phoneticians call the 'glottal stop' or 'glottal plosive' in place of the alveolar consonant represented by the letter t.

This sudden opening and shutting of the glottis transforms, for instance, water into wa'er, butter into bu'er, and Italy into I'ly.

But by 'grunt' Mrs Shephard meant — I am assured by a reader who is a closer student of these matters than I — not the 'glottal stop' in a particular regional variant of the language, but the alleged inarticulateness of many young people in all regions, who seem unable to express their thoughts clearly.

Certainly children whose parents habitually shout commands at them, and rarely if ever converse with them, develop into teenagers with limited conversational skills.

But my own observation also suggests that the inarticulate 'grunt' of some teenagers is often a sign of boredom or a device to distance themselves from the adult world, and that on subjects that interest them the 'grunters' become miraculously fluent, not to say loquacious.

Peter Fryer

Letters

Crisis in the Socialist Campaign Group

AS WE head towards the 'Crisis in the labour movement' conference to discuss the need for a new socialist party, sponsored by Workers Press, in Manchester next February, Tony Benn still holds dear the idea that the Labour Party can change.

This Labour Party, under its leader Tony Blair, is less likely to change anything than any we've seen since the war.

In the October issue of 'Socialist Campaign Group News', Benn says in a back page article, 'Why all socialist should stick with Labour', that the largest part of his political postbag is made up of dozens of letters from people who are seriously thinking of leaving the Labour Party or who have already done so.

The reasons they give, he says, is a deep and growing concern at the direction in which the 'New Labour Party' is being taken. The feelings go deep into the movement, he claims.

Benn goes on, that despite all the arguments for quitting no one should make that mistake... to desert now would be to abandon their responsibility to maintain Labour as the only instrument we have for transforming society.

Come on Benn! Who are you kidding? Labour isn't going to transform society for the benefit of the working class and those who are leaving know it!

The first task of socialists, says Benn, within the party must be to get it elected, and then to prepare for the future that will follow.

What bloody future? Everyone knows that under a Labour government nothing will seriously change for the better.

If you talk to workers today they know that Labour will not get rid of the hated anti-union laws.

Will they renationalise the railways? Will they rid the NHS of the get-rich bureaucrats who run it at present? What about the unemployed?

Mention Labour to a squeegee car window-cleaner and she will probably smash your windscreen rather than clean it.

If the manifesto on which 'we'

fight lacks substance, says Benn, socialists must be ready to fill that vacuum with policies on behalf of those 'we' represent. Tell that to Liz Davies!

He then argues that the biggest factor in the decline in support for the Tories is the rising tide of fear and insecurity about homes, jobs, schools, health and old age.

Wait a minute Tony! Didn't you say just that at the beginning about why members were probably leaving 'New Labour'?

He goes on: 'In the end socialism is about "right and wrong" rather than "profit and loss"... that is why we need every single socialist inside the [New] Labour Party.'

[In that way they can be muffled, gagged and completely pissed off.]

What we really want, of course, is a brand new party that will be worth fighting for. Labour, in the eyes of workers, has lost that credibility. Mind you, the middle class seem to like it.

Oh dear! As I write, news is coming through of possibly another defection, Tony. Yes, it's Arthur Scargill. He has decided to set up a Socialist Labour Party next year!

Alan Clark
South-east London

Disease figures hard to believe

DANIEL ROBERTSON's Science Focus column rarely attracts the discussion it deserves.

I should like Daniel to clarify some points he made about allegedly monkey-borne diseases, and the proposed explanation of their occasional sudden spread being related to the international trade in rare species (11 November).

Daniel proposed that: 'There are now strong suspicions that the HIV, Marburg and Ebola organisms — that will kill tens, possibly hundreds of millions of people — may all have come through this route.'

I find it hard to believe that these figures are not hugely exaggerated. On a global scale, both Marburg and Ebola are extremely rare.

I have tried to monitor internet discussions on Ebola, and to the best of my knowledge nobody has suggested that more than a

thousand human fatalities can be linked to it.

If Daniel has some other evidence to present, I should be very grateful (but not pleased) to see it. And even if HIV is to be included in his figures, what is his justification in the presently available information, for predicting 'tens, possibly hundreds of millions' of human deaths?

And just who is it, please, who harbours these 'strong suspicions'?

And on the issue of Ebola, my understanding is that it has, thus far, been confined to a few areas of Africa.

Can Daniel please explain his hypothetical mechanism by which exporting monkeys from Africa causes an outbreak of a rare virus in Africa and nowhere else?

Further on, Daniel claims that 'as a scientist', he 'recognises that animals are sometimes sacrificed for the human good'.

Here I think he is hiding from his responsibilities behind an abstract and timeless conception of 'science'. There is nothing 'scientific' in the idea that humanity has higher rights than other species.

'Science' can, at best, provide contributory evidence on questions about the status of other species, or for that matter, other races. It cannot in itself provide an answer to the moral or ethical questions involved.

I should like to add a further point of controversy. Daniel proposes that much animal research 'only panders to curiosity or simple greed for profit'.

I think rather more can be said: as I understand these matters, at least in Western Europe and the USA, the vast majority of experiments on live animals are conducted by and for the cosmetics industry, and a very much smaller number of experiments are related to the safety of medicines.

(And many cruel procedures are in no sense 'experiments' but merely some form of quality control.)

Now I don't doubt that women who find a need to use cosmetics should be protected from side-effects. But I do think that alternative methods of testing are available, and that animal experiments are not a reliable method of proving the safety of cosmetics.

Furthermore, the requirement for cosmetics at all needs to be subjected to radical examination. Women are manipulated by capitalism into believing that they

ought to look, smell and taste differently from the way they actually do.

Revolutionaries do not necessarily support this view.

J.J. Plant
London E7

Disturbing anti-nuclear trend

I HAVE been a reader of Workers Press for many years and I am disturbed by recent trends in your paper which are anti-nuclear.

I think it should be made clear to your readers that after a socialist revolution it will be the task of workers to use the best of existing technology for the benefit of all.

This can only mean that nuclear technology will be used to produce a considerable and increasing amount of electrical power.

It may be of interest of readers to consider the arguments I advanced in 'Workers Press' in 1974 (10 April).

R. Thurstans
Leicester

Editor's note: The 'Workers Press' referred to in this letter was the daily paper of the WRP which became the 'Newline'. In 1985, the current Workers Press was launched as a weekly paper after the expulsion of the WRP's former leader, Gerry Healy.

I assume the 'anti-nuclear' trends include Daniel Robertson's comments in his Science Focus of 12 August ('Doomray') and not criticisms of the testing of French nuclear weapons!

Silence please!

I NOTICED that the Mail on Sunday and the Sunday Express are pressing vigorously their campaign for a national two-minute silence in commemoration of Britain's war dead. Given the Mail's outstanding support for fascism and Adolf Hitler, and the Express's pro-appeasement line, in the 1930s, perhaps they could do us all a favour by remaining silent for the entire year?

George Angus
London SE5

SE London WRP

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Windsor wanted to be Hitler's man – a right Royal cover-up!



FORMER close acquaintances of Edward, Duke of Windsor, and newly-released documents from Portuguese secret police files, have added fresh weight to the charge that the ex-king looked to the Nazis to put him back on his throne.

In post-war years the Royal Family was involved in a strenuous cover-up of its errant member's shady commercial and political affairs.

Count Alfred de Marigny, who knew the duke in the Bahamas, where he'd been sent as governor during World War II, says Edward told him: 'After this war is over and Hitler will crush the Americans... We'll take over... They didn't want me as their king but I'll be back there as their leader... We are the strong people, the German and us... We are the strong people'.

A Channel Four programme broadcast on Thursday says Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, and 'Times' editor Geoffrey Dawson, discussed Edward's unfitness to reign at a private shooting party in September 1936.

The king abdicated in December, to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson.

Whitehall had a dossier, possibly forged, on her exotic sex life in Shanghai in the 1920s. But the Foreign Office was also concerned about German despatches saying Edward strongly favoured a British alliance with Germany.

The duke and Mrs Simpson married at a French chateau owned by millionaire industrialist Charles Bedaux, inventor of a notorious factory speed-up system, and Nazi sympathiser.

Bedaux arranged the Windsors' visit to Germany as guests of Hitler in October 1937. They visited an SS training centre and a concentration camp. Rudolf Hess told the duke his throne would be restored in a 'new world order'.

Apprised

At the beginning of the war, the Duke of Windsor's friendship with pro-Nazis like Bedaux and the Swedish businessman Axel Wenner Gren meant that Berlin could have been apprised of secret Allied deliberations to which the duke was privy, as British major-general in liaison with the French command.

In July 1940, in Portugal,

Edward hesitated whether to make his move, watched by British and German agents, who were watched in turn by the Portuguese dictator Salazar's secret police, the PVDE.

As governor of the Bahamas, the duke maintained his connection with Wenner-Gren, whom US intelligence was watching as a Nazi link man for Latin America.

Charles Bedaux, who was helping Nazi economic plans for Africa was captured in Algiers by French resisters in the Algiers rising.

Links

The FBI, which knew about Bedaux and Wenner Gren's links with US firms like General Motors, claimed Bedaux as a US citizen, and had him shipped back to the United States with all the documents. Bedaux committed suicide in prison.

Sir Harry Oakes, one of the Duke's business associates in the Bahamas, was murdered in 1943. De Marigny was tried but acquitted, and the murder remained a mystery.

At the end of 1945 former MI5 agent Anthony Blunt was sent to the Friedrichshof castle, at Kronberg, in Germany carrying a personal letter from King George VI to the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel.

Officially, his mission was to recover Queen Victoria's letters. German files sent back to England mention the Duke of Windsor, but don't include his 1937 conversations with Hitler.

Blunt became surveyor of the Queen's pictures, was knighted in 1956, and confessed to being a Soviet agent in 1964, but was kept in the royals' service until 1979, when his role was made public.

Meanwhile the Windsors had set up house in Paris, continuing with illegal currency transactions which netted £200,000 profit over ten years, while the British taxpayer was providing him with £100,000 a year tax free.

'The reason why no one has heard of this before,' says historian Andrew Roberts 'is because of a classic Establishment cover-up'.

Another expatriate couple used to wine and dine with the Windsors in Paris in the 1950s, and doubtless chat about what might have been: Sir Oswald Mosley, leader of the pre-war British Union of Fascists, and his wife, Lady Diana.

The former king, Edward VIII, of England, the duke of Windsor with his wife and Nazi chums in 1937

Trotskyist archive to be set up at University of Aberdeen

BY TERRY BROTHERSTONE

AN ARCHIVE to preserve information about the Trotskyist movement is to be established.

The meeting (7 October) to mark the tenth anniversary of the expulsion of the WRP's long-time leader, Thomas Gerard (Gerry) Healy (1913-90), aroused interest beyond the ranks of the current WRP and indeed from considerable numbers of people who would not regard themselves as Trotskyists.

We believe the meeting was an important moment in establishing that Healy's political life as a revolutionary socialist, his degeneration, and his expulsion from the Trotskyist movement are all matters of historical interest.

Those who knew him and whose lives were affected by him, and those who participated, either centrally or on the periph-

ery, in his downfall, all have important stories to tell.

The archive is to consist of oral and documentary evidence currently in private hands which is relevant to Healy's life, the 'Group', the Socialist Labour League, the Workers Revolutionary Party, and the events of 1985, and to the general background to these elements.

Anyone who may be able to provide such material should contact myself, Terry Brotherstone, at the University of Aberdeen, Department of History and Economic History, Kings College, Aberdeen, AB9 2UB. Phone: 01224 272466. Fax: 01224 272203.

A committee has been set up which consists, in addition to myself as chair, of two WRP members, Clare Cowen and Liz Leicester, and John Spencer, who belongs to no political party.

This committee has agreed to coordinate the collection of

material and to supervise its preservation under proper archival conditions.

It is proposed that an advisory body is established to include members of political organisations other than the WRP and independent academics.

Initially the archive will be stored at Aberdeen with a view to making it available at a more central location as soon as a secure venue governed by acceptable rules of access to bona fide researchers can be established.

Such rules would include the right of anyone submitting material to place conditions on access to it. Unless explicitly waived, copyright to personal reminiscences will remain with the author, whatever the form. (A letter with submitted material waiving copyright for those wishing it would be useful.)

It is hoped to launch an oral history project as soon as possible which would aim to locate and

record recollections of those who may be able to contribute.

The intention is not to restrict such recollections to just memories of Healy himself, but would be concerned with how people came into the movement, what struggles they participated in, etc. We hope that no one who has recollections will wait to be contacted. Please let us have any relevant material on tape, etc.

Contact us to discuss our acquiring a copy (or the original) of any documentary material in your possession: correspondence, notes of meetings, published leaflets, pamphlets, newspapers and books. Photographs and other forms of visual evidence may also be usefully preserved. We can arrange the copying and return of original material.

We plan to make further announcements as the project gets underway. Further, comments and advice would be welcome.

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Bosnia — Solidarity not Charity

An account of the August Tuzla Trade Union convoy
Produced by Tony Samphier, NUJ delegate on the convoy

Published by Workers Aid for Bosnia
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Clinton war crimes cover-up to speed Bosnian deal

THE American government claimed success last week in obtaining an agreement for Serb-held eastern Slavonia to return to Croat rule.

For the first time in this conflict, an issue has been resolved peacefully, said US ambassador in Croatia Peter Galbraith.

Whether Croatia's President Tudjman would wait out the 12-month transition period in the agreement before sending in his troops, remained to be seen.

So did whether Serbs living in eastern Slavonia would dare trust Croat rule, after the way Tudjman's troops butchered old people in Krajina. US troops may be sent into eastern Slavonia.

The Clinton administration has admitted to withholding information from the international court at the Hague investigating war crimes in Bosnia.

It claims this is for security reasons, although the suspicion is that with an eye on US elections it wants to expedite the Bosnian peace talks taking place in Dayton, Ohio, between the presidents of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia.

In a letter to the US embassy in the Hague, war crimes tribunal Judge Richard Goldstone complained that photographs of mass graves near Srebrenica had not been handed over.

Goldstone raised 25 questions for Washington, including a request for information about transcripts of conversations between Serb General Mladic and Yugoslav National Army (JNA) commanders reporting directly to Serbia's President Milosevic.

Some newspaper reports say US and other intelligence agencies eavesdropped radio conversations in which General Momcilo Perisic, the JNA commander in chief, gave military advice to Mladic during the assault on Srebrenica.

US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said he did not know whether the US has such information.

The US government reportedly urged Serbia's Milosevic to ditch the Serb nationalist leaders in Bosnia, Dr Karadzic and General Mladic.

Indicted

Secretary of State Warren Christopher said US 'peace-keeping' troops could not go in unless the two indicted war criminals were removed.

Other US officials said US policy could not be constrained like this. Burns said Christopher was stating US policy.

Asked whether the US was

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

withholding evidence that might link Milosevic himself with war crimes, Burns replied: 'I am unaware of any effort to do so.'

Although Milosevic was reportedly 'angry' over Mladic and Karadzic being treated as obstacles, some think this was for show.

Strategy

'He is no longer interested in the Bosnian Serbs or in even the smallest part of Bosnian territory,' predicts Zlatko Lagumdžija. 'His strategy is to bargain it away for the right to join the planned American economic zone of influence in the region...'

Lagumdžija, vice-president of the Social Democrat party in Bosnia, warns that any 'peace' which does not lead to a re-united Bosnia will not last, but only lead to renewed war.

He also fears that in a divided Bosnia, governments will take out their failure on ethnic minorities and those who don't toe the political line.

The war crimes tribunal has indicted six Croat nationalists, including Dario Kordic, chairman of Tudjman's Croat Democratic Union (HDU) in Bosnia, and Tihofil Blaskic, chief of staff of the Croat Defence Council (HVO), with crimes against humanity in Bosnia.

The tribunal says crimes were 'implemented in such a systematic fashion that they have effectively destroyed or removed almost the entire Muslim civilian population in the Lasva valley,' between May 1992 and May 1993.

But a spokesman for the UN in Sarajevo, Alexander Ivanko, said it would continue co-operating with the Croatian nationalists.

'As long as Minister Kordic and General Blaskic are the established leaders of the Croatian minority in Bosnia, we will continue dealing with them in that capacity.'

It was reported last week that Naser Osric, who was Bosnian army commander in Srebrenica, might be indicted by the UN tri-

bunal. But neither Milosevic nor Zeljko Raznatovic ('Arkan') are facing indictment.

It was Arkan's gangs, armed and trained by the Serbian secret police, who carried out some of the worst killings in Croatia and Bosnia at the start of the war, and went into Srebrenica after it fell.

More recently the 'Arkanovci' were terrorising Muslim and Croat civilians in northern Bosnia, driving thousands from their homes.

Some 2,000 men were separated from their families and taken away, its feared to be slaughtered, while women and children were herded out.

Although some managed to reach Bosnian government-held territory or Croatia, many people evicted from Banja Luka are stranded in the open in sub-zero temperatures.

There is a lot of snow on the ground, it's freezing weather and many of these people who

are being evicted are elderly and ill, and there is absolutely no place for them to stay,' said United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officer Ron Redmond.

'Some of them are still sleeping out in the open so I think we can expect to begin hearing stories about people freezing to death unless Banja Luka authorities begin providing some sort of shelter for these people.'

Before the war there were half a million non-Serbs in the Banja Luka area, but the UNHCR estimates that now there are only 13,000 left in the region.

Evicted

The Catholic bishop of Banja Luka had asked permission to shelter evicted people in churches.

The Bosnian Serb authorities say they can't give priority to this

issue because they are confronted with the massive task of finding shelter for 170,000 displaced Serbs,' Redmond said.

The Bosnian government is reportedly letting people who went with Fikret Abdic return to their homes in the Bihac area. Abdic, a renegade Muslim businessman turned warlord, made a deal with Serb forces, and helped them besiege Bihac.

When the Bosnian Army's Fifth Corps broke the siege with the help of the Croat offensive in Krajina, some 20,000 of Abdic's followers fled, ending up in a makeshift camp by the border. The UNHCR says some have already returned to Velika Kladusa without any problem.

UNHCR criticised the Croatian government's 'voluntary' return of 11,000 refugees to western and northwestern Bosnia as forcible relocation motivated by military and political goals.

Mainly Croat refugees have

been resettled in areas captured from Serb forces, creating 'ethnically pure ghettos', it says.

Meanwhile, Mostar remains divided between Croat HVO and Muslims, the former enriched by European subsidies, Catholic charities and racketeering, while the latter struggle to rebuild from ruins.

Ageed

Bosnian and Croatian presidents recently agreed to let 600 families return home, Muslims to Croat-occupied Jajce and Stolac, Croats to Bugojno and Travnik.

'All my neighbours have been around to welcome me back,' said Milica Lovric, 64, who returned to Bugojno a month ago, before the agreement was signed. 'Nobody has been anything but kind to us.'

But Croat forces are blocking the return of Muslim refugees. At Jajce, it is reported: 'Muslims are kept outside town in ghettos.'

Bosnian journalists unprotected

BY MIRZA MUKIC
Independent journalist
Tuzla, Bosnia

THE editor-in-chief of the local radio station in Zavidovici was killed, the new transmitter of the independent radio station blown up in Sarajevo, a journalist from an 'unfit' paper beaten up by his colleague in Tuzla.

During the war in Bosnia, 39 journalists, engineers, technicians (domestic and foreign) were killed says the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

It is an enormous figure but we could understand it since the journalists have to work on the

front-line and in dangerous areas.

Yet, the journalists meet accidents even when they are not on the front-line but when they fight for truth and when they write according to their conscience and ethics, not according to the dictation of certain political parties, the government and others.

The Union of Independent Journalists in Tuzla protested against an attack on Mato Bikic, a correspondent of the Sarajevo-based Oslobođenje newspaper. Two bullies beat him up.

One of these bullies was a journalist and former editor of Zmaj od Bosne and well known for his extreme stands based on Muslim

nationalism and propaganda of the impossibility of mutual life for Muslims, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia.

Union members raised their voices once again to protect colleagues and their profession after the transmitter of the independent radio station 99 in Sarajevo was blown up.

It is suspected that Muslim nationalists, SDA hard-liners, were involved in this incident. The protest became stronger after a perfidious killing of the editor-in-chief of the radio station in Zavidovici. The perpetrators may be the same.

Legal authorities have not reacted accordingly. Police stood by and covered up the names of

the perpetrators from being made public.

Finally, the names leaked out and one of the attackers was fined 100 DM (£40) in the local court.

In its protest, the union asked for permission to arm journalists with pistols for self-defense since the police doesn't although that is its job.

Police officials ignored this request and the journalists were forced to inform the IFJ of the situation since they couldn't see any other way to provide suitable conditions for their work, individual safety and safety of families and property.

Translation by Faruk Ibrahimovic

An appeal to the labour movement Stop the repression in Neuquen

THE economic crisis and austerity policy of the Menem government in Argentina has provoked strong protests from the hardest hit sector — the workers. After the revolt of the public employees in the province of Cordoba and Rio Negro, it was the turn of Neuquen.

In the province there was an important demonstration of unemployed workers on Tuesday 3 October.

The unemployed entered the county hall building and were then violently attacked by the police resulting in injury and material damage.

As reported last week, the police detained comrade Horacio Panario, member of Co-ordination of Unemployed and the

Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) who was at the head of the mobilisation.

It was not just any detention — the comrade was accused of 'aggravated coercion' which carries a five-to-ten-year prison sentence. Such a sentence would have no remission.

The case of Horacio is not isolated. It is part of the attack by the provisional government on the MAS and the MST (Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores).

Sobisch, the governor, accused Alcides Christiansen (construction worker) of MAS and Hector Etchebaster who stood in the provincial elections for governor on 8 October as being responsible for these events.

The police also raided the local headquarters of the MST. As a result of the persecution, on Wednesday 4 October they asked for the arrest of the two candidates, even though there were many others on the demonstration, using the same accusation made against Horacio.

These attacks on Argentine workers are a reflection of the fiasco of the Menem government which maintains its ridiculous boast to imperialism of having a stable economy.

The deepening of the instability imposes the necessity of trying to solve the crisis with brutal economic, political and physical attacks on the workers.

We call on all trade unions and labour movement organisa-

tions to demand that the Argentinian government and authorities free these people and end its persecution of all these workers.

We ask you to send a fax to the provincial Neuquen government and the Supreme Court of Justice of the province, which could say the following:

'To the Provincial Government of Neuquen

'To the Supreme Court of Justice of the Province

'We ask for the immediate liberty of Horacio Panario and the end of the persecution of Alcides Christiansen, Hector Etchebaster and other workers.'

The fax number is 00 547 5499 427113. Send a copy to: Socialist Voice, PO Box 9, Eccles, Salford M30 7FX.

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