

FLYING PICKETS STOP ATLANTIC CONVEYER!

INTERNATIONAL dockers' solidarity has sent the 36,000-tonne Atlantic Conveyor on a hunt for a port of refuge!

Normally it would work the Liverpool-New York run. But because it was loaded by scabs, the shipping company had to try and dodge US dockers' solidarity with the striking Liverpool dockers by diverting the vessel to Baltimore.

A flying picket took off from Liverpool for Baltimore, and the International Longshoremen's Association said they would not cross it. So the Conveyor was sent to Norfolk, Virginia, the US naval shipyard.

Off went the Liverpool picket to Norfolk, where they fell foul of the military police. But with only 30 containers unloaded the vessel was sent on to New York where it has been stopped again by Liverpool pickets hot on its trail. The pickets plan to spend Christmas in the US to make sure it's not unloaded.

In the meantime, not only were pickets flying about but writs as well. Port employers, shipowners, and governments joined hands to take on the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers. But international solidarity prevailed. Atlantic Concert remained in the port of Liverpool for well over 36 hours, waiting for the outcome of her sister ship's search to shed her load.

On the other side of the world, Australian dockers awaited the arrival of an ABC Containers NV vessel knowing they would not work it because it had been

BY DOT GIBSON
loaded by scabs. But the vessel seemed to have disappeared into the mist! It never arrived.

Has it been taken to a port in the Far East, and its cargo reloaded to another vessel, to try to avoid a confrontation with the Australian dockers?

One thing is certain. In their efforts to beat 500 dockers in the port of Liverpool the bosses appear prepared to lay out thousands in increased shipping costs.

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company is said to be meeting the extra cost as a way of assuring the shipping companies that all is well. They will pay thousands to defeat the dockers and smash the union, but for how long?

The striking dockers say time is on their side. Support is building up. Spirits are high, funds are flooding in! They will hold an international conference of dock workers on 17-22 February in Liverpool.

Workers Press sends its hearty seasonal congratulations to the Liverpool dockers and their supporters!

Directors' sticky reception

DIRECTORS of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and their partners got an unusually 'warm' reception when they turned up to a retirement party. Dozens of 'Women of the Waterfront', Liverpool dockers' dynamic women's support group, were waiting, with their children as well.

The courtyard was so crowded the directors' limos had to park up the road. This meant the party-goers had to run the gauntlet of singing and shouting women and children.

Not only that, but they were so stuck-up that the kids couldn't resist putting 'Support the Liverpool dockers' stickers all over them!

So not only coats, dresses and trousers were bedecked by the now well-known yellow stickers, but noses, foreheads, chins and red-hot cheeks were covered too!

It is ONE struggle for workers! Make it a united fight in 1996!

APART from the Liverpool dockers and the workers in France and Belgium there are other struggles going on over the Christmas period: the Hillingdon hospital cleaners, JJ Fast Food workers and Wandsworth refuse collectors among them.

All these workers are fighting for better conditions, against casual working, for public services. It is the ONE fight against the attacks on the working class demanded by the ruling class. The

working class needs to bring these forces against capitalism together. That is why there's a conference in February to discuss the need for a new party: 'Crisis in the labour movement'.

The employer at JJ Fast Food has been rattled by the workers' determination for decent working conditions and this has given added confidence to the pickets.

There is a weekly picket at the factory gate near Tottenham Hale from 6am every Friday. Also

today there is a children's party, meeting and social for the strikers. Presents for strikers' children are being asked for for ages two months to 15. Phone 0181-802 9804.

The Wandsworth refuse collectors are balloting for action and working through industrial tribunals.

The firm that sacked the workers is holding an internal inquiry into the shop stewards' sacking. Battersea and Wandsworth TUC: 0171-228 5638.

Campaign strengthens for Bongani Mkhungo

THE International workers movement contains many different viewpoints and each comrade should be able to express their opinions on how to strengthen workers' rights without fear of intimidation,' says a letter to the general secretary of the South African trade union federation COSATU.

The letter from John Perry, secretary of TGWU 1/1148 ACTS branch, conveys the concern of its annual general meeting at the treatment of Bongani Mkhungo, who is a member of the executive

A letter from the secretary of Bexley Trades Union Council, John Peters, reads:

'We were astonished to hear of the attack on Bongani Mkhungo while he was distributing leaflets critical of the leaders and policy of COSATU, an organisation which he helped, along with many others, to found.

'We first met Bongani when he was touring Britain on behalf of NUMSA and campaigning for the release of Moses Mayekiso, who was in prison for organising workers in opposition to apartheid. He spoke to our local anti-apartheid group.

'Now he has been attacked and threatened by COSATU stewards that he will be killed if he does not cease campaigning for a change of line in your organisation.

'We condemn these threats without reserve, and call upon you to do the same.'

The leaflet Bongani was distributing called on COSATU to support workers' struggles — specially the 7,000 sacked nurses in the former Transkei — and to end its alliance with the so-called Government of National Unity.

The government is using violence against workers through its Safety and Security Department.

Bongani's family have since been harassed by armed gunmen.

Clearly the work Bongani and other comrades have carried out in South Africa has met a response in the working class.

It is imperative to rally international action against this attack and any further threatened violence.

Workers International calls on workers everywhere to send resolutions and letters of protest to COSATU.

Resolutions are already on agendas for trade union branch meetings in January. We need these and others letters sent as soon as possible! If speedier action is possible please take it.

It may be the Christmas season with all the attendant pressures and holidays, but it does not mean that political violence stops.

Bongani Mkhungo and his family urgently need to move to a safer area. They must be protected. This requires funds.

Thank you to those who have already made contributions which have enabled us to send £435.70 already.

Please rush donations — large or small! — as quickly as possible payable to the 'South Africa Solidarity Fund'.

We need to send the next amount as soon as the banks reopen after Christmas and to build up our regular amounts to maintain the work in South Africa.

More information, standing order forms or copies of the leaflet distributed by Bongani and his comrades from 0171-387 0564.

'We are here because imperialists are over there' and 'New immigration bill — crisis in capitalism the cause'. These were just two of the many banners on the protest outside parliament last Tuesday against the Asylum and Immigration Bill. Full story page 3.



Workers Press Meeting

Saturday 10 February, 10.30am-4pm

University of Westminster, 309 Regent Street, London (north side of Oxford Circus).

Workers Press will be taking a break for two weeks in the New Year which will mean there will not be a paper on 30 December and 6 January 1996.

Greetings to our readers

WORKERS PRESS sends seasonal greetings and best wishes for the coming year to all our readers in Britain and throughout the world. Please note that our next issue will appear on 13 January.

URGENT

Send donations to South Africa Solidarity Fund Workers International, PO Box 735 London SW8 1YB.

committee of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International.

Violence was used against Bongani by stewards at the COSATU 10th anniversary celebrations in Durban on 2 December 1995.

The letter concludes: 'The maturity of the international workers' movement will be judged on how minority opinions are treated. I hope that you can write to us with full clarification of the incident.'

URGENT

Send resolutions and letters to COSATU

Fax: 00 27 11 339 6940

(Copies, please, to Workers International, Fax: 0171-387 0569)

Inside left

Spiked!

TO friends running a south-east London café are relieved not to be going home for Christmas. 'Home' being Banja Luka, in northern Bosnia, which President Clinton's Dayton agreement leaves in the hands of the 'ethnically cleansed' most of its Croat and Muslim population.

'Peace and goodwill to all?' Mladen's father is Serb, his mother Croat. His pal Goran is a Croat married to a Serb woman. Having refused to join nationalist forces, and escaped to Britain, they are threatened with deportation. Mladen's appeal has been adjourned, Goran's case comes in February.

We wrote about them before. 'Where can I go?', Workers Press, 2 December). Now *Casablanca* has published an article on the two by well-known journalist Jonathan Steel. It is originally written for that well-known liberal organ the *Guardian*, and spiked. Interesting, don't you think?

Saving Grace?

HERE'S a little mystery to solve the break. In the Spring of 1944, as free Trotskyists faced trial for 'encouraging' the strike of Tyneside engineering apprentices, the *Eighth Army News* ran a front-page lead: 'RIGHT TO STRIKE IS PART OF THE FREEDOM WE FIGHT FOR'.

Vladimir Dedijer, who was a Yugoslav partisan commander, says the *Eighth Army News* got in trouble with censors over its coverage of the Yugoslav war. Questions were asked in parliament, and editor Gregson was court-martialled for visiting a war zone without permission.

Hansard records a Commander Tucker-Lampson MP, complaining about the forces paper's treatment of the Gracie Fields — but nothing about Yugoslavia. Can any Old Comrades out there throw light on this? What happened to Gregson?

Marx lost

CONFESSIO time again! On 23 September, inspired by shadow home secretary Jack Straw's vision, of streets cleared of vagrants, beggars and squeegee crews (hadn't Salvationist Straw heard 'the poor shall always be with you?'), I referred to a scene in a Marx Brothers film, where Harpo is asked whether he's holding the wall up. He gets hauled off, and the wall crashes down.

I said it was in 'Duck Soup' (1933). A Wham reader agreed it was hilarious, but told me I'd got the wrong film. It was 'A Night in Casablanca' (1946). This figures. I remember chomping at the wall scene as a kid, and wasn't born till 1942. In fact, having borrowed the Faber and Faber book of the 'Duck Soup' script from the library, I discover — no wall scene.

What's more, it wasn't Rufus Firefly (Groucho) who hired the two spies Pinky and Chicolino, but the Sylvania ambassador, Trentino. Where goes my reputation as a film buff. Anyway, I think the falling wall scene would have fitted nicely at the beginning of 'Duck Soup'... Maybe I should join the hindsight school of history?

And recalling how British and US governments swept aside reconciliation attempts at the start of the Malvinas and Gulf wars, how's this for a snatch of 'Marxism, ten-cent Groucho'?

TRENTINO: I am willing to do anything to prevent this war.

FIREFLY: It's too late. I've already paid a month's rent on the field.

Season's greetings, Charlie Pottins

Should we eat th

Just before you tuck into the seasonal round of eating, drinking and generally going mad, DANIEL ROBERTSON writes to put you off some of your food

'MAD cow' disease is back in the news. A young mother has died of Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease (CJD) shortly after giving birth by Caesarean operation just in time to save her baby. Two teenagers have also recently died.

A recent World In Action television programme revealed that the government's own advisers feared that only one in three cattle with the disease were being detected.

A leading brain surgeon has advised against eating beef products. And now school-catering organisations are removing beef from school dinners.

Is this response just hysteria — or are the government, its Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Foods (MAFF) advisers, and their friends in the meat industry, correct to assure us that there is absolutely no risk of 'mad cow' disease infecting humans and indeed that we should be encouraging children to eat more beef?

To understand the reasons for this controversy we have to review the known science behind this outbreak.

What are BSE and CJD?

'MAD cow' disease (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy or BSE) and its human relative CJD are related diseases. They are characterised by a deterioration of brain structure and function.

In humans there is loss of memory, personality change and loss of control over bodily functions as the vic-

tim gradually slides into a vegetative state. Death is inevitable.

The condition is associated with an infective protein structure called a prion that prompts the accumulation in the brain of protein fibres causing a sponge-like consistency. Prions are mysterious in structure and function.

All other living organisms require the presence of DNA or RNA to reproduce themselves. The prions seem to spark off production of protein fibres (themselves prion material) by the host's genetic system, probably by modifying a normally produced protein. Prions are highly resistant to heat and chemical treatments.

Which animals are affected?

SEVERAL species of animal suffer from encephalopathies. A well known condition in sheep is scrapie. This has been present in British flocks for centuries.

Sheep, like several other species, show a genetically-based variability in susceptibility to the disease by individuals. Scores of deaths of domestic cats in Britain have been caused by exposure to BSE in cat food.

In humans CJD was first described in the 1920s. The best known outbreak (Kuru) was among cannibals in New Guinea who practised the unfortunate habit of eating dead relatives' brains.

Kuru is a variety of CJD with some additional symptoms similar to those suffered by BSE infected cattle,

including shuddering and an unsteady gait.

Some incidences of human CJD seem to be totally genetically determined. Rather than the infecting prion modifying a normally-produced protein these individuals suffer a mutation causing direct production of the prion without exposure to infection.

The spurious argument that deaths of vegetarians from CJD disproves an animal origin are thus probably not true. Some studies have suggested a connection between CJD and eating black or white pudding and some other pork or lamb products and recently with consumption of veal.

CJD is so dangerous and infective that hospitals have been known to refuse admission to sufferers.

When did BSE appear?

CATTLE BSE first occurred in 1985 in Britain.

It is still largely restricted to Britain, limited outbreaks abroad being due to imported animals. Unlike here the response abroad has often been immediate and decisive — infected herds have been slaughtered.

MAFF has been persistently slow to act or has tried to belittle concern about this new condition.

The first medical paper on BSE, in the *British Medical Journal* in 1988, warned of the threat to humans but was ignored.

Official response

SINCE 1985 there has been a slow reluctant programme of restricting contamination of the human food chain with BSE material.

There have been bland reassurances, distorted statistical information and restrictions or abuse directed against concerned scientists.

Imposition of controls has been nominal — a recent survey found that half of all slaughter houses inspected were not following procedures. Routine examination of cattle brains was rejected as being too expensive.

The earliest bans were on less commercially valuable materials such as tonsils and brains. Profitable liver and kidney materials were exempt.

Now the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens is advising laboratory workers handling BSE infected material to take stringent precautions handling materials that are still finding their way in some quantity into the human food chain.

The government sponsored Southwood Committee set up in 1988 projected that the outbreak would be limited to no more than 20,000 cattle and would be virtually over by 1995.

As of late 1995 around 150,000 cases have been confirmed and countless more have slipped through the wholly inadequate net of detection and control. It will be years before the BSE is eliminated.

This is partly because government claims that the use of animal-derived foodstuffs (effectively making cannibals of vegetarian animals) were uniquely to blame for its spread are wrong. It can in fact be passed from cow to calf.

The 500,000 veal calves exported from Britain every year (and subject to no effective BSE controls at all in Europe) contain some nasty surprises for their ultimate consumers who apparently favour sweetbread materials that may be loaded with the BSE agent!

Large numbers of infected corpses have been illegally buried in landfill dumps where they risk infecting surrounding areas for years to come.



There are presently over a billion cattle on this planet. They take up nearly 25 per cent of its surface and actually weigh more than

e cows?

The claim that BSE originated from feeding cattle sheep material seems to be undermined by the differences between BSE and scrapie.

Its origin and range of potential hosts is essentially unknown. Changes in the manner in which animal material (everything from dead cattle to cats corpses collected from vets) is processed before being fed to cows to improve their milk yields probably made it easier for the infective agent to spread.

Government claims that the disease would not spread beyond cattle, and could thus be no threat to humans, have been proven to be untrue.

BSE has been found to infect over 20 other species, including pigs and monkeys that are often used to model human susceptibility in drug trials due to their physiological similarities to humans.

CJD experts have not been consulted for their views. BSE research programmes are actually being run down. No research is being pursued on means of combating a possible spread to humans.

A massive research programme should be in place. Instead concerned scientists are harassed and the public fed meaningless reassurances.

What are the risks?

What are the risks of humans being infected? CJD is increasing, but nobody can be sure if this is due to a real increase or just better detection.

What is clear is that the recent apparent increase shows some disturbing characteristics. Four dairy farmers have died from CJD. The statistical probability of this happening by chance is minute. A new type of CJD, similar to Kuru, is responsible for the recent increase.

Traditional CJD has been of types one and two. This new third type has a short incubation period.

It has killed several British teenagers (teenage deaths world wide were previously almost unknown). It also shows symptoms very similar to cattle BSE and quite distinct from normal CJD. It seems possible that we are seeing the beginning of an epidemic.

Canada is currently experiencing a scare over the possibility that blood transfusions from CJD carriers may spread the disease.

Could this factor further spread CJD in Britain? Can it be caught from consuming milk or other dairy products? Is the gelatine prepared from beef bones carrying the agent?

Gelatine is used in a very wide range of foodstuffs. Perhaps the genetic susceptibility factor will protect most people from it. Studies on CJD caused by infected growth hormone treatments or transplanted tissue suggest that perhaps 1 in 200 people are susceptible.

Big business

HOW much BSE material has to be eaten for infection to occur? At present we have no idea of the answers to these questions.

How could this have been allowed to happen? The beef industry is very big business indeed. There are presently over a billion cattle on this planet. They take up nearly 25 per cent of its surface and actually weigh more than the total human population.

The environmental and economic impact of beef farming has devastated many countries. The promoters and profiteers of this industry are powerful and violent men and can easily sway political debate to protect their interests.

In South America they do not hesitate to use death squads to impose their will. Allied to them in Britain are the food processing and retailing industries and the government scientists that protect them.

Scientists speak out

SCIENTISTS who speak out against this insanity have been ridiculed. Richard Lacey, who has campaigned vigorously on this issue, has been described as a 'bogus professor' and 'in need of psychiatric treatment'.

A particularly outspoken scientist — Dr Harash Narang — has been hounded out of employment as a microbiologist. He has developed simple tests for rapid and simple detection of both BSE and CJD that the government fear will produce embarrassing results.

He has been burgled and scientific evidence stolen. His car has been repeatedly tampered with in a manner designed to threaten his life.

Protecting profits

THE decision to expose the public to this terrible risk was taken to protect profits, by men who care nothing for human (let alone animal) well being.

This disease is a symptom of a wider disease in society — domination by a system that has profit as its only motivation and in which people are only a means of making more profit. We will continue to be threatened by this irresponsibility until there is a settling of accounts.

an the total human population

★ Quiz of the year ★

Quiz-master CHARLIE POTTINS has rumaged around the year's events to give you something during those low moments of the festive round

1. On New Year's Eve 1994, a strike ended at Keatons engineering works in Sheffield. How long had the workers been out?
2. What kind of storm hit Tuzla, in Bosnia, on New Years day?
3. On 4 February, Workers Press republished an article from the *Daily Telegraph*, with a comment. Who wrote the article, and what was it about?
4. Which country's Interior Ministry ordered five Americans out for spying, in February 1995?
5. Whose invitation to the White House, on 17 March, occasioned a stiff letter from Downing Street?
6. Figures released in April showed a big increase in the number of people in Britain working in temporary and part-time jobs. What was the total figure estimated at?
7. The World Health Organisation reported in May 1995 that the greatest single cause of sickness and death was that listed in the International Classification of Diseases as 'Z59.9'. What is that?
8. What date was set aside in Yugoslavia as 'Youth Day'? Why was it given a grim significance for people in Tuzla this year?
9. What did authorities in central Java, Indonesia, ban this year, for 'introducing a symbol of communism' to children?
10. It was sold for less than the price of a British Rail sandwich, and Labour's then transport spokesman Michael Meacher said he'd refer the sale to the Commons Public Accounts Committee. What was it?
11. Who turned up at a House of Commons meeting in July, and boasted that he was 'proud' to have acted as an adviser to Serb Chetnik leader Radovan Karadzic?
12. Why was the Nine o'Clock news a 'body blow' to the Church of England in August, and who was the Brain behind it?
13. He staged a hunger strike in September, nine years after being inveigled out of England. He is serving an 18 year sentence for 'espionage' because of a newspaper article exposing his country's nuclear weapons programme. Who is he?
14. Whom did the French army pronounce innocent this year, over 100 years after he was framed on spy charges and sent to Devil's Island?
15. Union leader Mukhtar Pakpahan flew into London to meet friends in October. He'd been released from jail in the spring. Where?
16. Where was the picture taken of the homeless family printed above?
17. Who was accused of using improper influence to obtain a luxury Paris flat, and agreed to move rather give up his job? (clue: he's been in more serious trouble lately).
18. By what name is Zeljko Raznatovic more notorious?
19. How did citizens of Zagreb, the Croatian capital, show their appreciation of President Franjo Tudjman in October?
20. Whose execution caused world-wide outrage on 10 November 1995?
21. Why was the 36,000 tonne



'Atlantic Conveyor' diverted from its port of destination in November?

22. An expedition is due to probe the wreck of the biggest ever British ship lost at sea. What is the name of the ship?

23. He sailed to plunder the Spanish main, they ship in scabs to rip off the Mersey dockers. What's the link?

24. What well-paid, if dirty, job has been landed by Stephen Lander?

25. If the memorable answer was: 'G'way you wife-swapping sodomites!', what was the question?

■ The answers to 'Quiz of the year' are on page 6

★ Quiz of the year ★

