



Hounded: Members of the National Trust, gathering in Westminster yesterday for their annual meeting, face calls to ban hunting on NT land./Photograph by Neil Libbert.

BRITAIN'S hunters face another battering this week when the League Against Cruel Sports names 17 more hunts involved in illegal and criminal activities, writes David Harrison.

The League will produce a 'professional huntman with impeccable credentials' to denounce his fellow huntmen, said John Bryant, the League's head of Research.

He disclosed the League's plans as the row over the Quorn hunt video rumbled on.

'The huntman will make it clear that the sort of practices seen on the Quorn video were far from rare,' Mr Bryant said. 'The League would produce evidence from other huntmen 'disgusted at their hunt's lack of ethics'.

He said that the League had evidence of malpractice including:

- Foxes being dragged by terrier men out of holes and released to hounds;

- Foxes having their tendons cut and then being released;
- Criminal offences such as badger-baiting and cock-fighting connected with the hunts.

The League plans to present a dossier to MPs 'in the near future', he added. 'There will be no videos and there is no royal connection this time, but the evidence we have is still damning.'

Mr Bryant said that Lady Waechter, from the North Leicestershire Hunt, the longest serving Huntmaster in the country, had complained to the Master of Foxhounds Association about the terrier men's cruelty.

Five members of the Quorn hunt have resigned over the

video which showed a fox being dragged out of a hole and trawled to the hounds in contravention of hunting laws. The five are Lord Crawshaw, the hunt chairman, and four joint masters: Joss Hanbury, Barry Hercock, Di Turner and Alister Macdonald-Buchanan. Prince Charles has ridden several times with the hunt.

Michael Clayton, a member of the Quorn hunt for 20 years, said it was the first time the Quorn had taken such action in over two centuries. 'We took responsibility for what went wrong and that shows that the Quorn has acted with alacrity and firmness.'

He said the affair was shock-

ing, 'but there was certainly no sense of shame among the huntmen'.

But the League said that the next series of revelations would further shake the hunting fraternity and bring further pressure for a ban on all hunting.

Mr Bryant was speaking as the National Trust held its annual meeting in London. Seven anti-bloodsport candidates made a vain attempt to win election to the Trust's 52-member council to lobby for the hunting ban.

Mr Bryant said that the League's switchboard had been jammed since the Quorn video was shown last week. 'The irony is that many people were

upset with the bits which were not illegal, like dragging a fox out of a hole, shooting it and throwing it to the hounds.'

He claimed that huntmen had approached the League after their complaints were ignored by the Master of Foxhounds Association. 'They are sick of what they are seeing. The sport is being taken over by the terrier men — who compete to get their dogs to the fox first when it goes to ground.'

Three motions at yesterday's National Trust meeting reflected the battle between the pro- and anti-hunters. Two of them sought to limit the opportunity for anti-blood sports resolutions, and the third tried to

Huntsmen at bay as protesters pledge more bloody revelations

change the complicated proxy voting rules.

Doreen Cronin, secretary of Devon and Somerset Residents for Deer Protection, said that the proxy voting system was undemocratic and unfair. But Lord Chorley told the meeting that he was for the proxy voting system and would continue to exercise his right to vote on behalf of the thousands who trusted him to cast their vote.

Richard Rider, vice-chairman of the RSPCA council and one of the seven anti-hunting candidates, accused the National Trust of 'not living in the Nineties. Public opinion is changing,' he said. 'It is hardening against the hunters.'

Mrs. Cronin said: 'The bottom line is that there is no justification for cruelty to animals.'

But Michael Clayton, who is also editor of *Horse and Hound* magazine, defended hunting as entertainment. 'Eating steak is entertainment, and an animal has been killed for that,' he said.