

STRATFORD EAST

Down the River

THE STAGE

THREATENED BY work shortage, redundancy and unemployment, people either strike, leave for greener pastures or go on the dole. In 'Down The River' - Stratford Theatre Royal's community touring production, concerned with this current state facing the docks, we see a depressing commentary on the government's inability to provide safe, efficient conditions and enough work for able men. Solving the problem by benevolently offering to retire everyone at a total cost of £35,000,000.

Ian Buckley's play, directed by

Jules Wright, traces the explosive events in London's Upper Docks from May 1978 to the present time. It realistically explores how the unattractive prospect of closure, instigated by the government Port of London Authority, affects the lives of three dockers and one of their wives.

Mervyn Stutter, as Mick Gillet the radical, determined not to be fobbed off with severance money or half baked promises is unable to comprehend the less committed ideals of Bob Critchley's Alan Lewis - a certified 'B' man - disabled - happy to take his 12 grand offer and find work elsewhere. Dave Gaston (Patrick Dickson), "proud to be a docker," is a solid kind of semi-extremist, in with the fight, but missing the workers rally for a boat race. While Primula Cotton's Jean Gaston, a self educated fighter for the cause, whips up dockland fire, addressing action groups and demos.

Cleverly portrayed it seems to end on an opti-pessimistic note of unity, progress and futility.

Elizabeth Jarvis

Down the River (Stratford East, on tour).

IAN BUCKLEY writes informatively about the major events in London's Upper Docks from May '78.

He explains how, despite containerisation, there should still be work for the dockers, and how the downfall of the Uppers is due largely to lack of investment.

His play also tells the story of the increased awareness of one of the docker's wives in her own abilities.

The play also contains characters, as do the docks themselves, whose principles on solidarity are not very advanced.

The main drawback of what otherwise is a very interesting and down-to-earth play is that it doesn't manage to create the atmosphere of a whole working force and surrounding community.

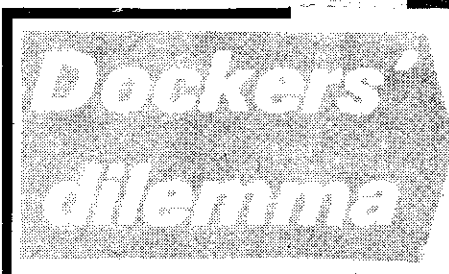
They are mentioned as being there, but not felt to be there. Perhaps, also, more concrete information on ways that job security could be improved for dockers could be raised or emphasised.

Rosie Barker

THE 'MORNING STAR'



A LOCAL PAPER



THE plight of Newham's ailing dockland is to be highlighted in a special play at the Theatre Royal next month.

Writer Ian Buckley, who has been commissioned by the Stratford Theatre, has traced the recent events leading up to the closure threat.

And although the possibility of closure has not been realised yet

Ian Buckley has formed his own opinion of the outcome which he will use as a climax to the play.

"I have spent five weeks research this issue and have come up with what I think will happen", said Ian.

Picture shows Ian Buckley with Don Perry (left) and George Springford (right), both members of the dockers' distress fun.