

News from everywhere

THE WEST GERMAN government have used the threat of terrorism as a cover for a serious attack on civil liberties.

A new "Prevention of Violence Act" apparently makes it illegal even to write about factory occupations, people squatting, and demonstrations. Punishment is up to three years in jail.

There is no need to take part in any of these activities to break the new law. Just to "disseminate, exhibit, make accessible, produce, subscribe to, store, offer, announce, import or export" a publication "which is likely to encourage other people to commit these unlawful acts" is enough.

The new laws were supposed to be to counter acts of terrorism. But they are also clearly aimed at preventing non-violent actions as well. —Peace News.

GGGGGG

STUDENTS, staff and children occupied the offices of the Director of the North East London Polytechnic to demand nursery facilities for the children of staff and students.

About seven staff and students and fifteen children took over the office and a group of them stayed all night. — People's News Service.

GGGGGG

THE 1974 miners' dispute really put the wind up the Conservative government.

In a series of articles, the Sunday Times has described how in December 1973, Prime Minister Edward Heath put Britain's alternative government on stand-by.

The anonymous Regional Commissioners, who command military

and civil services in an extreme emergency, were alerted. And the secret Regional Seats of Government — located in bunkers round the country — were prepared for action.

These desperate moves followed a much earlier attempt to sell the miners short. Only a fortnight after the NUM conference agreed the pay claim in the summer of 1973, union president Joe Gormley attended a highly secret meeting in Downing Street.

Heath and Gormley tried to work out a deal which would keep the miners happy and the Tories' Phase 3 wage controls intact. Heath expected Gormley to "pilot the bargain past the executive and members of his union."

Things didn't work out for them. So in December, after the overtime ban had begun, Gormley attended another secret meeting in a London hotel, this time with Employment Minister William Whitelaw.

Whitelaw, according to the Sunday Times, "wanted to discover from Gormley what the government would have to offer to give the right wing of the executive an opportunity to regroup and get the votes to call off the overtime ban."

That didn't come to much either. The Tories eventually had to call an election, which they lost. Joe Gormley is still president of the National Union of Mineworkers.

GGGGGG

THE 700 residents of the Danish "free city", Christiana, are preparing to resist plans by the Copenhagen authorities to demolish their homes.

Christiana grew up when troops vacated barracks on the site. Some of the people live there because of



Torture in Uruguay

THERE ARE 5,000 political prisoners in Uruguay. Out of a population of 2½ million that's one prisoner for every 500 citizens.

Amnesty International, which is running a campaign for the abolition of torture throughout the world, has identified 22 cases of torture in Uruguay where the victims did not survive. There are undoubtedly many more.

The military government and its puppet President, Jean Maria Bordaberry, have banned all left-of-centre parties and torture is now a routine practice in political cases.

The most common methods are the 'parrot's perch' (suspension by the wrists), the 'dry submarine' (suffocation by tying a plastic bag over the head), electric shock, drugs and psychological torture.

Amnesty International recently held events in the city centre to support their petition for an independent body to be allowed to investigate these allegations of torture.

If you missed it and can help with the petition, which will be handed in to the Uruguayan government in June, contact Michael Reed (publicity officer), 10 Scotchbarn Lane, Prescott (426 4948).

their ideas. Others because they are outcasts like alcoholics and drug addicts. But crimes of violence are few.

There is a system of self-government based on small area meetings and a larger general meeting. And in addition, working groups concentrate on special needs. — Peace News.

GGGGGG

AN ESTIMATED 17 million American adults are actively boycotting scab grapes in support of the United Farm Workers' Union. Around 15 million have also stopped buying scab lettuce and 11 million are boycotting Gallo wine.

The boycott is part of the continuing battle by agricultural workers to get their union recognised by employers. — People's News Service.

SWEDEN'S dockworkers have announced a three-month ban on the unloading of all Chilean goods, starting on March 1.

Dockers' unions in the rest of Scandinavia have been asked to join the blockade.

Meanwhile in Stockholm, workers at the Saab aircraft division have called for an end to all export of war materials to Ali Bhutto's regime in Pakistan, following reports that 45 Saab training planes had been converted for use as attack planes against the guerilla movement in Baluchistan.

GGGGGG

THE MINISTRY of Defence always try and persuade people that British soldiers in Oman are only training there, and not helping the Omani

government fight its opponents.

So it's curious that three service awards have just been given to British soldiers for their work there — one DSO and two Military Crosses. They are normally only given for acts of bravery while on active service.

GGGGGG

MR HAROLD LEVER, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Wilson's friend in the banking world, has bought himself a new blazer.

It was made by one of the West End's top tailors and cost £900. The buttons alone cost £700. They are 18-carat brushed gold.

Apart from his country house, Mr Lever owns a 22-room flat in London's Eaton Square.

Just who really benefits from Housing co-ops?

I WOULD like to attempt a brief analysis of the part played by planned for housing co-ops in the Wilson cabinet's property policies.

When the establishment cries Co-op! it creates a travesty not a mere misnomer. In such times as these it is indistinguishable from Co-opt! Government backed housing co-ops are the most insidious and vicarious stooges in the Labour cabinet's plans to bail out capitalism in the property market. Domestic legislation and world financial realities have rendered Rachmanism so unsure and unprofitable that speculators are stampeding away from bricks and mortar.

Local authorities throughout the land are encouraged to buy up all the rubbishy property they can from landlords eager to get rid, by such devices as the declaration of housing 'stress' areas. Landlords slow to recognise the opportunity are served with compulsory purchase orders.

This spree is financed partly by central government and partly by the usual sources councils borrow from to build their grotty housing estates.

The famous and everlasting 'Crisis' encourages these activities while in a perfidious way so too do the 'Cuts'. Profits in the form of rent are so truncated landlords often prefer to sell rather than improve with the aid of substantial state hand-outs. Builders curtail construction of houses because of the level of inflation and

local authorities follow likewise in the wake of 'Cuts'.

The situation in the community is hundreds of thousands in the building industry unemployed and hundreds of thousands rendered homeless. Architects, surveyors, even conveyancing solicitors are claiming dole and previously unlikely people are squatting in growing numbers.

Housing co-ops are discovered by the Housing Corporation and all the expertise gained with housing associations is let loose in a new direction. Societies, trusts, agencies appear and begin soaking up the unemployed professionals and misguided 'Lefties'.

WITHOUT POWER

They are created with the Ministry's blessing to promote and service existing co-ops, expand them and create new ones. Most of this activity takes place in the run-down urban inner areas where preparations are being made to colonise them with 'popular' co-ops.

Popular with whom? Embarrassed local authorities are relieved of their depressing portfolios of derelict homes they can't afford to improve/demolish (or rehouse the tenants). Big property companies like Standfield/Realdeal conveniently begin going bankrupt like lemmings. Neighbourhood Housing Services, C.D.S. etc get fatter and fatter.

Such rapid growth and frantic activity obviously leads to deviations,

excesses and cut corners. The term 'housing co-op' is politically established. Minister Freeson and the property market get over a sticky period.

Service agencies are in firm control and learning from the unavoidable mistakes of the previous rush. In existing co-ops tenant/member management committees composed of enthusiasts exercise responsibility without power — lamenting the apathy and non-participation of the majority of their peers. They have a heavy task ahead persuading/inducing others to share their self-deception and themselves coming to terms with the efficiency-democracy dilemma.

The agencies continue improving houses, imposing "fair rents" and buying more property — though this time more carefully, especially where sitting tenants are involved. If they can get it they would prefer a high level of participation (as in Canning co-op) and general meetings rather than management committee meetings (as in Granby).

In spontaneous rank and file co-ops this last point is correct and crucial. In state sponsored co-ops it's more pernicious than paternalistic. Freeson is dealing in illusions. Government at any level prefers dealing with the predictable responses of mass meetings and groupings of people who are conned into taking responsibility without control.

Articles in this series do not represent the views of the Free Press. They are intended simply to stimulate discussion.

OFFENSIVE

Readers are invited to comment on points raised here

Send letters to Liverpool Free Press, 48 Manchester St., Liverpool 1

is not the nationalisation of housing but the nationalisation of ourselves. We could be co-operating in the construction of our own prisons if we mistakenly think we can buy Heaven with money from the Devil.

I am of the opinion that the bosses in this corner of the world have chosen the Parliamentary Labour Party to spearhead the construction of the 'corporate state' they so badly need to survive and housing co-ops are a means of achieving this at home while closed shop legislation accomplishes it at work.

Parochially now, the biggest danger to Liverpool 8 is the London based giant CDS which is about to play around with about 300 properties in the area.

BE VIGILANT

The only statement I have heard of their intentions went something like: "We propose to establish co-ops in around five years' time — when it is hoped the people will be ready to take on the responsibility. Meanwhile we will improve the properties."

They have set up a local office staffed by three people who seem more enlightened — perhaps they'll declare UDI?

Only vigilance can tell us what needs to be done when a situation presents itself. Right now we have in housing co-ops an amorphous, embryonic mess with opposing potentials. And for some years now it's been difficult to see the grass roots with all the scurrings of successive waves of rodents and parasites.

JOE GORTON

IF YOU would like to write an article for readers to debate, please let us know.

DO NOT send completed articles but write or phone first and tell us briefly what your article would be about.

NEED TO CHALLENGE

What I have tried to express here is not the hysteria of an imminent Armageddon which brevity sometimes manufactures. I simply wish to indicate that important things are happening here as well as in Angola, Chile, Ireland etc, that we neglect to our cost: to say that the co-op operation is the latest, most advanced threat to our long term prospects of happiness.

The attack in this relatively boring quarter is so obtuse and pedestrian it is in danger of going unnoticed: of succeeding without challenge by default. Ultimately what is at stake