

CLASS STRUGGLE



Political Paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain

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Suicide rate soars in prison death cells

HOW MANY MORE MUST DIE IN THESE HELL HOLES

"We must never forget that five teenagers who were in the care of the governor are no longer alive". These are the words of the father of a young remand prisoner in Armley Gaol, Leeds. He is talking about the five suicides which have taken place in the fortress-like prison in the nine months from May 1988 to February 1989.

The victims were Alan Skey, aged 17; Michael Elliott, aged 18; David Littlewood, aged 19; Charles Greechan, aged 19 and Philip Beckett, aged 18. All were remand (unconvicted) prisoners awaiting trial, those who, according to the legal myth, are "innocent until proved guilty".

Armley's grisly record led to official concern and the deputy director-general of prisons, Brian Emes, was instructed to prepare a report. His alarming conclusion was that the young men's deaths were not related to the conditions in the prison, nor to the way the prisoners were treated. Emes' conclusion was better "preventive" measures, such as more and better lighting and more "screening" of prisoners for potential suicides. How anyone is supposed to predict who is going to kill himself out of a prison full of people depressed by being locked up is a question Emes does not address.

This official complacency is not widely shared. Local solicitors in Leeds have been demanding that young remand prisoners be transferred from Armley. Local MPs have taken up the issue and NACRO (the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) and the Howard League for Prison Reform have condemned the conditions at Armley. Even the Prison Officers' Association has stated that the prison is deplorable.

Local people have organised

an Armley Prison Campaign and held pickets of the Law Courts in Leeds. The Campaign outlines some of the conditions which the prisoners in Armley face:

1,300 prisoners are crammed into cells designed for 650.

Most prisoners live three to a cell, in cells built in 1840 for one person.

Prisoners are locked up 23 hours a day without work or association.

There are no toilet facilities, only a urine bucket between three people - prisoners are often obliged to throw their excrement out of the window.

Prisoners get only one shower and change of underwear a week.

Prisoners are regularly intimidated, racially abused and brutalised by prison officers.

PRISON SUICIDES - WIDESPREAD

Armley is just one example of

the horrifying prison conditions in England and Wales which drive people to suicide. While Armley had seven suicides in 1987-1988, Risley Remand Centre had six, Strangeways five, Brixton, Wormwood Scrubs, Durham and Wandsworth four each and Pentonville and Canterbury three each.

In Walton Gaol, Liverpool, in March this year, two men died within 24 hours. In the same month, a prisoner in Gloucester died after dousing himself in solvent and setting fire to himself.

An open verdict was returned by an inquest judge on Dukey Daley, who hanged himself in the cells at Marylebone Magistrates Court in February. He had been held for over a month on remand and taken to the court for his case to be dealt with. Due to administrative errors, the case could not proceed, and five minutes after the adjournment, Daley, who suffered from mental illness, was found dead.

Even identification as a suicide risk can prove ineffective. In Winson Green in 1987, Singh Atwal, who had been so identified, was placed in an ordinary cell without supervision and hanged himself. A coroner's jury returned a verdict of lack of care.

CONTINUES ON BACK PAGE

Heading for a watery grave... what future for the water industry as the sharks move in?

Centre Pages



JAMES CONNOLLY

executed by British Government
May 12th 1916



BOBBY SANDS

died on hunger strike
May 5th 1981

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**SUPPORT NATIONAL STRUGGLE
 AGAINST IMPERIALISM.**

The loosening of the chains under Gorbachev is leading to predictable uprisings in the oppressed nations of the Soviet Union. The recent elections saw massive victories for nationalists in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. In Georgia and Armenia demonstrations ended in violence. Both Soviet concern for Azerbaijan in its dispute with Armenia and the withdrawal from Afghanistan reflect Soviet fear of the awakening of nationalism in the Asiatic Republics.

The other superpower also tries vainly to suppress national struggle. In the United States' "backyard", Nicaragua and El Salvador strive for national freedom. Within the US, there is the irony of the clampdown on "illegal immigration" when most immigrants are Mexicans entering states like Texas and California which were originally stolen from Mexico by the USA.

British imperialism continues its war against Irish nationalists who demand only their freedom. And the aspirations of the oppressed Celtic nations of Wales and Scotland express themselves in election despite the vote-machines of the big English parties and their cultural strength grows among the people. The consciousness and self-organisation of the black national minorities in Britain also develops as they find new ways to challenge their domination by the oppressor nation.

As Communists, we understand that liberation requires the revolutionary overthrow of the owners of the means of production by the working class and their allies. But we are also aware, especially because of the work of Mao Zedong, that the process does not take place only through struggle between these classes and that the struggle of oppressed nations is the principal form of class struggle on a world scale in the present stage of imperialism.

Imperialism controls the lives of every human in the entire world, particularly through the complete economic, political and cultural subjugation of the nations of the Third World. The central role in the development of world history today is played by the struggle of the oppressed nations of the Third World, national struggles, in which a broad alliance of different classes participate.



There can be no doubt of the progressive nature of the struggle of the Third World nations, even though it does not fit simply into a class against class model. We can go further and say that wherever a nation or a nationality is oppressed by another and fights back against it, that struggle is progressive and can only assist the overall struggle against imperialism. Ireland is not part of the Third World, but its struggle for national freedom is just and helps to undermine and weaken British imperialism. The same is true of Scotland and Wales and the oppressed African and Asian minorities in Britain. It is also true of Latvia, Georgia and Azerbaijan where they are fighting against Soviet imperialism.

May Day is when we celebrate the international solidarity of those fighting against imperialist oppression. Our slogan does not merely call for the unity of workers, but for the unity of the workers and the oppressed peoples and nations of the world.

Dear Editor,

Last week I had to play tooth-fairy. My six year old daughter had one of her teeth fall out and we were told that this had to be left under her pillow so that the tooth fairy could replace it with a 10p piece.

Nothing remarkable in that, you might think. It's a phase parents have to go through.

What was interesting was how my daughter described the tooth fairy. She was not sure how big the fairy was. But she was sure that she was black, with black wings. (My daughter is white, as are we, her parents.)

She goes to an inner-city school that is very much a multi-national school. She is one of very few white children going there. Most of the local white parents send their children to a more distant all-white Catholic school.

Despite having very few funds, her school is very good. Her education has not suffered because it is a "black" school.

It's a school that tries to meet the needs of the local community and it celebrates all the festivals of the different nationalities. It teaches an international and anti-racist outlook.

When I compare my daughter's school with the all-white ones I went to, then I am really glad she has the chance to learn better values. As an adult, I had first to unlearn bad values before I could start to learn good ones.

The tooth fairy may be a trivial part of childhood. But if it helps to break the idea that white equals good, black equals bad, it gives me hope for the future.

A Dad, Aston, Birmingham.

Dear Editor,

Recently while I was off sick from work, I saw a TV quiz show that is on at a time when I am usually still at work.

In the show, they show a couple of film clips, then three contestants have to answer questions about what they have just seen. One of the films was about American Apollo moon astronauts, the other about Sherlock Holmes. In both films there were no women and the subjects were about male occupations.

Needless to say, the woman came last in the contest.

It just shows how deep and widespread discrimination against women is in society.

Even the show's name, 'Hitman' is biased.

A Birmingham reader

Dear Editor,

On Saturday, 22nd April, an anti-fascist, anti-racist festival was held in Leeds city centre. Although it rained all day, the atmosphere was warm and friendly and there was a great feeling of solidarity with, and remembrance of, the victims of racism and fascism. This was appropriate in the week that fascists celebrated the centenary of Adolf Hitler's birth, and on 23rd April, St George's Day.

One performer noted that the fascists had stayed away from Leeds on this day. But he commiserated with the people of Rochdale, where the fascists have chosen to centre their activities.

There were many performers and acts throughout the day, including Reggae Band Creation Roots, Poet/Singer Attila the Stockbroker and the Bradford band, New Model Army.

Almost inevitably, on a day when the atmosphere was good and there was no trouble, the police contrived to create problems at the end of the day. The large crowd began to disperse quickly. Small groups of people stayed in the area in front of the art gallery, finding their friends and saying goodbye to others. There was no trouble until the police started to try and move people. There was no need for this. When people protested to the police and asked why this was happening, they were threatened with arrest. I saw one flat-capped policeman, presumably an inspector, grab a young man and say: "If you don't move, I gonna f...ing lock you up." As other onlookers shouted for him to "leave him alone", other police moved in on these people. Fortunately, and no thanks to the police, things quietened down quickly. But it could have turned nasty very easily. There was no "public order" problem. It was clear to me that the attitude of the police was to intimidate people, to create a situation when one did not previously exist.

We often hear the police complain that "innocent bobbies" are attacked and hurt by "violent crowds". In Leeds, I saw few "innocent bobbies" and no violent crowds.

A Bradford reader

Dear Editor,

I liked your article on the NHS White Paper in the last issue of 'Class Struggle'.

Those of us who work in the NHS in various capacities are well aware of the shortcomings and inefficiencies in the system and often try to change it for the better. However, the administrative support for changes is totally lacking. Often the Managers' main aim is to carry on the service without getting

into trouble whilst cutting back the resources to the minimum. Hence the employees face campaigns "Save it..." (i.e. water, electricity, heating bills) every few months and these savings go into the pockets of the unit managers as their bonus! How does that help the patient?

The employees in the National Health are dedicated in their work. Otherwise why would we work at such a low rate of pay in some appalling conditions? Cockroaches in the kitchens is not a joke.

How will privatisation help?

A Health Service employee

WINCHESTER THREE CAMPAIGN

The following leaflet has been issued by the Winchester Three Campaign:

The British state has added three more names to the list of Irish people victimised by its courts. In October, Finbar Cullen, Martina Shanahan and John McCann got 25 year sentences for conspiracy to murder Tom King, and other persons unknown.

Martina Shanahan was singled out for especially appalling treatment....A prisoner in Risley Remand, she was held in solitary for seven months and was only allowed limited association after it was proved that she was suffering mentally. She was strip-searched on numerous occasions. She was, in fact, tortured. In March, her sister was served with an exclusion order, and she was therefore barred from visiting and from attending the trial. Her brother was held for four days under the PTA. These actions represent a concerted campaign of terror against an Irish woman and her family.

The trial itself was held amidst a blaze of publicity... In the middle of the trial, Tom King stepped in and declared that those who used their right to silence were to be considered guilty.... Much of the evidence presented to the court was negligible; all of it was co-incidental.


The real crime of the three was that they were Irish. If it wasn't for that they would never have been arrested. There can never be justice for Irish people in British courts.

If you want to know more about the appeal, contact:
 The Winchester Three Campaign
 c/o Grass Roots
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OVERSEAS	

PLENTY OF MONEY AROUND ~ FOR A FEW

By Alan Greenall

On April 1st, the government raised the pay of over one million state employees. The nurses, along with mid-wives and health visitors received a 6.8% increase. Now an enrolled nurse on Grade D will be paid between £8,569 and £9,815 and a ward sister will get between £12,840 and £14,860. Teachers got slightly less - 6%. So now the least qualified will be on £8,394 and the most experienced, at the top of the scale, £14,694.

On the other hand, the salary of the Law Lords went up to £82,750 while admirals, generals and high court judges saw their annual salary rise to £72,000.

New salary scales, with the 1988 award in parentheses, are:

- £89,500 (£85,250)
- Lord Chief Justice
- £82,700 (£78,750)
- Lords of Appeal
- Master of the Rolls
- Lord President of the Court of Session
- Lord Chief Justice
- £79,500 (£75,750)
- Lord Justice Clerk
- Lords Justices of Appeal
- Inner House Judges of the Court of Session
- Lord Justices of Appeal
- President of the Family Division
- Vice Chancellor
- £72,000 (£68,500)
- High Court Judges
- Outer House Judges of the Court of Session
- Puisne Judges
- £62,700 (£59,700)
- London Official Referees
- £53,400 (£50,900)
- Sheriffs Principal
- Vice-Chancellor (County Palatine of Lancaster)
- Senior Circuit Judges
- Recorder of Liverpool
- Recorder of Manchester
- Recorder of Belfast
- Chief Social Security Commissioners
- Industrial Tribunal Presidents
- Judge Advocate General

If we put these salaries on a weekly basis, the great gap in earnings is much clearer. Thus, for example, a staff nurse on Grade E will earn about £210 before stoppages, whereas Sir Peter Middleton, the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, will get £1,610, just £111 a week less than Sir David Craig, the Chief of the Defence Staff.

In order to see an even bigger difference in levels of income, we have to look at what some directors and owners of the big companies are getting. Recently, the annual report of the huge trading conglomerate, Lonhro, was published. Lonhro, of course, is currently hitting the news headlines over the activities of its managing director and chief executive, Tiny Rowlands, who has been waging a battle over the last four years against the £615 million takeover of the House of Fraser, which includes the top London shop, Harrods.

The Lonhro annual report revealed that Tiny Rowlands' annual salary had leapt by 55% from £656,251 to over one million pounds, while that of the company group chairman, the former Tory MP, Sir Edward du Cann, had more than trebled in 1988 to over £400,000.

As a weekly wage, Tiny Rowlands must be earning nearly £20,000 which is more than most people, even with well-paid jobs or on regular overtime, can gross in one year. As if that was not enough, the report showed that his own personal share in the company had risen from 66.7 million to over 71.7 millions and was currently worth more than £245 million.

THE RICH ARE GETTING RICHER AT WHOSE EXPENSE?

When you read of such levels of wealth and income - and Tiny Rowlands is by no means unique or the richest person in Britain today - it reinforces the view that there is plenty of money around. As far as most of us are concerned, the trouble is that it is all in the hands of a very small, but highly privileged, minority of the population.

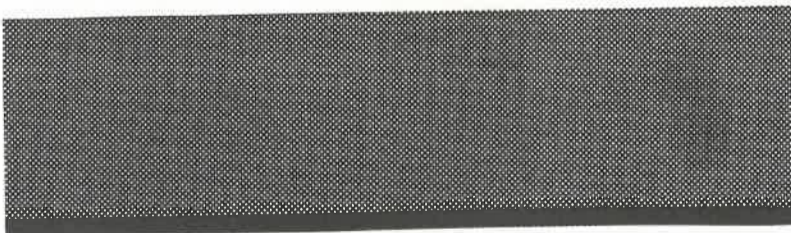
Moreover, as a direct result of government policies, this totally unjust situation is getting worse. Almost one year

THE POSITION OF THE POOR

This great difference in income is the reality of Britain today. When you look at the position of the poor, mainly working class with a large proportion of black people and of women, it can only be described as an obscenity. In this country now, there are around twelve million people who can be described as living in poverty. They include the unemployed, two thirds of all pensioners and those who are dependent on state benefits. For most of these people, April 10th was just another bad day. It was the first anniversary of the government changes to the social security system which saw the introduction of Income Support - brought in under the slogan of helping "to target the most needy".



Bedding down for the night in a cardboard box. It is estimated that over 2,000 people are sleeping rough every night in the capital.



ago, in a Parliamentary answer in the House of Commons, it was admitted that the cumulative effect of the previous ten Budgets had been to make anyone earning over £70,000 a year better off to the tune of over £700 a week.

The Child Poverty Action Group concluded that all the changes to the tax and benefit structure since 1979 have resulted in the majority of the population becoming worse, not better off. They found that households in the bottom half, that including pensioners and those on Income Support, were in early January this year losing out, on average, by around £8.50 a week whereas those in the top ten per cent were gaining £36.

The effect of these changes has led to every major organisation that handles welfare rights to condemn them. The Disability Alliance estimated that more than one million disabled people have suffered as a result of the changes. The Alliance commented: "The best thing that can be said for the new social security system is that it has been an appalling failure as far as people with disabilities have been concerned representing the most savage attack on their living standards."

The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaus also commented that some of the poorest recipients of social security were worse off now, than when the new system was introduced last year

WORKING FOR LOW WAGES

But what about those who are working, "standing on their own feet", and bringing in a regular wage? The government claims that their policies are successful because they are bringing down the number of jobless and providing more employment prospects.

For those with particular skills, qualifications or experience, there is not too much difficulty in finding jobs, particularly in the South East of the country. But for large numbers of people, and particularly young people, those who have had no proper training or whose skills have become no longer needed, the situation is totally different. For them, their job prospects are linked to low pay.

A good example of this comes from the investigation carried out by the West Yorkshire Low Pay Unit on the situation in Bradford. It found that around 40% of the local workforce were either working full-time for less than £140 per week, or part-time for less than £3.50 an hour.

These figures meant that nearly 70,000 people in Bradford were earning below the Council of Europe's decency threshold for full-time earnings or the hourly equivalent.

Moreover, the Unit also discovered that about one in seven Bradford workers was either working full-time for less than £100 a week or part-time for less than £2.50 an hour. Low-paid employment was concentrated in hotels and catering, retail, packing, cleaning and caring occupations, certain types of office work, and in clothing and textiles. A majority of the low-paid are women and their low wages are often accompanied by poor employment conditions, insecurity of work, lack of health and safety provisions and a disregard of what are supposed to be basic employment rights.

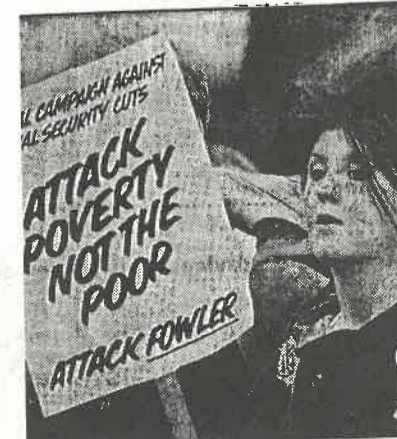
BRADFORD IS NOT UNIQUE

Bradford is in no way unique. The problem of low pay is one that affects every part of the country in differing degrees, involving hundreds of thousands of people.

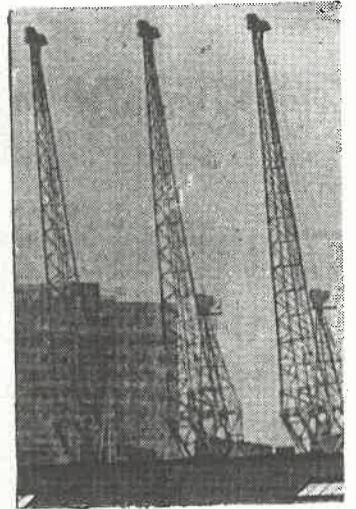
If we add to these two groups - those depending on state benefits and the low-paid - a large proportion of those in regular work and on around average pay, all of whom are being hit by the high interest rates and rising bills, then it can be said of the present system, that it is one run for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many.

Finally, in looking at Britain, it has to be stressed that the whole imperialist system, with all its injustices is built up and rests on the exploitation of the Third world, where vast profits are still being made for the few.

Clearly, there is need for change, in the interests of millions of people, both here and in many countries around the world. The question then to be answered is - how?



DOCKERS WALK OUT



At the beginning of April, dockers at some of Britain's major ports, including Tilbury in London, Liverpool, Bristol and Southampton, walked out in protest against the government's plans, announced on April 6th, to abolish the Dock Labour Scheme.

One docker from Tilbury said:

'We don't want this strike, but what else can we do? Even if they offer me £40,000, that's no use. I want a job....'

The National Dock Labour Scheme was introduced in 1947. Each port had its Dock Labour Board, jointly controlled by the employers and union, on a fifty-fifty basis. Dockers were registered and paid a minimum wage when not working. The employers saw the scheme as a major threat because of the degree of control it gave the unions.

Although the workforce was still essentially casual, it was strongly unionised, and fought to defend gains that had been made. For example there were 37 strikes between 1945 and 1955, many of them around the question of mechanisation of the docks.

In 1965 a Committee of Inquiry into the Port Transport Industry was set up. The recommendations from this inquiry, known as the Devlin Report, were introduced in two phases from 1967. In essence, higher wages and permanent, as opposed to casual, employment, were conceded by the employers in return for flexible working by the union.

This agreement was however soon overtaken by changes in the economies of the ports. On the one hand, concentration of ownership among shipping lines was leading to fierce competition. At the same time, new technology in the form of containerisation provided a means by which employers tried to by-pass a strongly unionised workforce.

These changes led directly to the 1971 clash between the dockers and the government. The dockers were fighting for the right of registered labour to be employed at a new depot at Chobham Farm, near London. When five dockers were imprisoned under the Industrial Relations Act, a general strike was threatened and the dockers won the day.

In the intervening years, however, container ports have grown many of them using unregistered labour. There are now 40 ports operating under the DLS and 35 non-scheme ports. The scheme ports account for 70% of all trade by tonnage but about 50% in terms of value.

As we go to press, the dockers are preparing a ballot on a strike. It is clear that a strike will have a significant impact. But they face a government that has laid its plans more carefully than its forerunner in 1971.

WATER FOR SA

by Joe Steel

Many issues have floated to the surface since the Tories first proposed selling off the ten state-owned water authorities.

This de-nationalisation shows yet again that state ownership does not mean ownership by the whole people.

Massive environmental issues have been highlighted. It is also clear that not only have those water authorities not used their powers to control pollution, they themselves have contributed to pollution. Their sewage works are major polluters of rivers, beaches and estuaries. The Control of Pollution Act has been shown to be an ineffective piece of legislation.

This particular sell-off is unusual. Normally when something is nationalised, usually under a Labour government, the taxpayer foots the bill to modernise the enterprise and then the Tories sell it off when it is profitable again.

The water industry is different, however, in that it is being sold off at a time when massive investment is needed. In many parts of the country, the old Victorian water and sewage systems are in need of large-scale replacement; levels of drinking water purity and state of cleanliness of our beaches fall well short of EEC standards which the government has to meet.

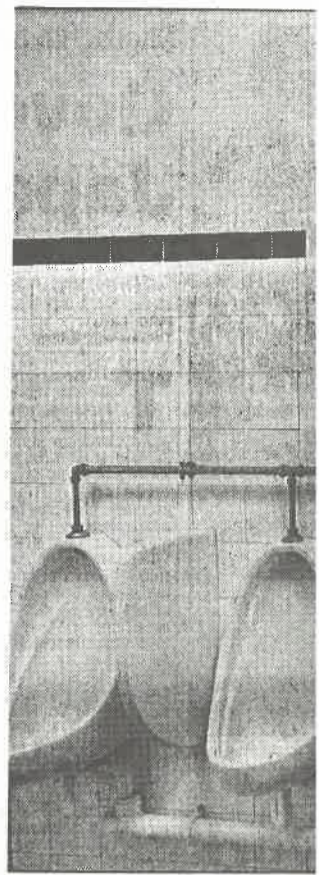
The government seems to have opted to sell off now and ensure that Chancellor Lawson meets his £5 billion a year target from sales of state assets, leaving the consumers, you and me, to pick up the bill for modernising the water industry through price rises. After all, in the case of water, there is no such thing as competition. We have no choice in where we get out water from, and there is no alternative product.

There are already 12 million customers who have experience of private water companies. These 29 companies supply about 25% of the water in England and Wales. In February this year, they intended to raise prices between 30% and 50%. This obviously embarrassed the government, which put pressure on them to lower the increases. But, for how long?

Those of us who make use of the countryside in our spare time, or who go fishing, are worried that our access to these areas will be limited or cost more after the sell-off.

WILL THE SELL-OFF SUCCEED?

A total of £25 million will be spent on advertising to persuade a doubting public and



encourage would-be investors. Some would argue this is more taxpayers' money down the drain. However, the success or otherwise of this water flotation will depend on the assessment of the big money in the City.

The total cost of buying the ten water authorities is estimated to be £6 to £7 billion. Whether this is a profitable investment will depend on whether the government writes off their collective debt of £5 billion at the taxpayers' expense. The new owners will face a bill of £1.6 billion to clean up sewage. The new companies must spend a further £1 billion over the next seven years to cleanse bathing water and another £1.5 billion over the next 15 years to improve drinking water.

The problems are very real not just for would-be investors, but also for you and me, who rely on the services. When the water authorities were set up, fifteen years ago, under the then Labour government, they inherited a system that had been suffering from under-investment for two decades, under local government control. Public spending cuts under both Labour and Tory governments only made matters worse. Now, under the streets, 2,000 miles of sewers are officially classified as seriously defective,



Mandy's Diary

April 2nd: Today the 'Sunday Times' magazine published the names of the 200 richest people in the country. Head of the list is, of course, the Queen, the richest woman in the world. But apart from the Queen, not one single woman's name appears in the first hundred, and only six in the first 200.

April 4th: It is not only women who will be encouraged back into paid work over the next decade. Today 'The Guardian' states that: "Older workers have a very strong work ethic and they serve as positive role models for younger people". It looks as if there may be a trend to welcome back pensioners to employment. They work hard. They don't expect a lot in return. The powers-that-be will be nice to anybody if they can use them for their own ends. But pensioners are not so easily fooled.

On the day my father died, my mother, who was a nurse in the same hospital, was summoned to the matron and told she no longer had a job because she was now 60. He died on November 11th, Armistice Day.

At the age of 19, my father was sent to Burma for the duration of the Second World War. He survived malaria three times and a Japanese POW camp. My mother left school at 14 and worked on the land. She qualified as a staff nurse. But she had to register with the Professional Association and pay every year to retain her qualification. She could not afford to do this and so the qualification was taken away from her. When she went back to work after the children were born, she had to start again at the bottom, as a nursing auxiliary.

That is how my parents were treated by the system. Many other senior citizens can tell a similar tale. When people are treated like this, they don't forget.

April 9th: Edwina Currie was back on the box today, talking about women going out to work. She who told 'Marxism Today' that when it comes to going out to work, women don't have any problems. And 'Marxism Today' swallowed every word of it without a single hiccup.

Wonderful, isn't it? Well, she now appears to have thought better of it.

The Tories have found another group of people to exploit and therefore need to look a little closer at why some women are not as keen as they should be to do twice as much work for not a lot more pay.

Some other Tory (I forget his name), realising that single parent mothers receive state benefits where wives do not, (no doubt, in his view, for sitting at home and twiddling their thumbs), came out with the suggestion of cutting state benefits to single parent mothers in order to force them into paid work. It seems to have slipped his mind that they tried this only a year ago, when maternity benefits were drastically reduced and Social Security Single Payment Grants (including for maternity clothes and baby equipment) were axed completely. You can still get £85 if you're on Income Support. If you are on any other benefit, you get nothing. £85 wouldn't buy any more than a new cot. It wouldn't stretch to include the blankets. It wouldn't keep the baby in nappies for six months.

So would mothers be better off working, as far as maternity benefits are concerned? Well, if you're working, you get nine tenths of your salary for six weeks, then half your salary for a further twelve weeks, and after that you get nothing. In theory, you are entitled to six months off work after the baby is born. But you don't get paid for it after the first six weeks. If you want to take six months off work (and who wouldn't, when you're breastfeeding every four hours and the baby wakes you up every night?), you live on thin air. So you could bottle feed? Ask any doctor or any health visitor in the country which method of feeding produces the healthiest babies. It's OK to give the baby second-best if it benefits your employer.

I could only afford it because I was married, and we lived off my husband. Single parent mothers have to go back to work when the baby is six weeks old if they want to carry on eating.

The system of maternity benefits in this country is one of the worst in Europe. How it could be further cut, is baffling, to say the least.

But perhaps they don't mean cutting maternity benefits? Perhaps they mean that they intend to refuse Income Support to single parent mothers? The implication of this don't bear thinking about.

For one thing, women will get married when they wouldn't otherwise have done so, just to have money to live on. More battered wives, more abused children, higher divorce rates. Who was it said that marriage is a legalised prostitution? Those who don't sell themselves to a man will struggle on in poverty. They will be forced to go out to work. But can they afford to pay a child-minder? They might decide to work at home. Homeworkers receive the lowest rates of pay of anyone in the country. If they go out to work, it could mean illegal childminding, abandoned children, juvenile delinquency, soaring crime rates. More police, more punishment, more prison: Mother will be blamed. They will have mental breakdowns trying to cope. What will have happened to the NHS by then?

I don't believe that the ruling class can't see any further than the end of their noses. I think the truth is that as long as they can carry on making money out of people, they just don't care.

Everyone knows that the main thing preventing women taking part in paid work is childcare, and the care of adult dependants. Yet, when it comes to tackling this problem in an organised manner, the government is silent. State-organised childcare, or state subsidies to carers, would mean spending too much money. It would defeat the object of exploiting people.



What's for Sale?

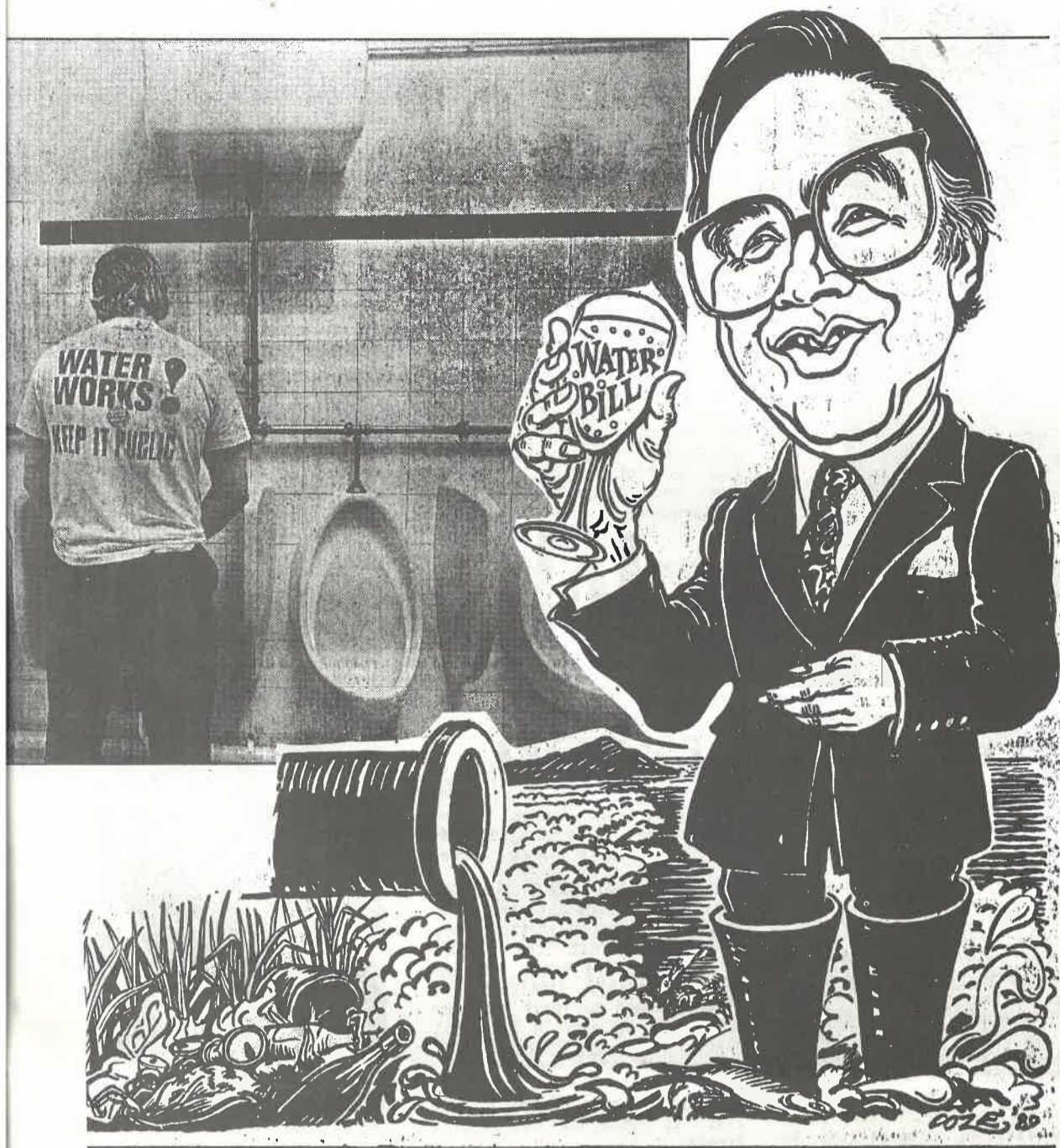
PERFORMANCE OF THE WATER AUTHORITIES

Ranking by Profit	Debt	Authority	People served, m	Turnover	1987-8, £m Profit*
1	3	Severn Trent	8.3	467.9	224.2
2	9	Thames	11.6	596.9	221.4
3	1	North West	6.8	441.2	191.6
4	2	Anglian	5.3	361.9	169.3
5	4	Yorkshire	4.6	297.6	141.4
6	7	Southern	4.0	213.3	99.4
7	5	Welsh	3.1	233.6	80.0
8	6	Northumbria	2.6	125.2	62.3
9	8	Wessex	2.4	127.8	58.9
10	10	South West	1.5	102.8	47.1

* Before interest and extraordinary items

Source: Water

...E - SOAK THE POOR!



If he knew what was in the water he would wipe the smile off his face

which means that they are on the point of collapse. About 1,300 of the 6,500 sewage works are so inadequate that they break the law. Victorian diseases, such as leptospirosis, caught from sewer rates, are on the increase. The rat population of Birmingham, for example, now outnumbers the human population. The Beck in Bradford which is polluted, sometimes causes floods in the city centre.

It is obvious that the new private owners will want a good

profit. This is why the government's promises about price rises must be lies. Even the promises about 7½-12½% price rises are bad enough. But some experts estimate that water bills will double over the next decade.

The introduction of water meters seems an inevitable consequence of privatisation. The cost of this is estimated at £1 billion, which once again, consumers will have to pay for, one way or another. Metering of water raises several questions: Will people in different parts of the country or even in different parts of the same town be paying different rates, as some of the pilot schemes have shown? Will people living in rural areas pay more than town-dwellers? Poor people and those with large families will end up paying more.

OTHER ISSUES

On the face of it, the setting-up of a National Rivers Authority as part of the Water Bill, is a good thing. Having a separate (from the water companies) body to regulate water pollution control, water quality, land drainage, flood protection, etc. is a good thing. However, the real question is, will it have any power? Would it really have the power, or the will, to revoke the license of one of the ten new big private water companies? Pigs may fly.

But it is highly doubtful that the government would allow one of its new private water companies to sink because of a "little pollution problem".

On the face of it the right to roam on land owned by the water companies has been preserved. However, Mr Moynihan (Environmental Under-Secretary) argued that the Water Bill should not outlaw all charges for access to land owned by the water companies, after privatisation. The new companies should be allowed flexibility in charging for recreational facilities, he said. Should a water company sell off land to another company, then that second company would not be restricted in what it did with the land.

What is not talked about in the Water Bill is the effect of increased fragmentation of the water industry. During the drought of 1974-75, there was not enough water. But it was not in the right place and there was no way of getting it to the right place. What is really needed in this country is a national grid system, so that we have the services of a national water system to avoid local shortages. In the future, these local shortages can only be overcome if one company has excess water to sell and another has the funds to buy. Whether either of these possibilities exists will depend on profitability, not need.

A Green and Pleasant Land?

EXAMPLES OF THE EFFECTS OF WATER POLLUTION

- *** A virulent skin disease affecting 2,000 British fishermen has been linked to the millions of tons of raw sewage pumped out into the sea every day.
- *** Untreated sewage pollutes more than 500 British beaches.
- *** One in five sewage works is discharging illegal effluents into our rivers.
- *** Britain's estuaries are being regularly polluted by companies which are allowed to escape controls on industrial pollution. Many firms along the Mersey, Humber and Tees are discharging poisonous waste up to 100 times stronger than the normal permitted levels. None of this is illegal. Industrial giants such as ICI, Unilever and Ciba-Geigy are involved.
- *** Since the beginning of last year, British Steel's five big steel works have on 54 occasions exceeded the legal limits on substances they can pump into rivers.
- *** Severn-Trent water authority has only prosecuted British Steel at Scunthorpe once in the last decade. In 1985, the company was fined £480 for a serious pollution offence. Last year, British Steel made profits of £419 million.
- *** Bernard Matthews' Whitchingham (Norfolk) turkey-processing plant exceeded pollution limits five times last year. His other factory at Holton (Suffolk) failed 21 of Anglia Water's tests. The Authority only sent a warning letter.
- *** Pressures on farmers have doubled the use of nitrate fertilizers in the last twenty years. Combined with phosphates from sewage, nitrates stimulate the rapid growth of algae. This uses up oxygen, killing all aquatic life and leaves a scum-like layer on the water. Even if farmers stopped using nitrates tomorrow, it takes between 5 and 40 years for the chemical to seep through to the rivers.
- *** 95% of Norfolk's waterways have been killed by the combined effect of phosphates and nitrates.
- *** Pollution of rivers by animal slurry and silage is a major problem. Silage is 200 times more potent than raw sewage.
- *** The Department of the Environment has told water authorities not to bother to test drinking water for cryptosporidium, a potentially lethal organism, which has already made hundreds of people ill this year. This advice was issued on 22nd March, a month after 600,000 people in southern England had been warned to boil their drinking water because of an outbreak of diarrhoea caused by cryptosporidium.

DID YOU KNOW?

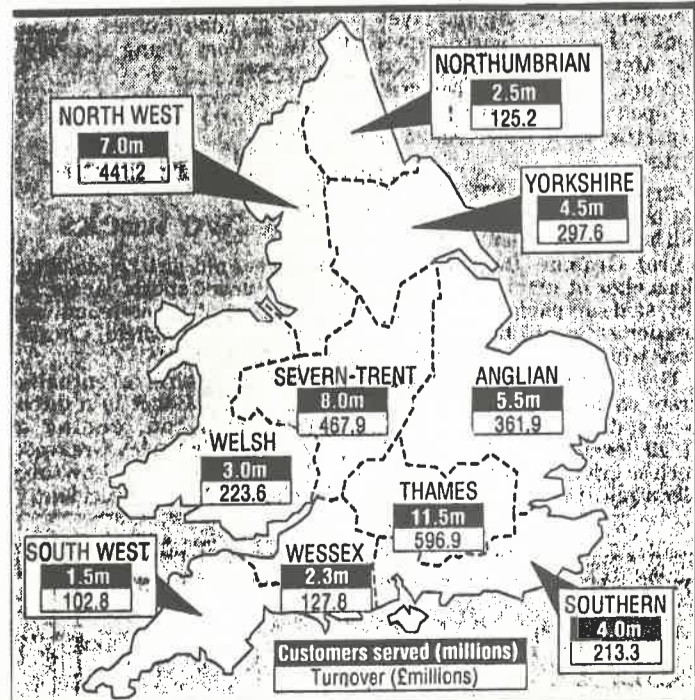
WHAT DO THE STATE WATER AUTHORITIES OWN?

- * 335,000 acres (about the size of Berkshire). Only 38,792 acres of which is water.
- * This land is some of the most scenic in England and Wales. About 70% of the total is designated as National Park, Site of Special Scientific Interest or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It includes parts of the hills and mountains of the Peak District, Lake District and Wales.
- * 143,337 miles of water mains
- * 145,842 miles of sewers
- * 545 reservoirs
- * More than 500 dams
- * 784 sea outfalls
- * 1,502 boreholes and wells
- * More than 800 houses
- * More than 90 listed buildings
- * About 200,000 acres of agricultural land.
- * Thames Water's land assets alone are estimated to be worth £1 billion.

The Parliamentary Register of M.P.'s interests has recently been published.

Virginia Bottomley, the Conservative Member for South West Surrey however can't be criticised on that point. She declares her only external interest as being a director of Mid-Southern Water Company. Keith Speed, Conservative Member for Ashford, Kent is much more involved. In addition to being a director of the Folkestone Water Company he is also a director of Westminster Communications Ltd, Consultant to the Association for the Instrumentation Control and Automation Industry in the UK (GAMBICA) and to the Machine Tool Trades Association, shareholder of Westminster Communication Ltd and adviser to the Professional Association of Teachers.

Many of the M.P.s are also described as being members or under-writers of Lloyds. Membership is open to anyone, as long as they have £100,000 in fluid assets. May be when they have sold off the water industry, their assets will be a bit more fluid.



Debt	Profit margin
843.2	48%
209.6	37%
1,045.8	43%
928.5	47%
575.6	47%
303.9	46%
459.2	36%
425.4	50%
282.3	46%
135.4	46%

Utilities Association



WOMEN: The Debate on Jobs versus Homemaking

by Ma Lizhen

We reprint below an article published in 'China Reconstructs', in March of this year, written by a regular contributor to the Chinese language edition of 'Women of China'.

The question of women's employment outside the home, long thought to be a settled issue in socialist China, has in the last few years become a hot topic of discussion. The following is a preliminary report on the arguments offered on each side, along with some thoughts on the subject by the author.

All through 1988, the pages of the Chinese edition of the magazine 'Women of China' were the forum for a passionate debate on the future of women in China. It was kicked off by two articles entitled 'Whither Women?' and 'The Women of Daqiu Village Return to the Hearth - Some Thoughts Thereon'. A column entitled '1988 - Women's Future' was opened where letters and comments were published.

'Whither Women?' was written by a woman worker. She described how, because she frequently had to take time off from work to look after her child, she had been dismissed by the manager of her factory when business fell off and told to stay at home to wait for another job assignment (although she did, meanwhile, collect 80 percent of her old wages). "I have lost my work because of my child", she said sadly.

The Daqiu village of the second article is in the outskirts of Tianjin. Prior to 1979 it was very poor, and all the women worked in the fields alongside their menfolk. Today, however, the village has become very prosperous, a man can earn enough to support his family and most married women have returned to their homes as "housewives". Is this a sign of progress or of retrogression? The debate has raged back and forth for some time.

Some 60-odd articles have appeared in the 12 issues of the magazine, all centred around the question of women returning to the home. In many provincial and municipal seminars held on women's affairs, this has

become the main topic of discussion. Luo Qiong, a veteran of the women's movement, and Wang Shouchu of the Guangdong Women's Federation, went to Daqiu village to investigate the situation. 'Women of China' in conjunction with national investigative networks, carried out a survey on people's responses to the debate in cities all over the country. Out of the 2,000 men and women questioned, 87 percent felt this public discussion was useful and 46.9 percent not only knew about it but were also joining in. Women between 35 and 45 were the most interested, and 58 percent of them were participating.

THE ROAD TO EQUALITY?

When the new China was founded in 1949, it inherited a huge unemployment problem from the old regime. A policy of "extensive employment, low salary" ensured that as many people as possible held jobs of some kind. In China, the rate of employment for women is high, higher than in certain economically developed countries. Undoubtedly, women benefited from this. However, with time, a negative aspect of the policy also manifested itself: low efficiency. Though the rate of employment in China may surpass certain developed countries, per capita income, growth and productivity per worker lag far behind. An important task of economic and social reforms in China today is how to overcome the difficulties caused by this "extensive employment, low salary, low efficiency" situation.

It is estimated that, nationwide, at least 20 million employees, of whom over 60 percent are women, have paid jobs but little work to do. If appropriate measures are not taken, women will find themselves even more seriously disadvantaged in the job market because of their generally lower level of education and training. The future of women which was thought to have been a closed question, has thus once more come to the fore, because for men and women to achieve equality, women must be guaranteed equal opportunities for employment.

Particularly puzzling to many is the behaviour of the women of Daqiu village where 84 percent of the married ones have happily gone back home. Villages like this which have prospered rapidly as a result of the reforms are still in the minority, but in many of these places the same thing has happened. In the days of the people's communes, Daqiu village was very poor, and 95 percent of the women worked for the collective. Since 1979, the village has diversified from straight crop-raising to forestry, cattle-raising, fishing, industry, commerce and household sideline activities. The village's 4,400 mu of land (15 mu = 1 hectare) have been turned over to nine of the best farmers to tend. Per capita income has risen dramatically since 1979, and many new houses have been built. The rise in farming efficiency through mechanisation and the many new village enterprises have absorbed most of the male manpower, leaving the women to return home.

"We used to rise before dawn, young and old women alike, to go to the fields. We worked just like the men, carrying heavy loads. When we finally got home at night, our men could throw themselves down on the brick bed, but we had to cook, look after our old people and children, wash, mend, feed the chickens and pigs. Now things are much better, the men earn more. And someone is really needed at home. We're glad to come back to an easier life," said one middle-aged village woman.

A woman worker wrote to the magazine saying that she greatly envied the women of Daqiu village. "If I could guarantee my present standard of living, I would be willing to go home too," she said. However, many women, including ones who have devoted their whole life to women's liberation, have great difficulty understanding this. The liberation of China's women, they say, has been precisely their exit from the home and entry into productive social life, and the sharing of household chores between men and women. If all women follow in the footsteps of Daqiu village women, how will there be equality between men and women?

Most veterans of the women's movement, career women over 40 and a certain number of men around 50 all believe that productive work is an essential part of women's liberation. 'Returning home' is a step backwards, a manifestation of the old, conservative denigration of women and their subordination to men. Ding Juan, a teacher at the Chinese Institute of Women Management Cadres, has this to say: "If we examine history, we see that society's rejection of women began with the change in their economic status. Therefore restoring women's dignity must start from their economic position. Women's employment is first and foremost an economic issue. If women relinquish their right to employment, it amounts to giving up their rights to possessions and to their fair share of the wealth produced by a socialist economy. It means denying themselves the protection of socialist law and forsaking economic independence and autonomy."

AN OPEN AND FLEXIBLE ATTITUDE

After this year of spirited debate, I believe one reason for the sharp disagreement lies in different interpretations of the meaning of equality of the sexes.

Since the 1949 liberation, two views have been evident. One emphasises an absolute physiological and psychological equality between men and women, regardless of their differences.

The other cites these differences as a reason for all sorts of special protective measures for women. The first view tries to deny differences, insisting that women should reach the same levels as men in all trades and jobs, including certain areas completely unsuited to women. The second view resulted in protective employment regulations that actually weakened women's abilities to compete and increased their dependence.



Zhou Xiangdang is one of the fourth generation of female pilots trained in China.

'Returning home' means taking the old road of becoming dependent on others once more.

Kang Keqing and Luo Qiong, both longtime leaders of the All-China Women's Federation, are strongly against the return of women to the home. It has been incredibly difficult for Chinese women to leave the home to go out to work in the first place, they say. Urging them to go back now - as some have done - runs counter not only to the reforms in China, but also to international social trends.

The opposing view is held by a certain number of government officials, certain factory and enterprise management cadre and some young and middle-aged married men and women. They claim that women's return to the home benefits both society and the family. "At the present time, when people are generally not very well off," says Bai Xu, a cadre in charge of personnel, "most chores are still carried out by family members. Husband and wife in many two-job families each spend up to three or four hours a day on household chores. For many women employees, things are even more exhausting. They are like tightly wound springs, rushing round and round from home, bus, workshop, bus, home, day in and day out without a moment to spare. Meanwhile latch-key children and their education, the care of the sick and elderly, public security in residential areas, crowded public transport and over-staffing are serious problems which are very difficult to resolve. This is an extremely unbalanced social situation."

A letter from woman worker, Tian Shufan said: "If a certain proportion of women were to return home, things would be very different. Wives would have enough energy to make their families happy. They would have time to read and study and participate in social activities. Husbands, freed from household worries, would be able to devote all their energies to their work and study. This means that very quickly there would be a highly efficient, trained, disciplined and active work force. Our children would benefit from more maternal care and upbringing and there would be less delinquency."

The women's liberation movement in China has always aimed for equality between men and women, but the basic approach is still a male-centred one. Men are dominators, women are dominated. In some people's minds, liberation for the dominated means becoming a dominator, and therefore women's liberation means women must become just like men. This has resulted in very narrow views of sex roles: either remain a down-trodden woman, or "liberate" yourself by becoming like a man. In this writer's opinion, any debate on the future of women which cannot break away from this old stereotype is going to lead nowhere.

At a time of reform and openness, I believe that questions of the future of women should also benefit from an open and flexible attitude. Women should be able to choose what they want to do, on the basis of their capabilities and inclinations. As long as this choice does not infringe upon the rights of others, they should not be condemned for their choice. Some will aspire to a career, others will wish to be housewives. In the countryside where many families are still relatively poor, women are an important part of the labour force and will wish to get jobs in industry and agriculture alongside their men in order to contribute to the family income. All these options should be respected by society and the necessary conditions created for carrying them out. Only then will women be spared painful choices and society be able to develop harmoniously.

Women

INVISIBLE WORKERS - BOOK REVIEW



A review of 'Unseen Phenomenon: The Rise of Homeworking' by Anneke van Luijken and Swasti Mitter.

"Women always work at home; it is also not uncommon for them to work from home. Indeed, there is a marked similarity between housework and homework. In all societies, they are performed mostly by women, and because of the nature of the work, they remain invisible to the outside world...."

This is the beginning of a pamphlet about women doing paid work at home and ways that they are organising for change.

The introduction outlines the re-growth of homework in Europe as a result of the "new restructuring in the global economy today". Detailed examples are given of homeworkers in the Netherlands, doing work ranging from sewing cloths to making links in belts for machine gun bullets. The pamphlet puts the growth of homework in the context of developments in the Dutch economy.

Homeworking in Europe is linked to women working in the Third World:

"The phenomenon of homeworking in Europe is the mirror image of employment of Third World women in export-led industries. In the 70s, after the oil crisis, big companies in the



West resorted to international sub-contracting to survive. While the skilled and knowledge-intensive parts of the production stayed in the West, labour-intensive parts of the production went to the Third World countries where there were promises of non-unionised and cheap female labour...."

More recently, much work has been brought back to Europe as the growth of unemployment

and poverty has led to a ready supply of labour in the form of women working at home.

The pamphlet also points out that many women in the Third World work from home and relates the words of Neela Naresh (aged 45), of India, who rolls beedies (cigarettes):

"The past 30 years I've rolled beedies. I married when I was eleven years old and I had my first child when I was sixteen. I have six daughters and one son.... I used to roll 1,000 to 1,500 beedies a day.... My health is deteriorating.... My eyes burn and the permanent inhaling of tobacco makes me asthmatic. When will I get some rest?"

National minority women in Europe are also forced into working at home by the increasing level of racist violence and abuse in most European countries.

ORGANISING FOR CHANGE

The second, and shorter, half of the pamphlet, gives some information about the ways women are organising themselves, particularly in the Third World. The main point seems to be that although some women call their organisations trade unions, they have a different and broader interpretation of what this means. Ela Bhatt, organiser for the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of Ahmedabad, is quoted as saying:

"The purpose of trade unionism is not only for agitation. It is about solidarity and development: 89% of women workers in Ahmedabad are self-employed. If they are excluded from the labour movement, you are cutting off the vast majority of workers, and those who most need protection."

The lesson for women in Europe is not to copy organisations in the Third World mechanically but to break away from narrow



definitions of trade unionism and for women themselves to determine their own needs, demands and appropriate organisational forms.

'Unseen Phenomenon' is written by Anneke van Luijken and Swasti Mitter, both of whom are well-known for their extensive research and work with women working at home, in sweatshops and for big companies. It is unfortunate that their writing has not been well-edited in this pamphlet. It is still well worth reading.

The pamphlet is produced by 'Change', an organisation committed to exposing the lack of power and abuse of women, particularly in the Third World. It publishes a range of material on women in different countries and a basic principle of their work is that these reports are written by women from these countries not by outsiders.

'Unseen Phenomenon' costs £3.00 and is available from Change, PO Box 824, London SE24 9JX.

BOOKNEWS

FROM BEIRUT TO JERUSALEM A Woman Surgeon with the Palestinians

Dr. Swae Chai Ang's own account of the experiences in the camps of West Beirut covers the period of the Israeli invasion. The Gaza Hospital was flooded with massacre victims. Like her volunteer colleagues, Dr. Pauline Cutting and Susan Wighton, she had to attend the most appalling injuries and witness the suffering of thousands, sometimes lacking the most basic facilities and in an environment both hostile and without elementary hygiene. The book is a testimonial to the courage and dedication of both its author and the Palestinian people of Sabra refugee camp. 302 pages. £3.99 + 46p P&P

THE PALESTINIAN CATASTROPHE The 1948 Expulsion of a People From Their Homeland

Michael Palumbo has tackled head on the myth that the birth of the Zionist state filled a vacuum. Using archive material and personal testimony, he reveals how Ben Gurion's plan to "expel the Arabs and take their place" through massacres and gunpoint expulsion was the inevitable result of Zionist policy. 233pp.

£6.95 + 40p P&P

BATTLEFIELDS OF INDIA The Crisis of the Indian State

This pamphlet from South Asia Solidarity Group looks at the roots of the recurring separatist demands from movements within the Indian state and the economic and political trends underlying them. Taking two very different parts of India, Punjab and Bihar, it assesses how much of a threat they pose, and how they relate to India's history of revolutionary struggle.

£1.00 + 22p P&P

TALKING BACK Thinking feminist-thinking Black

These thought-provoking essays from one of the most challenging black feminist writers today, Bell Hooks, confront issues such as class and education, the meaning of feminist consciousness in daily life, overcoming white- and male-supremacy and exploring the point where the public and private meet. 184 pages.

£5.95 + 40p P&P

THE STRUGGLE FOR POST-UHURU AFRICA

A.M. Babu, former Tanzanian Minister of Economic Planning, takes the experience of Nkrumah's Ghana to draw out the wider lesson to be learnt on the nature of national democratic revolution and the neo-colonial obstacles that still need to be challenged in Africa today. 32 pages.

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Soviet Union ELECTION SUCCESS FOR NATIONALISTS

by Edward Leonard

In the recent elections in the Soviet Union, the sweeping successes of the nationalists in the Baltic republics were a foregone conclusion: two thirds of the seats in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania went to candidates favourable to some form of self-rule.

The Estonian and Latvian Popular Fronts and the Lithuanian Movement for Perestroika share a common approach in favour of a multi-party system and a very loose Soviet confederation with Moscow having the final say in issues of defence and foreign policy. Otherwise, most other policy areas would be left to the republics.

Next year, the three republics will shift to regional Khozraschet, which essentially means that the republics can run their own economies on a profit-and-loss basis. This marks the beginning of an enormously complicated transition that will experiment with what perestroika means in practice.

GROWTH OF NATIONALISM

The growth of the nationalist movements seems to be setting a collision course with central rule.

In Latvia, nationalism has brought forth a strong response from non-Latvian residents. Baltic Russians have organised in Interfront (International Front) and some 60,000 supporters marched in February, ostensibly to mark Soviet Army Day but actually to demonstrate opposition to a new law which would oblige non-Latvians, who make up half the population, to learn the language. Latvian counter-demonstrations denounced "Soviet occupiers".

In Armenia, troops are still on the streets and a curfew in force after unrest over the disputed territory of Nagorny Karabakh.

Illegal nationalist protests, 20,000 strong, demonstrated in the Moldavian capital of Kishinev in March. They denounced high-level corruption, demanded that Moldavians replace Russian as the official language and called for an end to Russian immigration into the republic.

In April, an attack by troops on 10,000 Georgian demonstrators, some calling for Georgia to secede from the Soviet Union, saw at least 30 dead and hundreds injured.

Eduard Shevardnadze, Soviet Foreign Minister, and former Georgian Party boss, flew to the republics to head an attempt to defuse the situation. Nationalist demonstrations in Tbilisi had been growing in strength and frequency in recent months.

In a speech that addressed the demands for greater autonomy for the republics, Gorbachev condemned "the actions of irresponsible people" warning nationalists in the Caucasus that "restructuring of inter-ethnic relations is not the replanning of the borders or the breakdown of the national-state structure of the country. We are resolutely against this." But he held out promises to meet some of the grievances expressed in the nationalist ferment. "We stand for the consistent expansion of the rights of the republics, of all national formations, for filling them with real content." It is how this is achieved that will be taken as the test of the much-heralded democratisation by the different nationalities.

The recent elections reflected the growing popularity and strength of the nationalist movements, encouraged by recent



changes in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev has acknowledged: "If perestroika is, indeed, the continuation of the revolution, if we are currently pursuing a revolutionary policy, then struggle is inevitable." It looks, however, as though he will get more than he bargained for.

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND

FREEDOM FIGHTERS NOT CRIMINALS

The May Commemorations in London and Birmingham are held to honour those who have fought and given their lives in the long struggle for Irish freedom. The ten H-Block martyrs, who died in 1981 in the struggle against the criminalisation of political prisoners, were part of a long tradition, going back through James Connolly and the other martyrs of the 1916 Easter Uprising, to 800 years of Irish resistance to British rule. It is also a tradition carried forward by the Gibraltar Three and others who have died at the hands of the British army since 1981.

The Irish people have shown that they will not give up until they have forced Britain out of Ireland.

The leaflet from the Birmingham Hunger Strike Committee points out that like successive British policies, the 1985 Hillsborough Agreement has been shown to have failed:

"....Since 1985, with all the hype and promises that this so-called major British initiative would deliver to the nationalist people in the North, it can best be judged by what actually was delivered.

CONTINUED REPRESSION

"British Crown Forces continue to murder Irish people with their shoot-to-kill policy and to collude with loyalist assassination squads. Plastic bullets are still used against unarmed civilians. No-jury Diplock courts continue to function. Torture continues in the interrogation centres. The 'temporary' PTA will become permanent. Supergrass trials are only suspended because discredited. Widespread raids and wrecking of homes in nationalist areas by British Crown Forces escalate. Discrimination against nationalist in employ-

ment and housing remains. British Crown Forces still confront and intimidate the mourners at Republican funerals.

"The framed-up Guildford Four, Birmingham Six and Judith Ward remain in British jails after 15 years. Republican women prisoners are strip searched in Durham and Maghaberry prisons. Republican prisoners (Lifers and SEsPs) remain incarcerated, some in their 17th year, without a release date, while British soldier Thain, convicted of murdering a nationalist in the occupied Six Counties was released after serving two years of a life sentence. Republican prisoners in jails in England are refused transfers to jails in Ireland near their families, while criminals like Thain in the British army, convicted in the Six Counties, are transferred to jails in England. Republican prisoners continue to be abused and placed in solitary confinement for long periods.

"Censorship against Sinn Fein continues while the right to silence when arrested, is abolished. Serious attacks and assassination attempts take place against Sinn Fein councillors by loyalist/Crown Forces including murder of an elected representative and a relative. Fianna Fail extradites Republicans to be tried by Diplock courts. This is how the Hillsborough Agreement, with the active co-operation of the Dublin government, has operated against the nationalist people demanding Irish unity and freedom. British policies will never bring about freedom, justice and peace to the Irish people. All British policies will fail until the British accept that it is the Irish people who will determine their own future in their own country."



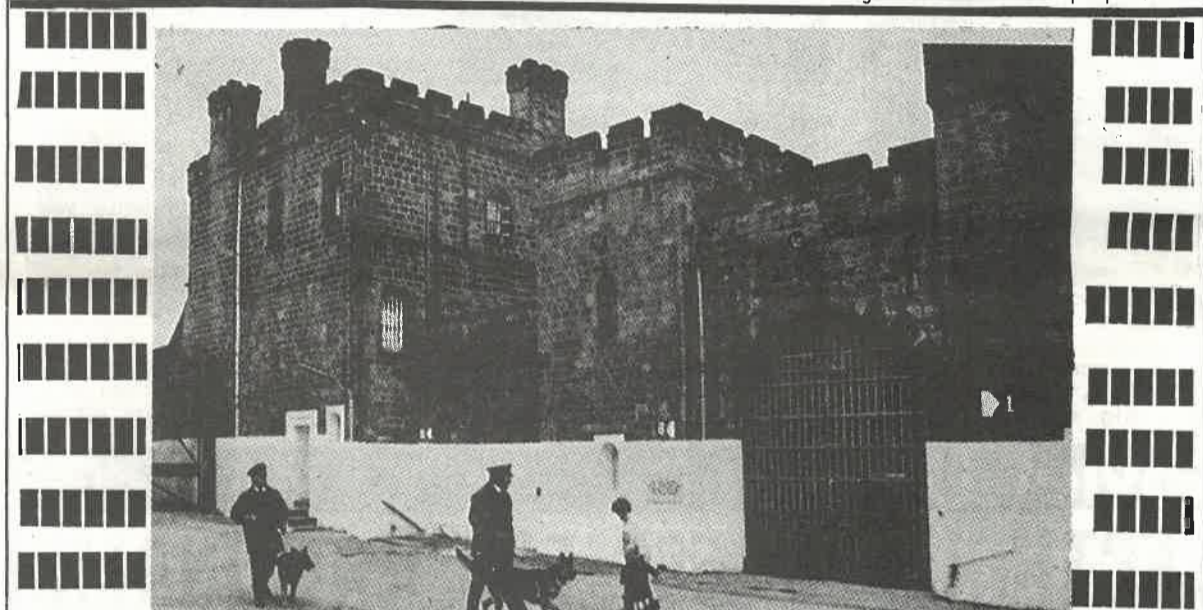
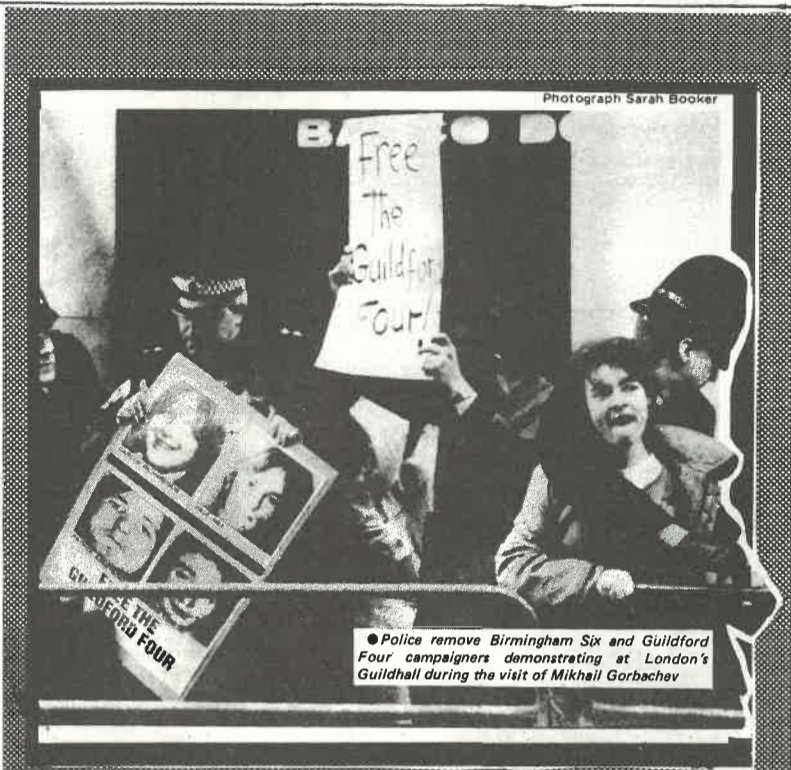
WHOSE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Mrs Thatcher is keen on denouncing the abuse of human rights in the Soviet Union. But the hypocrisy of any such statements, by any British government spokesperson, was shown by the treatment given to those protesting against the continuing imprisonment of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, during Gorbachev's recent visit to London.

A group of campaigners planned to demonstrate as Gorbachev arrived at the Guildhall, with placards calling for the release of the ten innocent prisoners. As soon as they arrived, police rushed at the group, seizing banners and placards and tearing them up.

Nine people were arrested and released four hours later, without being charged, clearly to prevent any protest taking place.

The British state had demonstrated once again not only that we no longer have the basic democratic right of protest, but also that it refuses any recognition of the national rights of the Irish people.



DEATH CELLS in ARMLEY

FROM FRONT PAGE

There are also large numbers of attempted suicides in our prisons. Over the nine month period of the five suicides in Armley, 19 people tried to commit suicide and failed. On average there is one suicide and there are three incidents of self-inflicted injury every day in the prisons of England and Wales.

Because the suicide rate is clearly higher among remand prisoners, much criticism has focussed understandably on their plight. Distress among remand prisoners will tend to be more marked because many have committed no offence and all wait anxiously for their trial dates. These can be delayed for months or even years, and neither lawyers nor courts can tell the defendants when their trials will be held.

There is rarely any justification for remanding defendants in custody. Even the Home Office tries to discourage custodial remands. But judges and magistrates increasingly refuse bail. In 1987, the last year for which complete figures are available, 11,162 prisoners

were on remand, 23% of the prison population. Of these, 39% of men and 58% of women did not subsequently receive a custodial sentence. Important reforms would be a thorough overhaul of the 1966 Bail Act and an increase in the number of bail hostels. The Home Office's only response is to experiment with "electronic tagging", treating suspects like cattle.

WORST IN EUROPE

Serious though the problems of remand prisoners are, they are only symptomatic of the deep flaws in the whole penal system in England and Wales. (Scotland's prisons, like its legal system, are under a separate, though no less barbarous, regime.) The system imprisons a greater proportion of the population than any country in Europe apart from Turkey and Austria. And whilst the proportion is falling in Turkey and Austria, it is increasing here. In England and Wales, 94 people out of every 100,000 are in prison. Compare this with 37 per 100,000 in the Netherlands.

Because of overcrowding, Home Office ministers encourage the

courts to cut down on prison sentences, while making plans for building more and bigger prisons in the 1990s. The courts take no notice and send more people to prison for longer periods. The prisons become more overcrowded and more insanitary and prison officers more brutal. The spiral goes on, and leads to more ruined lives and more suicides.

At the root of the problem is the need for an increasingly unequal society to control those at the bottom who have nothing. Imprisonment is a major weapon in the armoury of repression. The overwhelming majority of prisoners have committed offences against property, with no element of violence. The fastest growing sections of the prison population are black and young people, those who have least share of society's wealth.

Within this system it is important to fight for reforms which reduce custodial sentences and increase prisoners' rights. In the long term, the only solution is to end the repressive system which uses incarceration to control and poor and oppressed.

Irish Hunger-Strike Commemoration

BIRMINGHAM

MARCH & RALLY



sat **MAY 6th**

ASSEMBLE 12.00 MIDDAY

BROAD STREET/CUMBERLAND STREET

RALLY AT NORTON HALL, RALPH ROAD SALTLEY

SPEAKERS: SINN FEIN, P.O.W. RELATIVE, HUNGER STRIKERS RELATIVE, MINERS SPEAKER, PLUS INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER

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