

ANIMAL EXPERIMENTS

It is not often that the multinational companies choose to advertise widely in the labour movement press, including *Marxism Today*. It was therefore with some surprise that I saw the last round of advertising by the self-styled 'Research Defence Association' arguing for animal experimentation and defending the multinationals use of vivisection in your journal.

I have no objection to '*Marxism Today*' taking money where it can. However your readers should know who and what these adverts stand for. They should also ask why these adverts are appearing at this time. The RDA was quite unknown until it started an expensive advertising campaign in the media to discredit the recent gains made by the animal's movement in general and the campaign to end vivisection in particular.

In truth this 'association' has no open members, no delegate conferences, no public affiliates. It is largely financed by the drug and chemicals industries and is no friend to any of the aims of the labour movement. It is now worried by the fact that the labour movement is swinging over to support the demands of the animal's

groups and if Labour does win the next general election measures may be enacted which stop the drug industry from covering up a lot of facts about the unsafe character of many drugs by using worthless tests like the 'LDSO' one to justify their alleged safety. In fact, of course, thalidomide was fully-tested on animals and conversely penicillin is poisonous to many animals including guinea-pigs. Animal tests are worthless, cruel and potentially dangerous in that they justify the use of drugs that would otherwise not be put up for sale. Marxists and socialists should put themselves firmly in the camp of those who oppose vivisection and cruelty to animals. The so-called 'RDA' is opposed to all we fight for: socialists should expose this organisation's activities, even when it is backed by large and expensive adverts.

*Cllr Valerie Veness, London
(Deputy Leader, Islington Council)*

RAPE AND THE LAW

Hannah Kanter and Jennifer Peck (*Marxism Today* April 1983) repeat the thesis that has become common from certain sections of the feminist movement that rape law is loaded against women. There are important areas in which the need for reform remains. But it is important to challenge the basis of

their argument which leads to a politically and legally dangerous conclusion. Their argument rests on an attack on the very definition of rape. They object to rape being defined as sexual relations *without the consent* of the victim.

They point out that the law does not ask whether someone consented when their wallet has been stolen. Surely there is a very sound reason for this: it is that having a sexual relationship is not in itself unlawful. However much it may irritate radical feminists, the majority of people engage in sexual relationships because they wish to. The legal problem of rape is to distinguish between the normal and legal act of sex and the unlawful act. The test of 'consent' is the most liberal and progressive grounds available.

There are strong positive grounds for commending the 'consent' definition. Not only does it not require proof of violence or the threat thereof. More importantly it is consistent with a central demand of the women's movement 'a woman's right to choose'. Women should be free to choose whether or not to participate in a sexual relationship. This is caught very succinctly in the slogan 'When we say "yes" we mean yes, and when we say "no" we mean no'.

Alan Hunt, London

Pluto Press

To coincide with the second anniversary of the death of **BOBBY SANDS MP**, who died on hunger strike on 5 May 1981

Bobby Sands' own record of life on the blanket conjures up vividly the enclosed hell of Long Kesh. This is a book about human bravery and endurance which will take its place beside the great European classics on imprisonment.

BOBBY SANDS
One Day in My Life

With an introduction by Sean Macbride. £2.95

Pluto Press

NOTES

WORLD ECONOMY IN CRISIS

Hugo Radice writes: The Conference of Socialist Economists is holding its annual conference this year on a subject that is more than ever at the heart of socialist concerns: *World Economy in Crisis*. The conference is being organised around eight wide-ranging themes: New International Divisions of Labour; International Capital; Arms and Disarmament; The Nation State; Energy and Raw Materials; Living Standards and Conditions; Mass Unemployment; and Socialist Responses. The conference will be on July 9th-11th in Sheffield. We welcome participants who are not already members of the CSE. The conference fee is £12, or £6 for those who are unwaged or on low incomes: this covers conference papers, entertainments and other direct participation costs. Accommodation and meals are extra but reasonably priced. There is a full range of child-care facilities, and a hardship fund for those who otherwise can't afford to come. For further information and booking forms, write to CSE, 25 Horsell Rd, London N5 1XL



WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?'

Philippa Langton writes: The labour movement has always been fond of initials. And over the last couple of years the initials AES have been rolling off everyone's tongue. But what is the 'alternative economic strategy'? What do the initials conjure up to most people? Are we talking about the same thing? And what would it mean in practice for women?

Some women active in the South East Region of the TUC decided to produce something that helped open up discussions, focusing particularly on the question of 'what's in it for women'. We felt it was important that as many women as possible

were involved in the process of putting flesh on the bare bones of the AES. We also wanted to pick up on some of the criticisms about whether or not the AES really meets women's needs and provide a focus for constructive discussion.

The very words 'economic strategy' put a lot of people off. That's why the booklet takes women's daily lives as its starting point and *then* asks what strategies make sense for women — and what we can do now in our unions and elsewhere to make things happen.

The booklet was written by members of the South East Region TUC Equal Opportunities Committee with help from Fran Bennett, Anna Coote, Judith Hunt and Tess Woodcraft.

'*What's in it for us?*' is available price 30p from: SERTUC, Congress House, Great Russell St, WC1; Collet's London Bookshop; Bookmarks, Seven Sisters Rd; Central Books, Grays Inn Rd; and Sisterwrite, Islington Upper Street.

MARXISM TODAY DESIGN

As our designer will be leaving in the near future we invite applications from people with suitable experience for the job of designing and pasting up Marxism Today each month. The work also involves picture research and needs good organisational ability. This is not a staff job and is undertaken on a freelance basis. Some commitment to the magazine would be expected.

Write to Sally Davison as soon as possible at the editorial office for more information.

ANTI-PRIVATISATION

Dexter Whitfield writes: The first issue of a new monthly anti-privatisation newsletter for the labour movement is now available. It contains: a consultants response to the privatisation of National Health Service support services; a profile of Barrett Developments, Britain's largest housebuilders, now involved in the privatisation of council housing in several cities. A list of major shareholders is also included — these include local authorities, pension funds, health authorities and the Labour Party; an article identifying 21 ways in which the government is privatising council housing; the newsletter also contains a speculators share price index, evidence of contractors failures, a who owns who, together with news of campaigns and action against privatisation around the country. *Public Services Action* is 30p inc post (bulk rates

available) from SCAT Publications, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (01-253 3627) SCAT (Services to Community Action and Tenants) is a housing, planning and public service project serving the labour movement since 1973. Further information from Dexter Whitfield or Steve Nathan SCAT 01-253 3627.

RUTH FIRST

Nick Jacobs writes: Ruth First was assassinated at the Centre for African Studies in Maputo on 17 August last year. A Memorial Trust has now been established with the aim of organising lectures, providing scholarships and funding suitable projects in her name, including publications. It is also intended to establish a resources centre, at a suitable location in Britain, for the collection and transmission of material on all aspects of African studies relevant to the struggle for independence and development in Southern Africa. Please send contributions to: Ruth First Memorial Trust, c/o Ronald Segal, Old Manor House, Manor Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

David James is a journalist specialising in southern African affairs.

Cynthia Cockburn is the author of *Brothers: male dominance and technological change*.

Keith Dixon lives in Grenoble and is a member of the French Communist Party.

Louise Christian is a lawyer who works for the GLC Police Committee Support Unit, writing here in her personal capacity.

David Currie is Professor of Economics at Queen Mary College, University of London.

Chris Pond is director of the Low Pay Unit.

John Gordon is a journalist specialising in Third World affairs.

Phil Lee is a member of the *Critical Social Policy* Collective.

Pat Hudson teaches Economic History at Liverpool University.

Buchi Emecheta is a novelist.

Jane Bryce is a freelance writer.

Paul Morley until recently was a journalist with the *New Musical Express*.

Malcolm Barry lectures at Goldsmith's College, London.

John Fisher is a lecturer in Adult Education at Surrey University and teaches for the TGWU.

Jitendra Mohan is a member of the editorial collective of the *Review of African Political Economy*.