

Workers' fight

5p

No.83 — January 18th to 25th 1975

Inside:
IAN HEYES
talks to
Workers Fight
about the
Pochin's
occupation



(p.2)

Occupation, Day One: Pochin's workers in the site office corridors. (Photo John Sturrock, Report.)



At a building site in Manchester's Oxford Road, an important blow is being struck against the redundancies that are sweeping through the building industry.

When 14 redundancies were suddenly announced on Thursday January 9th, the men on the site (Pochin's Manchester Polytechnic extension) struck immediately. And the following Monday they occupied the site and took over the site office.

In announcing the 14 redundancies, Pochin's had ripped up all the site's existing procedure agreements. The list included 3 stewards, and the principle of "first in, last out" had been completely ignored. And on top of that, the management wanted to get as much work out of those left, and for the same bonus.

The only concession the management have now made, at a meeting of the Disputes Panel (employers, union officials and shop stewards) on Thursday 16th, was to say that one of the 14 could have a week's wages in lieu of notice, but he had to be off the site by the next day! And they demanded that work resume from the following Monday, and "then there can be more talk".

A mass meeting of the occupation responded by demanding the reinstatement of all 14 before any further talks could take place, and also insisted that all the stewards be present at the discussions, not just the Convenor (Ian Heyes) and one other.

"We know there is no going down the road for another job" say the Shop Stewards Committee. "This time there are at least 200,000 building workers on the dole". Many sites are just ticking over, or have closed down.

The nonsense of Denis Healey, and all the other Social Contract mongers, who claim that low wages will cure unemployment, is most clearly exposed by the building industry. In the name of the Social Contract which is said to save jobs, the building union leaders are trying to palm off a complete wages sell-out to already low paid workers, knowing that in any case and however much they crawl, the slump in building will continue and sackings will increase. And they have dropped the demand for a 35 hour week, which would have done more than anything to save men's jobs.

In fact the only protection is a militant refusal to accept the bosses' say-so on layoffs. This is a time when more and better organisation is called for — rather than concessions which leave workers wide open to have the employers' problems heaped onto them.

In this situation, the militant occupation of the Pochin's site in Manchester could be

Builders strike a blow against the dole queue

the focus for a fight back against the bosses' tactics and the union leaders' sell-out.

Already, news of the occupation has spread to building sites outside Manchester, and the Rank and File Organising Committee has agreed to help circulate the Pochin Shop Stewards' leaflets.

Locally, the Polytechnic Students have donated £100 to the strike fund (it is unofficial) and £5 has come from an LPYS branch. Men from Intex Yarns, only just back to work after their strike, have visited the site and pledged a levy from their first week's wages, as a recognition of the solidarity the site gave them during their strike.

Help will certainly be needed. Already the management have called in the police, who didn't do anything then, though no doubt they will if they get half a chance. Send donations and messages to Pochin's Shop Stewards Committee, at 45 Heathfield Drive, Bolton.

See Back Page

Shrewsbury Two A massive lobby

LAST Friday's speech by Chancellor of the Exchequer Denis Healey was clearly meant to tie up with Harold Wilson's of the week before.

The Wilson speech warned that the State could not be expected to 'bail out' firms where there was a 'bad strike record', and that the consequence of strike pressure would be a steep rise in unemployment.

Now Healey has weighed in with his pennyworth: "It is far better" he said "that more people should be in work, even if that means accepting lower wages on average, than that those lucky enough to keep their jobs should scoop the pool while millions are living on the dole. That is what the social contract is all about."

Healey — a wage freeze in mind?

can somehow cure or stave off unemployment, and that workers should therefore voluntarily accept lower wages rather than higher unemployment.

None of these people has yet been heard to utter the obvious fact that unemployment and inflation are caused by the inherent

First, because of the factional line-up within the Labour Party between "right" and "left" — even though they both stand for much the same thing. The only thing they differ over is whether to run capitalism with state intervention, or to run it without such intervention.

The TUC chiefs rattle their spears and demand that the Government clear such "controversial" speeches with them before they are delivered; Len Murray accuses Healey of "re-writing the social contract" without a by-your-leave. But this is all play-acting: it is the conflict between two salesmen of the same shoddy article, each afraid the other will make a mess of things and give the game away.

Secondly, the TUC leaders are afraid that Healey will initiate some system of wage freeze — in other words, a wage cut.

irrationality of the capitalist system on a world scale and not by workers having enough to eat, clothes to wear, a place to live in and a couple of weeks' holiday — whether it be to Blackpool or Majorca.

So why the denunciations of Healey? And why — if after all, Healey was only hacking away at the same tree as Wilson, albeit from another angle — did Wilson's speech meet with a grudging approval from trade union leaders, while Healey's got the bird?

by JACK PRICE

Apart from the assertion that "millions" will be on the dole (which Healey is no doubt far better qualified to make), the essence of this speech differs little from the line trade union and Labour leaders have been peddling since the "social contract" first got an airing.

Yet Healey's speech was followed by a flurry of denunciations by trade union leaders.

Foremost of these was Jack Jones — the most persistent advocate of the same line: that low wages



Several ingeniously vicious schemes are said to have been put forward. Shirley Williams has advocated a change in the Price Code which would penalise firms conceding what the Government considers a "high wage rise". There is also the idea that workers getting increases over a norm would be taxed punitively, so that the State would claw back such increases.

Whatever the ploy for keeping wages down, it is likely that Healey will advocate a wage norm. His reference to wage increases for "better off workers" shows he is thinking along the lines of persuasion used by Heath during Phase 2 and

Phase 3: we should remember how then, too, the weakest and poorest workers were bashed the worst.

This government is of course wholeheartedly committed to keeping wages down. The whole point of the "social contract" is to do this without statutory controls, thereby gaining the full co-operation of the trade union bureaucracy and helping these disloyal "leaders" to manoeuvre with the rank and file. And union leaders are deeply disturbed at the prospect of having to put up a show of fighting a Labour government which institutes statutory controls.

When Wilson spoke a week before, and attacked

the trade unions far more sharply than Healey has done, he was careful to outline an important collaborative role of the trade union leadership. Healey's speech, these leaders fear, indicates a policy where their role is narrowed.

Healey wasn't 're-writing' the social contract. That contract means a wage cut now, and it always did. But his speech might indicate a change in the role of the trade union leaders in operating and patrolling such a wage cut.

Is it surprising that the CBI leaders, the bosses' militant representatives, have now swung round to open advocacy of the "social contract"?

ONE IN THREE OR FOUR ON THE DOLE IS A BUILDING WORKER

IAN HEYES, a supporter of Workers Fight and member of UCATT, is the Convenor of the Pochin's Polytechnic extension site in Manchester's Oxford Road. In an interview with Workers Fight, he explains some of the background and issues linked to the current occupation of the Pochin's site by the building workers who have been on strike for over a week. The stoppage and occupation, in the struggle against redundancies announced by Pochin's, could become an important focus in organising resistance to the growing wave of redundancies and short time working currently sweeping Britain's factories and building sites.

Q. Why did Pochin's management choose this time to declare redundancies?

A. The bosses claim they are losing £22,000 a month, and they hoped that by sacking 14 men (3 scaffolders and 11 labourers) they could make some savings on the wages bill. They also hoped that the sackings would push the craftsmen into maintaining present work output by using trade labourers to carry out the work of the general labourers who have been sacked.

Pinch

But the real reason is easily explained. Pochins like other building firms are feeling the pinch. Their profits are not big enough, and the easy money they made out of building such things as luxury apartments and office blocks has ended with the collapse of the building industry's profits. So they attempt to sack workers, and discipline those who remain, to help keep themselves afloat.

IAN HEYES talks to WORKERS FIGHT about the Pochin's occupation

Why did the men decide to strike and occupy?

The men felt there was no justification for the sackings. They are just mass sackings. The pressure by management to get the remaining workers to carry on to achieve the same bonus targets was felt as a threat to those who remained on the job.

The reason why we occupied is simple. We felt that the strike could be ended sooner than if we used the normal picketing methods. The shop stewards committee feel they have to win the dispute as quickly as possible, and occupation of the site was the best way.

How bad is unemployment in the building industry?

Some people put the figure at 120,000, but many place it nearer 200,000. But almost all agree that it will rise and could go as high as 300,000 building workers out of a job by this summer. That's a third, or more, of the total of people out of work in all the country. One industry.

It can only get worse, with the Government's cutback in public spending. The industry is in the worst state for unemployment. But it is the one industry where there is no reason at all for workers to be out of a job. With over a million people homeless, thousands of



houses in slum conditions, hospitals 50 years out of date and the education system creaking at the joints in really depressing and decrepit old buildings. I can't think of any time in the foreseeable future that building workers won't be needed. And yet they're laying us off right left and centre.

How do you think that unemployment can be fought?

It is important that the trade unions take up the campaign for a shorter working week. The agreements with the employers over a 40 hour week must be ended, and a 35 hour week, or less, must be worked.

The Government should organise direct works departments to absorb the unemployed building workers, and to begin to build the houses and schools needed. And the bigger projects like hospitals must be done where necessary.

Those building firms like Pochins and MacAlpines which insist on making workers redundant must be resisted by strikes and occupations. And they should be nationalised without compensation, if they are unable to keep workers in jobs.

Record

What do you think of the record of the building unions in fighting unemployment?

Despite the high unemployment in the building industry, all the unions have done is to publish the figures in the Union Journal and little else.

This is one reason UCATT is losing members. Conference decisions are not carried out. For example the demand for £1.50 and £1.40 per hour for craft and labourers respectively seems to have been dropped. The latest pay offer, which we have been asked to accept, is well below the Conference demand. The call for the 35 hour week has been conveniently forgotten. It has never been mentioned since conference, and it makes one wonder whether it was even put to the employers.

So far this year we have seen a massive number of workers thrown onto the dole, and many unions and workers have accepted short time working. What can be done to turn the tide?

I don't think any worker in the building industry or any

industry should accept redundancies. It seems to me that workers should organise to challenge the so-called 'right' of the bosses to sack workers when they feel like it.

The Pochin's shop stewards committee is fully aware of the present situation in the building industry, and have always had the attitude of looking very carefully at any proposed redundancy.

Really, it's everybody's fight. What are the plans for extending the fight against these redundancies?

We have leafleted with collection sheets, carrying the facts and arguments about our occupation, to most building sites. We also plan to cover the factories, especially the big engineering works, and the docks.

On the way down to the TUC lobby of Parliament in support of the Shrewsbury Two, we leafleted the delegates on the train. We have plans to take the campaign of support for our strike and against unemployment into the building trades unions.

Solidarity

From the beginning of the dispute, the local UCATT officials concerned have been fully in the picture as to our situation, and there are moves now to get the strike made official.

But we need support from all workers in our fight against redundancies. Money and messages of support will be very welcome, but we also think that the issue of unemployment must be raised within the trade union movement — it will be a very important weapon of solidarity with our fight.

PAT LONGMAN reviews a disturbing report on a quarter of a million women forced to work at home

the worst paid workers of all

I find the job of painting these tiny figures in the manner required a severe strain on my eyesight and sanity. If one keeps up a fast rate it is possible to do a figure for one third of a penny. This averages out at 20p an hour. But it is impossible to keep to that rate due to the precision required."

The woman talking is a 'homeworker' who binds and covers game boards at £3.50 per 1000 boards. The same boards are sold later in retail packs of 11, at 50p each.

This is one among a whole mass of examples given by the Low Pay Unit in its first report, a pamphlet on homeworkers called "Sweated Labour", by Marie Brown.

Ms. Brown maps out a picture of extreme exploitation of people — nearly all of them women — who because of their circumstances have to work at home for outside manufacturers. She estimates that there are at least a quarter of a million women crocheting, knitting garments, making toys and Christmas crackers etc., invariably at appalling rates of pay.

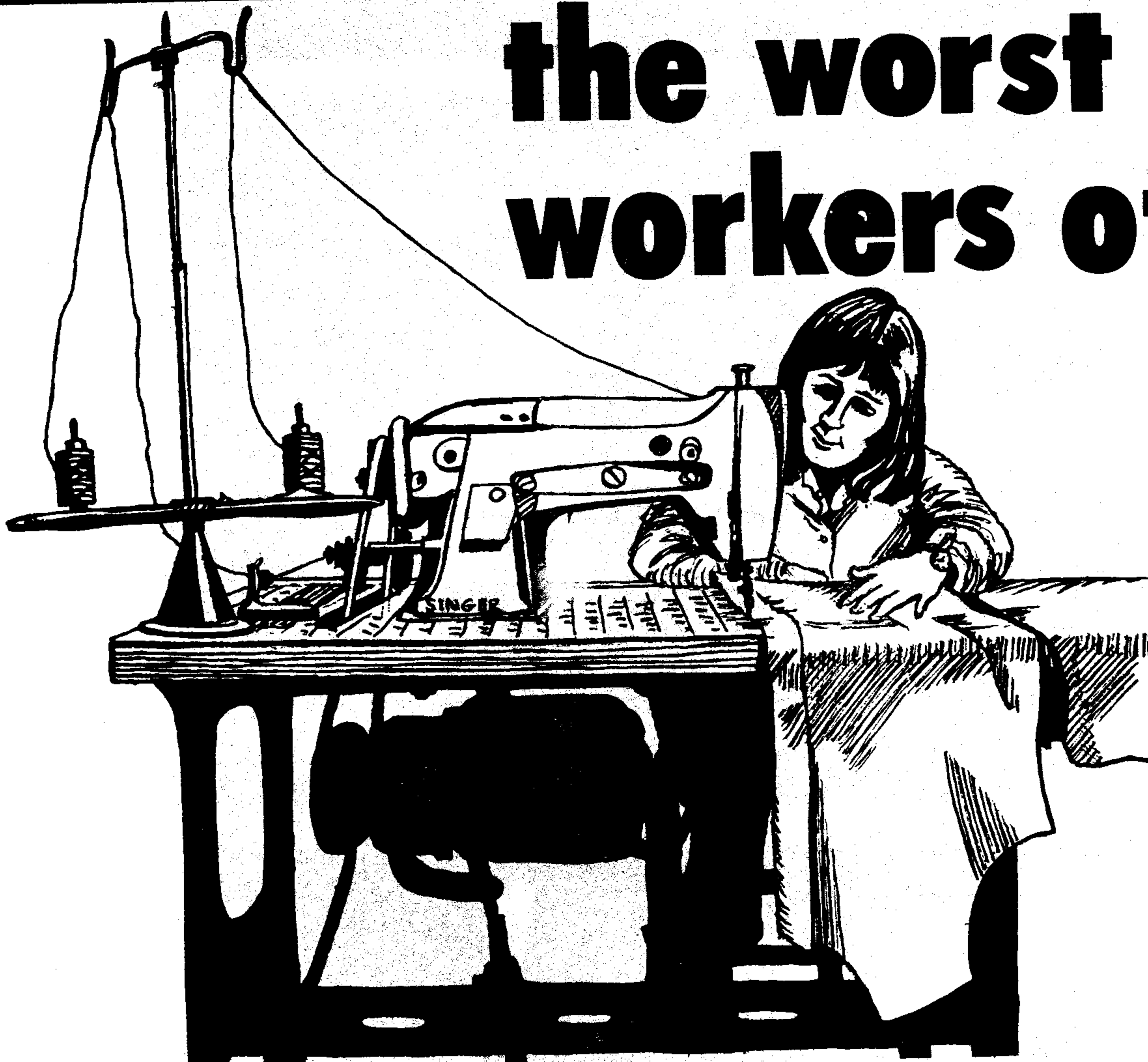
£2.40 FOR 60 HOURS

Over half the sample taken by the Low Pay Unit were paid at an hourly rate of less than 16p an hour. 11 workers were paid less than 6p an hour! Over three quarters of the homeworkers earned less than half the national average wage paid to women in employment outside the home. 23 women were paid an average wage of £5.50 for a 45 hour week; at 12.5p an hour, they earned less than a quarter of the national average hourly rate of 56.4p.

Women who spent hours crocheting babies' booties were paid 2½p-3½p a pair; others got 4½p an hour for making soft toys — £2.10 for a 45 hour week.

This was not unusual: even after a 60 hour week, women were still unable to earn anything approaching a living weekly wage. Mrs. Dean, a machine knitter who hand sowed and pressed the garments, earned £2.40 a week after 60 hours' work!

Manufacturers employing homeworkers are making a killing:



Aran knitted sweaters knitted, labelled, pressed and packed for £2, are later sold for £16.95; hand knitted gloves for which the homeworker receives 18½p are later sold for £1.99p.

The conditions of employment is like the pay — abysmal. Many have a deadline to meet — set by the employer. It means that women work through the night and often when they are ill to get the work finished on time.

Mrs. Barron, a divorced mother with 3 young children, had been so humiliated by Social Security officials that she found a job finishing fishing rods, for which she averaged a take home pay of £8 a week. She described the insecurity of pay: "I have no control over the amount of work sent to me. My wages have varied from £13.65 at

the highest point to £3.14 at the lowest. ... I have occasionally worked right through the night to get an order finished. This has happened when my youngest son was ill, and when I had to be with him during the day. I have also worked when I was so ill that I couldn't get off the chair when I was finished. I literally couldn't move. I have worked with raging tonsillitis, and through a migraine. There is no sick pay as yet for me as I don't have enough stamps."

Homeworkers are the first to be laid off when demand falls, and have no security of employment whatever.

In many cases, the machinery and the work invade the only living space and create mess and dirt. Many of the women who use machines have to pay for the

electricity they use, and there are other hidden costs such as for posting or delivering work (and one employer in the sample of 50 took one eighth of a woman's meagre wages to pay for collecting and delivering her work).

For the women who make fishing tackle, and find that the nylon thread cuts into their fingers and the fish hooks get embedded in their hands, advertisements offering the chance to "earn money in the comfort of your own home" are a pretty sick joke.

Many women approached by the Low Pay Unit were justifiably afraid that if they complained they would lose their jobs. Mrs. Norris did complain, she said, and "the complaints manager was shocked to think I even complained and said they couldn't possibly pay more".

Mrs. Norris was paid 5p an hour (34p below the statutory minimum rate of 39p an hour) for folding and banding hats before they were put into Christmas crackers. She folds 3,456 hats and earns £1.80 a week after 36 hours work.

"I know I am a fool to do this, but I have to work at home and I have no choice but to agree to the boss's terms". Homeworkers are completely trapped in their homes — and the employers know it and make the most of the workers' dependence.

There is an old saying that what you don't know won't hurt you — this could not be more true than in the case of trade union organisation of homeworkers. None of those studied by the Unit had ever seen a trade union rep., although trade unions are supposed to represent some of the homeworkers on the wages councils. In fact many trade unions seemed to be completely unaware that they existed at all.

However, this unseen part of the labour force has the effect of lowering the rates of all workers in that industry and is a potential threat to trade union organisation. Homeworkers are a pool of very cheap labour which can be used against the organised section of workers — rather like agency workers.

MERCY

Due to their complete isolation they themselves are completely at the mercy of the employer, and any attempt by homeworkers to unionise would be especially vulnerable to victimisation.

The only way forward is for the unions to take up the question of the homeworkers and take it into the organised sections of industry in a campaign on their behalf. But at the present, trade unions mostly have a policy of simply being against homeworkers, and instead of going to the trouble of getting them into the unions and linking

Continued on p.4



Kurdish refugees (above) forced to find shelter in mountain caves.



FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL IN KURDISTAN

THE OTHER WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

You will not find Kurdistan on the map because the Kurdish nation was divided into four by Britain after the First World War, in line with the general British imperialist policy of 'divide and rule'. You will hear nothing of Kurdistan because the capitalist west and the parasitic bureaucracy of the Soviet Union have maintained a conspiracy of silence regarding the national liberation struggle of the Kurdish people.

The line which divides the American and Russian power blocs cuts through Kurdistan. Of the four countries where the Kurds suffer oppression — Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey — Iran and Turkey are allied to the USA, and the Iraqi and Syrian regimes are supported by the USSR. In Turkey, Kurds are forbidden to speak their native tongue, and Code No. 125 of the Turkish Civil Law makes it an offence, punishable by death, for Kurds to admit their own nationality.

Trampled

Kurds in Iran also suffer discrimination, torture or death at the hands of the state. Since the United States has never been concerned about the rights of oppressed nations — apart from the occasions when it has trampled over them — it has naturally kept silent so as not to "offend" these dictatorships it arms and finances.

The situation for the Kurds in Iraq is much worse than elsewhere. Ever since 1961, the various governments of Iraq have pursued a war of genocide against the

Kurds. By 1970, the death toll in this war has been over 125,000.

In one week alone, since the resumption of the war in March last year, Iraqi forces destroyed 1,542 Kurdish villages in air raids.

The bombers used in these raids were made in the "Soviet Union". The napalm dropped was also of "Soviet" manufacture. Indeed the "Soviet" regime has even gone so far as to supply the Iraqi army with poison gas, although this hasn't yet been used. An estimated 3,000 Russian 'Advisers' also direct Iraqi military operations against the Kurds.

Ever since the Stalin faction usurped power, the Soviet bureaucracy has abandoned Lenin's position of championing oppressed nations in their struggle against the oppressor. The bureaucratic caste instead give their support to 'friendly' bourgeois governments even if this means supporting their moves to eliminate mass movements fighting for self determination.

Of course, the Stalinist policy of "peaceful co-existence" never works well for the bureaucracy anyway. The Iraqi ruling class is one of the many in the 'third world' which frequently shift their allegiance from Moscow to Washington and back again whenever it suits their interests, massacring or 'rehabilitating' the

Iraqi Communist Party adherents in the process. In 1963, 3,000 ICP members were executed in the coup which overthrew the 'progressive' Kassem. Today, with the Iraqi bourgeoisie shuffling its political alignments yet again, they have ceased to become "CIA agents" and are now called "socialists". (Even so, at the same time as the Iraqi leaders are thanking the Kremlin for its arms supplies, they are preparing to open up the economy to fresh imports of US capital.)

Truce

But the Iraqi Ba'ath government have some strange ideas about 'socialism'. During the Sixties, the peasants of Iraqi Kurdistan took over the land and drove the Kurdish landlords to Baghdad. The 'socialist' government then proceeded to finance and arm these landlords in order to use them as a "loyal" force against the Kurdish people.

Yet the major concern of the Iraqi government in relation to Kurdistan is not primarily land, it is oil. More than 90% of Iraq's wealth is derived from the oil industry, and the country's oil fields are located in Kurdish areas. Although the Kurds are one of the most poverty stricken peoples of the world, the oil extracted from their areas fills the coffers of the American oil corporations and the pockets of the Iraqi ruling class. Attempts by the Kurds to control their own resources by sharing them with the rest of the Iraqi population have therefore been strongly resisted by the local and foreign exploiting classes.

The Iraqi government also fears the democratic aspects of the Kurdistan national liberation struggle. When it concluded a temporary truce with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Iraqi government agreed on paper to set up a democratically elected national assembly. It has gone back on this promise, because it fears that Kurdish talk of democracy has a bad effect on the Arabs of Iraq.

Desertion

The Kurdish Arab language newspaper sold in Baghdad during 1970-73 — the only non-government newspaper in the country — was sold out almost immediately it appeared on the streets. It was bought by Arabs in search of something which approximated to real news.

The desertion rate from the Iraqi army also shows the extent of the sympathy which exists among the Arab masses for the Kurdish struggle. Since the resumption of the war, nearly 2,000 Iraqi soldiers have gone over to the Kurdish side. Dissidents within the army, 171 so far, have been executed and 168 are under sentence of death. (Those shot included members of

the ICP. But the ICP representatives in the government coalition have not seen fit to comment on their fellow Party members' fate.)

The reluctance to fight the Kurds was expressed by one Iraqi deserter — "There were 10 of us to begin with. Only four of us remained. The officer visiting our position ordered us to advance. I refused and said 'Only if you come too.' He jabbed me with his bayonet. I turned on him and smashed his face with my rifle butt.

"We were caught in a hail of bullets. The officer was shot; I didn't know if he was dead, and I didn't care. I managed to surrender to the Kurds."

Clique

But despite the desertions, the war goes on. The Iraqi government has used the 1970 break to re-equip the army for the 'final solution' to the Kurdish question. In previous campaigns they could muster only 250 tanks; now they have a thousand. Where before they put only two or three artillery



Mustapha Barzani (above) is the best known of the Kurdish leaders. He has been fighting for several decades for an independent Kurdish nation — along bourgeois lines.

Recently the Iraqi press reported him dead... for the tenth time. But, as before, he appeared a short time later in a shoot-out with Iraqi troops.

battalions on any one front, they can put 12 today. An air force that managed only four or five sorties a day now does 40 or 50.

All of these large military build up is thanks to Russian help. The military aim, according to Iraq radio, is "to liquidate the treasonous clique... whatever the price." By "treasonous clique" they mean the Kurdish people.

Those Kurds who have not already died in the new Iraqi onslaught, and are in areas unprotected by the PESH MEGA (Kurdish Liberation Army) have been forced onto the road of refugee exile. Thousands have passed through the mountains, endeavouring to find safety in neighbouring Iran, while starvation or disease deplete their ranks.

One doctor found that out of 450 Kurdish refugee children under two, 60 were suffering from marasmus, 24 from rickets, 65 from retarded development 178

from diarrhoea and 175 weren't growing properly.

Poverty, disease and enforced exile seem to be the only alternative to genocide the Iraqi government has to offer.

Their intention is to "Arabise" the Kurdish region by getting rid of Kurds and settling Arabs in their place. Perhaps they have learnt this lesson from the Zionists?

The Kurdish struggle is not a socialist struggle, and since no Kurdish working class exists (the Iraqi government has for instance deliberately prevented Kurds from working in the oilfields) at the moment it cannot assume a socialist character.

But the Kurds are fighting a democratic struggle for national liberation which has progressive significance for the Arab east. The fact that many Iraqi workers and peasants sympathise with the Kurds is proof that they do not share the narrow reactionary nationalism of the Iraqi regime.

The Palestinian resistance has also supported the right of the Kurds to self determination, realising that the Palestinians' struggle to win back their homeland would be made meaningless if they denied this very right to the Kurds.

The Arab east has been divided by imperialism. The feudal and capitalist regimes of the region wish to perpetuate that division so that they can share with imperialism in the exploitation of resources which should be used for the benefit of the Arab people as a whole.

Genocide

The war against the Kurds is but one example of how this division is perpetuated, particularly since the Kurds, in spite of their sufferings under the Iraqi regimes, want autonomy within Iraq instead of forming their own independent state.

To support the Kurdish struggle is to support the struggle for a socialist Arab east. It is essential now that socialists in Britain and elsewhere raise the Kurdish question in the working class and student movement, for the danger of genocide faces the Kurds now more than ever. Until 4 years ago, many who read the 'Morning Star' knew of the war against the Kurds. Now that Moscow has changed its line, the stories have disappeared from its pages and the dead have become "non-persons".

Revolutionaries stand by principles, not secret diplomatic deals with bourgeois governments no matter how 'progressive' they may be. Revolutionaries support the struggles of the oppressed.

We support the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination!

BAS HARDY

from p.2

THE WORST PAID WORKERS

them up with the stronger sections, they confine their efforts to appealing for better legislation to protect homeworkers, and meanwhile ignoring them altogether.

The Low Pay Unit (which is not trade union-connected) in its report suggests that a new campaign be launched on behalf of the homeworkers — similar to the anti-sweating League of the early 1900s. The TUC has also appealed to Employment Minister Foot to improve their pay and conditions, stating that they should be paid more than those working in offices or factories for the inconvenience of working at home and providing their own overheads. They also want the wages council inspectorate to increase its efforts in policing wages council orders, and that lists of employers who have not observed these orders be made public to trade union officials.

The 1961 Factories Act already requires all employers to keep lists of homeworkers. The maximum fine for not doing so is £20 — and the report wants this raising to £200. But this in itself is not enough.

As with the infringement of safety regulations, it is more profitable for firms to pay the fines and just carry on as before. (Yet some quite dangerous machines have no guards, and could seriously injure a worker, let alone small children.)

Whatever legislation is passed, there is little doubt that the isolated and often desperate homeworker will continue to be an easy prey for rapacious and bullying employers. The isolation must be broken, both by organisational links with the mass of trade unionists, and by ending the conditions which force women to work at home.

FACILITIES

In practically all cases, homeworkers are tied to the home because they have to care for young or disabled children, or an elderly relative. They are taking on themselves tasks which ought properly to belong to society. The demands of the Working Women's Charter for adequate nursery and child care facilities would, if met, free most of these women from their drudgery and slave labour. And a more reasonable attitude by the so-called Welfare State to attendance allowances for the care of the disabled — failing the provision of public facilities — would enable these women to go out to work — leaving the isolation of the home where they are at the complete mercy of the employer and have a very restricted choice of work.

Sweated Labour: A study of homeworkers by Marie Brown. Published by the Low Pay Unit, 9 Poland Street, London W1U 3DG at 50p.

The C.I.A. JUST ONE HEAD OF THE HYDRA

by JANE GORDON

JUST ABOUT as soon as President Ford announced a top level commission to investigate the activities of the CIA within America, to be headed by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, the story began to circulate that the list of the commission's members had been drawn up by Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger (generally understood to be the unseen director of the CIA) while they were on holiday together last month.

The deep scepticism among the American middle class public had already caused the non-acceptance by President Ford of the CIA's own report, drawn up by William Colby, on its activities in the United States.

Their insistent demand for a full accounting comes in the wake of their relentless pursuit of the Watergate matter to some sort of conclusion. In fact, their concern with both these questions is very closely related.

Spying on the middle class — that's wrong

While Nixon was conducting obliteration war on Vietnam and Cambodia, the American bourgeoisie, whether they agreed with the policy or not, were still prepared to accord him all the honour, respect and recognition due to their head of state. The Quaker church to which he belonged, which is supposed to espouse pacifist ideas, was proud of its prestigious member. But when it turned out that he was employing dirty and illegal tricks against the other American capitalist party, well, that was different.

While the CIA was conducting murder, mayhem, infiltration and any number of dirty games on behalf of the whole of the American capitalist class in Latin America, Indochina, the Middle East and in fact in every corner of the globe it could get in to, that was OK by the US establishment. When it spied on, infiltrated and committed murder among socialists, Black Panthers and even half serious opponents of the American state and the capitalist system it exists to uphold, that was fine too, even if it was against the rules. But now that it's been shown that their files included Nixon's and Johnson's "enemies" among the liberal bourgeoisie and in the sport and entertainment and newspaper world — well, now they want to know what it's all about.

US Imperialism's snake in the grass

The CIA is rightly infamous for its ruthless undercover activities around the world.

It has engineered coups for US imperialism, brought down governments and installed right wing dictatorships. It has financed mercenaries and whole armies such as the Chinese Nationalist Army of Chiang which pillaged Formosa before taking it over. It has organised the systematic murder of supporters of the NLF in Vietnam ('Operation Phoenix'). It is known for placing spies in left wing parties and trade unions, for establishing CIA-controlled "free" trade unions, for falsifying documents and attributing them to

revolutionaries or opponents of US imperialism. It uses techniques of provocation, such as setting off bombs, in order to engineer mass hysteria and aid repression of the left.

Then there is the bread and butter, everyday work of obtaining files and photographs from governments in order to set up surveillance teams, the training of local intelligence services in various countries, equipping and guiding them in techniques of torture and "counter-subversion", and using local police and army as a base for operations.

The American state keeps different agencies and departments for different tasks. The CIA has been developed and was deliberately set up for the tasks it has carried out for US imperialism. For home consumption, the State uses the FBI and other bodies (for instance, the House Un-American Activities Committee, set up 45 years ago, kept files on 750,000 US citizens, and helped to hound many from their jobs: which puts the CIA's 10,000 files and 100-odd break-ins in the junior league).



William Colby, CIA Director, followed by aides with evidence for the investigation organised by Rockefeller and Kissinger

Whichever of these options it takes, the effect will be the same. The important thing is not whether one is up against the CIA or the Keystone Cops: the determining thing will be the degree of repression which such a body will be required to enforce.

The present outcry arises basically out of a situation where the Presidency, isolated in trying to conduct an increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam in the late sixties and early seventies, gradually lost its sense of proportion and began to treat every spokesman or supporter of the mass anti-war movement as a threat to state security. CIA chief at that time Richard Helms laid plans for a huge and illegal information gathering exercise against the left and the peace movement, to be carried out by all US intelligence in cooperation.

Frankenstein monster they can't control

In the revelations that have followed the downfall of Nixon, what most disturbs American politicians is the possibility of a Frankenstein monster over which they have no control and which acts in secret. They are not against such a monster just as long as they know what it's doing and are assured that it makes sense for US imperialism.

There is a danger that the investigations and commissions will serve to lay all the odium of the American state on the CIA, to

heap it up with all the violence and evil of US capitalism's mailed fist, and send it back into the "wilderness" to wreak its havoc amongst the oppressed and struggling workers and peasants fighting to free themselves from the political and economic domination of American capital.

Clear out the riff-raff!

But there is also a chance that in the course of the investigations American workers will come to know more about the ugly face of the state and establishment that they have, even through the Vietnam war, trusted and supported as the champion of freedom. And in the deepening of the present recession, as more and more are rudely picked up and shaken awake from the American Dream, this new knowledge might help to impel them into action against a system which offers only insecurity to its workers at home and poverty, degradation, murder and dirty trickery for export.

Ultimately, indeed, it will be a task for the working class movement to clear out the bloodstained riff-raff of the CIA — which will not be stopped by the anguish of bourgeois editors or the deliberations of bourgeois commissions. Socialists in the US and everywhere should grasp the opportunity provided by the recent developments to expose the role of the CIA and mount a massive campaign for its disbandment.

VIETNAM - THE LONGEST GOODBYE

OFFICIAL U.S. sources rushed to deny that their fleet movements were at all connected with the recent NLF victories in South Vietnam.

They said they would not consider the NLF's conquest of Phuoc Binh as a breach of the 1973 agreements justifying intervention. But President Ford is demanding that Congress authorise \$300 million extra military aid to Saigon, and the US Air Force Chief of Staff flew to Saigon on 11th January for discussions with Thieu.

The fact is that the US is already 'intervening', on a scale which is massive by any standards except those of its previous war of devastation. US military aid already stands at \$700 million, and Thieu has in fact spent at the rate of \$1000 million per year. (Though, according to the 1973 Agreement, such aid is permitted only to make good used material!)

FLIGHTS

A UPI dispatch from Saigon dated 12th January reported that for about a year, US planes have been making reconnaissance flights over the North and over PRG-held territory — in direct contradiction to the 1973 Accords.

The Pentagon is probably correct, however, in its opinion that the present gains for the liberation forces in Indochina do not point to a showdown in the very near future. The Hanoi press has been playing down the battles in South Vietnam, and Agence France Presse reports indicate no moves to put the North back on a military footing.

Given the great influence of Hanoi over the liberation movements, this fact is of some significance.

The NLF certainly is stepping up the military pressure on Thieu, its victory at Phuoc Binh being just the last step in a general advance over

by JOHN STERLING

The US is already 'intervening' on a scale which is massive by any standards...

the last several months. In Saigon there have been anti-Thieu protests — often on grounds of blaming Thieu's incompetence for the NLF victories, but more radical opposition can scarcely show itself publicly under Thieu's police regime.

The situation in Laos and in Cambodia is more complex.

In Laos a coalition government was formed early last year, but a grass roots level the country is still divided into areas of Pathet Lao influence and areas of right wing influence.

In Thakhek, a small town in the south of Laos, a conflict over control at local level has led to the army firing on demonstrators, killing one and wounding 11. After the news reached the capital, Vientiane, hundreds protested in the streets.

A number of local organisations had, on January 6th, put forward a series of demands, including free passage between areas controlled by the Pathet Lao liberation forces and areas controlled by the Royal Lao Government Army, and the 'neutralisation' of Thakhek.

Similar demands put forward in the town of Ban Houei Sei in late December (and backed up there by a military rebellion) had led to a joint administration being set up, with the balance favourable to the



Pathet Lao. But in Thakhek the right wing responded with force.

In Laos, as in Vietnam, the 'peace settlement' of 1973 has not led to anything resembling peace.

In Cambodia, with the beginning of the dry season, the Khmer Rouge recommenced their siege of Phnom Penh. (They already hold most of the rest of the country.)

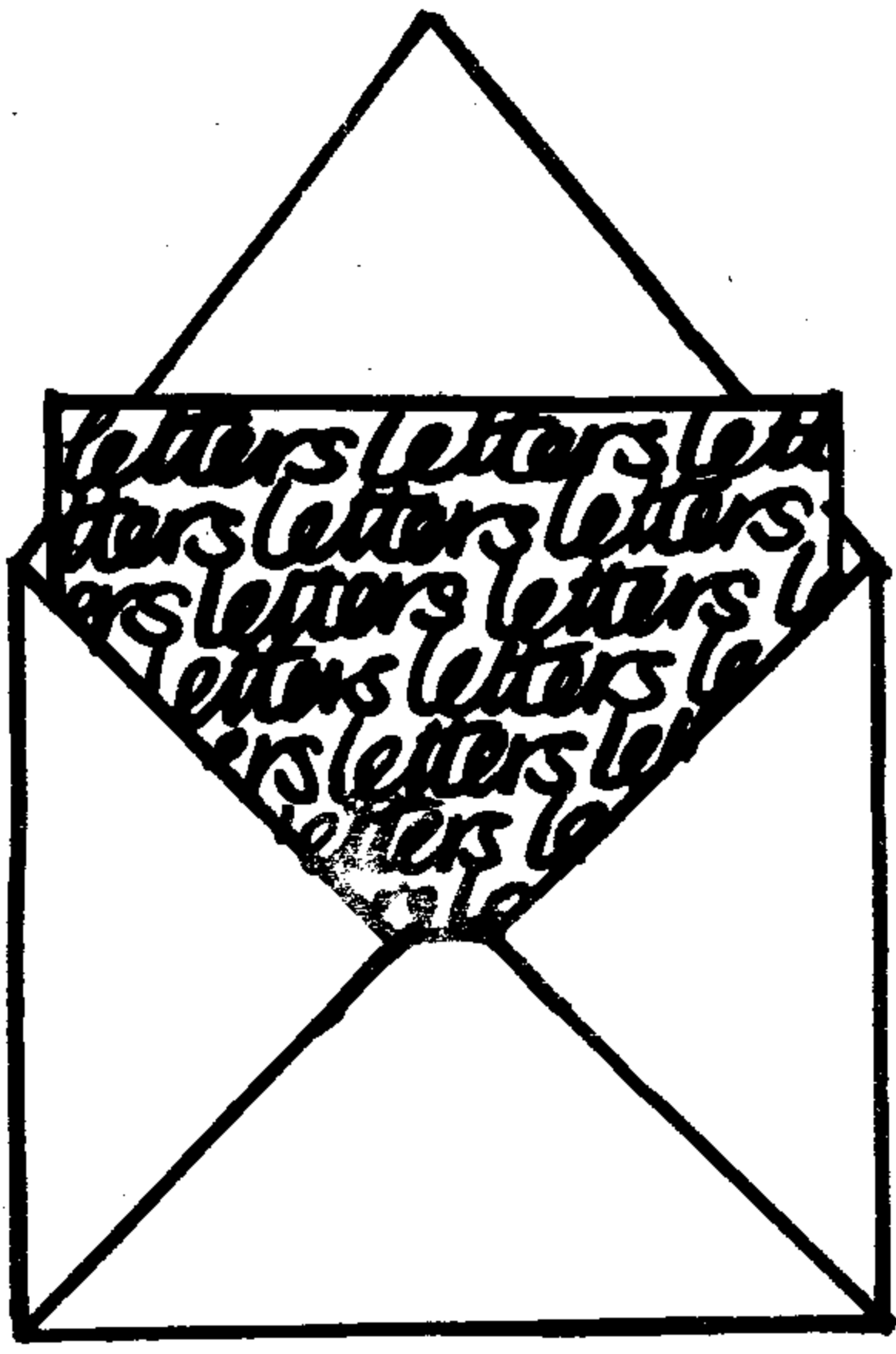
SUPPLY

So far, however, they have put relatively small resources into direct attack on Phnom Penh, and instead have concentrated on trying to cut off the main supply route to Phnom Penh, along the Mekong River.

Either tactic is wrong from a socialist point of view; there is certainly enough discontent with the corrupt regime of Lon Nol for

his overthrow to be organised through the activity of the masses of Phnom Penh themselves, not by bombardments of blockades from outside. But the shift in tactics does indicate that the Khmer Rouge are going to a relatively long term 'wearing down' strategy.

Very possibly if the Khmer Rouge do cut off the supply routes, we shall see a US-organised airlift into Phnom Penh. Our answer to that, as to Ford's proposal for \$300 million more for Thieu's hated regime, must be: **THE U.S. SHOULD GET RIGHT OUT OF INDOCHINA.** And the British Labour Government should stop supporting the imperialist puppet masters, and instead recognise and support the liberation movements which have the approval of the vast majority of the population.



GET YOUR BRANCH TO SUPPORT THE GAY WORKERS' CONFERENCE

PREPARATIONS are now in hand for the first conference of gay working people to be held in Leeds some time in March. This conference will be the first of its kind.

Homosexual workers are often in an unenviable position. Sexual discrimination at work not only affects all women but particularly affects homosexual workers, both men and women. Homosexuals are actually excluded from some fields of employment — gay teachers, for instance, live in constant

fear of exposure and victimisation. In other fields promotion is systematically denied and other petty tyrannies practised.

Homosexual workers frequently bear the brunt of victimisation and lay-offs at work. But what gay workers suffer today can be used against all workers tomorrow. It is a fact of industrial life that employers frequently soften up a work place for redundancies with the unchallenged sacking of members of minority groups — just as in political life the techniques used in 'controlling' minorities comes to be used for the control of the workers' movement.

It is hoped that the conference will feature lively discussion on these and other problems facing gay working people. But what is needed now is publicity and support for the conference. This support must be of the broadest possible kind within the labour movement. For trade union bodies to declare in favour of the conference will itself help the working class as a whole to start coming to grips with this question — as well as helping homosexual workers to shed their fears and play a full part in the workers' movement.

Enquiries and messages of support to: Conference of Gay Working People, care of Martin O'Leary, 32 Hartley Grove, Leeds 6.

Irishmen brought to court in Birmingham badly bruised, and one with cigarette burns on his arms.

Last month there were reports of remand prisoners in Birmingham, charged with the two pub bombings, being seriously worked over by warders. They were thrown down iron stairs, had their heads held under water, and were made to stand up through the night after these beatings.

The report seemed to indicate that this was an impromptu session undertaken on the initiative of junior warders. Nevertheless, there has been, after the briefest of press outcries, a total lack of watchfulness on the hundreds of Irish prisoners who are totally defenceless.

In the general atmosphere following the Jenkins Act, and with the police able to hold people for 7 days, a careful watch should be kept by socialists on Britain's jails and police stations. — Pete Grainger

OPEN LETTER FOR A REVOLUTIONARY REGROUPMENT. The Open Letter calls for a revolutionary regroupment, lays down 12 points as political guidelines and maps out practical steps towards unity. Copies from Workers Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N1 CDF. Please enclose a 4½p stamp.

DISCUSSION

Martin Thomas writes

ROS GAINS, in her repeated protests against supposed "male standards", unintentionally falls into prettifying and blurring over the oppression of women in class society.

"Housework" she insists, "is work. That 'till needs to be said. We must recognise that the contribution made by women is of value and is not easy and trivial."

So "the contribution made by women" is ... housework! And socialists are to be accused of adopting "male standards" if we describe housework as trivial drudgery. "Don't let's undervalue the work done by our sisters". (One almost wonders why Ros Gains has any complaint about "women's traditional role" at all, if it's so 'valuable' and 'rewarding'!)

Any Victorian bourgeois would be glad to agree with Ros Gains. Women have their place in the home; men have their place in society — but of course each makes an equally valuable contribution. All very tidy. As long as women stay in the home, the bourgeoisie is only too glad to glorify housework, to exalt the 'home-maker', to praise 'feminine intuition' and suchlike.

Socialists, on the contrary, protest that class society has confined women to petty drudgery, and proclaim that women can, should and will take a far greater role in society.



Oscar Wilde, in "The Soul of Man under Socialism", commented on the job of a road sweeper, that "every man is born for finer things than to disturb dust". Should we condemn Oscar Wilde for "undervaluing" the work of the road sweeper? Or should we agree that in a socialist society no-one would ever be confined to such a degrading job as road sweeper?

It is not a "male view" that sees housework as outside the world of human endeavour. What, after all, is progress? The increasing control of humanity over nature and over itself. The great advances in science and technique deserve to be ranked highly because they contribute to that progress. Housework, a never-ending treadmill, simply serves to stand still. (True, a woman washed the baby Einstein's nappies, kept his nose clean and read him bedtime stories: if that means she played an equal part, or any part at all, in formulating the Theory of Relativity, we might as well adopt as our motto that classic piece of patriarchal consolation — "behind every great man there stands a woman".)

It is a fact that men have played a greater role in human history, certainly in its later stages, than women. To deny that fact is to deny the oppression of women in class society, or to paint it over in rose colours. Socialists recognise the fact, and use it as a condemnation

Leukemia danger ignored

THE official view put out by the Atomic Energy Authority is that there is no connection between the handling of plutonium and the development of the fatal disease leukemia.

In the December issue of "Health Physics", however, there is a list of plutonium plant workers who have died of leukemia while working for the Authority. The list of five — out of a workforce of about 700 — and one known leukemia sufferer still alive, suggests that workers at the plant have an incidence of leukemia 20 times that of other workers.

The National Radiological Protection Board, responsible for checking such developments, admits that it has not even kept proper lists of those who have left the Authority's employ, which makes it impossible to work out accurate data. In fact, the figure of those who have been struck by leukemia could be much higher.

Meanwhile, the Authority still advertises for replacements of the workers who die of the leukemia which, by the latest figures, seems certain to be directly related to the work at its plants.

Wages for housework

We might as well say 'THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE RULES THE WORLD'



of class society, and a spur towards women taking a fully equal role in society.

Ros Gains praises the Power of Women Collective for making a "valuable contribution" in saying that "housework is work". If the point is that housework is not leisure but, on the contrary, exhausting labour, that's true enough (and socialists were saying that "loud and clear" before the Power of Women Collective ever thought of it).

But what is the special dignity of classing something as "work"?

The idea of "work", as a distinct thing, separate from the rest of human activity, has not existed for all time. It arose with the emergence of privileged classes and the division of labour.

The division between "work" and "life" takes on a sharp form in bourgeois society, where the majority of the population have to give most of their working hours to an exploiter in order to "live" in the remaining time.

In a socialist society, the division of "work" and "life" would wither away. Routine drudgery would be reduced, through mechanisation, to a small minimum, and "work" would become, not an alien imposition but the free, self-expressing, social productive activity of human beings. It would merge with "life".



The very idea of 'caring, tidying up, remembering things and generally consoling' being the particular "job" of a particular person reflects the pervading lack of human concern and solidarity in bourgeois society. In a socialist society these activities would simply be a normal part of life. They would be everyone's concern, society's concern.

In accepting the validity of 'housework', Ros Gains therefore — quite against her intentions — implicitly accepts the bourgeois family set-up: the set-up where caring for human difficulties, rather than being a social responsibility, is a task thrown on each little family unit to solve as it can.

And indeed, Ros Gains writes: "We want to change the home, not do away with it" and "we should be making a clear and careful call for the expansion of the family in the interests of its members."

Now in any form of society people are likely to live in groups of some sort. But the difference between bourgeois and socialist society is not whether the home and the family are "expanded" or

not. The important differences are: is the home made responsible for what should be the responsibility of society; are women and children confined in the home; is the household set-up a matter of legal and economic compulsion, or is it a matter of the free choice of individuals?

As long as we have the bourgeois form of home and family, expanded or not, social responsibilities of feeding, education, cleaning, child care, care of the sick, etc., will be thrust on it — and tend to become the 'job' of one member, who is thus isolated from social productive activity, while others go out to work.



Ros Gains puts forward the idea of achieving equality for women as not incompatible with the continuation of housework. "Anyone can take on the mother role". In the abstract, yes. But don't we want to do away with the present 'mother role', rather than sharing it out? And how in practice is this equality to be achieved without women asserting their independence, rejecting their role as 'housewives', and going out into society?

(In passing, Ros Gains' call for smaller work units. Surely large scale industry is more revolutionary than small industry. And alienation is due to the fact that we work for the exploiters and not for the common good | rather than being due simply to the large size of enterprises. When a large factory is taken under workers' control, the only ones "alienated" are the scabs.)

The fact is that Ros Gains, in defending housework, in calling for smaller work units, in saying that what we have to do with the home and the family is extend them, is unwittingly pointing a road backwards, not forwards, for militant women. The Power of Women Collective is doing the same, only more so.

This needs to be said. It is no service to the women's movement to hold back criticism because it's a "new movement" or because it is "presumptuous" to criticise. Not only is it no service, it is positively patronising. To demand equality for women is also to demand that equal standards of rationality and criticism be applied to ideas in the women's movement. The most militant women will not wish to shelter from criticism under cries of "we're only a new movement" or "you shouldn't criticise women". They will take what is valuable and reply to what is wrong — as equals.

BRITISH TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!

BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION

February 1st: Rally at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, London, 12.30pm; followed by public meeting at 2.30 p.m. Organised by Troops Out Movement.

January 26th: Manchester T.O.M. rally, 2.30pm. Small Hall, Barnes Wallis Building, UMIST (near Piccadilly Station). Speakers include Joan Maynard MP, Ernie Roberts, Eamonn McCann, and Alasdair Renwick.



TEACHERS FACE 7 YEARS' HARD LABOUR

Tuesday January 14 saw the beginning of a national strike campaign in England and Wales in protest against the Houghton Proposals on teachers' pay.

Over 150 teachers in 18 schools came out on unofficial strike in Leicester demanding a redistribution of the total award so that every teacher gets the same amount, that is £15 a week, instead of the proposed £4.40 for starters rising to £40 a week increase for top heads.

Six schools in Leicester were closed, and solidarity action took place in Liverpool and London.

North London NUT on January 13th decisively rejected the Houghton proposals and supported the campaign for a £15 a week across the board increase.

Woolton Ward Labour Party in Liverpool passed a motion supporting the strike action on the 14th and donated £10 to the Merseyside Teachers' Action Ctee.

Anarby Bank Comprehensive collected £35 towards the unofficial strike fund.

If the Houghton proposals are ratified at the special NUT Salaries Conference on 25th January, the become binding for seven years. Teachers on strike can see not only the injustice of the abysmal starting salary (beginner teachers, who generally have the heaviest teaching load, are offered £1677 gross) but also the divisiveness of the scale structure which forces teachers to move out of the classroom and around the schools in search of the higher paid, largely administrative jobs, on the higher scales.

The scale system is a major factor in the high rate of teacher turnover and will become an even greater and more permanent millstone around teachers' necks if Houghton goes through.

Teachers in Leicester, Liverpool and London are now gearing up for further unofficial action on 23rd January as a run up to the mass lobby of the NUT Salaries Conference on 25th. As the implications of Houghton sink in, now is the time to persuade all those who were waiting to see what would happen on the 14th that only concerted rank and file activity will have any effect on the NUT Executive — an Executive which is already scared of such action and is reacting by issuing general threats about job security.

It is an Executive, too, which numbers over 40 (mainly Heads and mainly men) and which recorded only 3 votes in favour of negotiating Houghton along the lines of official union policy: i.e. with a starting salary of £2000. Those 3 votes all came from Rank and File.

The Heads knew they were on to a good thing!

All teachers, whether striking or not, should go to the national conference called by the £15 for all Campaign Committee at Holland Park School, Airlie Gardens, London W.8, from 2 to 5.30pm on Saturday January 18th, when the Houghton Report will be discussed in full.

After national action on the 23rd, it's all out for the mass lobby at Central Hall, Westminster from 8am onwards, Saturday 25th January. Bring placards!

I.H., CB., IW.

IF HOUGHTON GOES THROUGH



Shrewsbury Two A massive lobby



SOME 10,000 trade unionists and supporters marched through London to lobby MPs for the release of the Shrewsbury Two, Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson.

This was the biggest workers' demonstration London has ever seen since those in support of the Pantonville Five.

And the connection is clear. It needed a massive show of support from workers all over the country in strikes and marches to free the Five in 1972. And it is going to need a massive effort to free the Two now.

Everybody was convinced at the end of the lobby that despite the last Labour Party Conference calling for the release of

the Two, most Labour MPs are not prepared to do anything.

And this is not just a matter of the "right wing" like Jenkins and Prentice, who have made this a "law and Order" issue. The number of MPs who have signed the petition demanding the pickets' release is still only about 50 — not two thirds of the number in the so-called left Tribune group.

This march must be understood as the first successful move in getting the TUC to call a one day General Strike. The rank and file must see to it that their union leaders do not dare to drag their feet any longer; they must prepare the ground for an all-out strike to free the Two.



NEW STAFF CUTS HIT PENGUINS

PENGUIN books have just announced 40 redundancies, mostly among their editorial workers. Taken with the failure of Penguin Education in 1974, this would represent a cutback in staff of 20% in a year, if the redundancies go through.

The management claims that if the company doesn't switch its policy from publishing new books to reprints, it will be £6 million in the red by the end of 1976.

By coincidence, £6 million is the sum Lord Cowdray, Owner of Penguins through his Pearson-Longman group, has just lavished on a yacht for his son!

The Penguin unions, witnesses of frequent management incompetence, have long stopped believing what they are told, and are preparing their own independent analysis of the group's finances before deciding what action to take.

Publishing is a rapidly contracting industry, and the outcome at Penguins will be an important test case in determining whether the unions can put a curb on management's priorities and wastefulness in the industry.

Hugh Macgrillan

Defend these two pickets!

Comrades - May I draw attention to what appears to be a misprint in my article on the INTEX strike in the last paper (WF82). United Manchester Hospitals NUPE, at the time the strike ended, had not decided to black ICI products, but rather, the question was being discussed.

May I also appeal for help for the two pickets arrested on the mass picket of Intex on January 2nd, Dennis Bridges and Neil Swannick.

They were charged with insulting behaviour under the Public Order Act, and assault on the police, and spent 6 days in Risley Remand Centre after the unprecedented refusal of bail by Colonel Grimshaw, Chairman of Ashton Magistrates. They finally got bail after an appeal to Judge in Chambers in London.

It is clear that Ashton Magistrates have it in for these two pickets. Those trade unionists who have been supporting the Intex dispute have responded by forming a committee in their defence.

Please bring this injustice to the attention of your trade union or labour organisation, so that financial and moral support can be obtained for these men.

Send donations to the Treasurer, Intex Defence Fund, c/o Union Office, St. Mary's Hospital, Whitworth Park, Manchester.

JACK SUTTON

THE ANTI-TERRORIST LAWS Meeting to discuss the significance of Jenkins' repressive legislation. CONWAY HALL January 25th 8pm. Campaign for Civil Liberties.

Published by Workers Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N.1. Printed by voluntary labour. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.

RELIEF — A PRACTICAL FORM OF SOLIDARITY

In recent days, following the Birmingham bombing, the Labour Government has set itself the role of adding to repression in Ireland by the introduction of harsh measures which Jenkins himself has described as 'Draconian'.

It looks as if this government is preparing for a situation where the British army will be given an even freer hand in the pro-republican areas.

Coupled with this, as was evident from a recent visit to Derry and other areas of the North, the programme of Ulsterisation is well under way. Soldiers are being aided with locally recruited searchers, who dress in blue zipped jackets, black trousers and a peaked cap on which the crown is prominently displayed.

The RUC are very much in evidence in town

centres, armed with sub machine guns, even when directing traffic! The Catholic areas are still sealed off with fences, road blocks and massive cement blocks which the people have called 'dragon's teeth'. Entry and exit is still accompanied by body and bag searches, requests for identification especially from young men and women, and cameras which click

automatically every few seconds.

The frequent question on everyone's lips, when they meet anyone over from Britain, is "what is being done in Britain to expose our plight?" Many genuine socialists were highly critical of the British left, who they accuse of being all mouth and no action, and claim that the left here speak of solidarity, yet not even a trickle of aid for the families of internees and prisoners, or to the socialist movements in British occupied Ireland, is being channeled through.

The areas where aid is needed can be listed, and the following suggestions could be used as a basis for an Irish Relief Group which could function in many areas of Britain:

1. Newspapers, magazines etc could be sent to those held without

charge or trial in Long Kesh concentration camp, and to those jailed in the various places of detention both north and south.

2. Comrades in Britain should be encouraged to begin a dialogue with a prisoner or internee by writing at least one letter a month, or sending a few lines with a socialist newspaper by post.

3. Organising functions to raise funds for the Prisoners' Dependents Fund and other relief bodies who are active in this humanitarian endeavour, eg the Green Cross.

4. Organising meetings at which ex-internees or relatives of internees could be invited to attend and put forward their demands and viewpoints on the situation in the six north eastern Irish counties.

F.O'Dochartaigh

A STRANGE PECKING ORDER

AT Hartlepool's Buxted Chickens plant in Brenda Road stopped last week when 20 lorrymen struck over pay talks. The men, T&GWU members, want to discuss a parity claim to bring their wages in line with those of drivers doing similar work in other areas, but the Buxted management refused to negotiate.

ineffective, so the drivers voted to step up their action. Round the clock picketing successfully turned away all delivery wagons, stopping all supplies to the factory.

But, in what appears to be a demonstration of pure sentiment, the strikers decided not to extend the picket to Buxted's sister company, Nitrovit, at Union Dock — Nitrovit supplies food for the chickens, and

the men don't want the birds to suffer!

At 30p or more a pound in the shops, one would think a crash diet for the Buxted inmates would be the ideal way to bring the bosses to heel. And where it's a choice between feeding chickens and feeding workers' families, I know where MY sympathies lie!

PETE CONLAN