

the worker

FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

CRIMINAL LAW BILL:

The noose tightens

A FEW MONTHS AGO the Coalition Government decided they could leave the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Bill on the shelf to gather dust. Now, suddenly, it has become a matter of great urgency to have it passed. And the whips are out to get it through fast.

This Bill is the last remnant of the Sunningdale Agreement. It was unacceptable as part of an agreement with British imperialism; it is unacceptable today. It means that anybody who is suspected of committing a political offence in the North can be tried and sentenced in the South.

Like the Special Courts, it breaches existing law and the flimsy democratic rights we are supposed to have under the law. The liberal traditions which capitalism likes to claim are abandoned when it becomes necessary.

Under this Bill evidence can be taken in the North under the watchful care of the Northern judges who refuse to believe that British soldiers could shoot innocent people in cold blood, and this evidence can be used in the south where neither the accused person nor the judge can question the Northern witnesses.

Any 'crimes' committed in the North by Republicans have been committed as part of a fight against British imperialism whose Army has no right to be there, whose capitalists have no right to exploit the whole Irish working class.

We have criticised many of the tactics used by republicans in this fight, and we still do. But we defend their right to fight against imperialism and we call on workers' organisations to defend them against repression. Remember the more repressive the state becomes, the easier it will be to turn its repression against the workers in their day-to-day struggles. Police trained to attack republicans can easily direct their attacks against strikers.

We call on all working class and anti-imperialist organisations to come together in a united front against repression, to fight this Bill, to fight the repressive legislation we already have, and to fight any more bills the government may think of along the same lines. A united front does not mean sinking anybody's identity beneath a cloak of liberal respectability, it means the adding up of the various forces into a movement to strike together against a powerful enemy.

Bosses want our flesh too

THE BOSSES' approach to the Wage Agreement has been consistent: they hesitated to start talks at all, they got an agreement with "more holes in it than a string vest", and then delayed signing it. The purpose was clear: to impress on us all their generosity in considering an agreement at all and the difficulties they will have in paying the terms.

Almost any trade unionist you talk to will agree that the terms for the 16th round are disastrous, and that the unions have sacrificed too much. But the feeling was strong that we could not hope for better cash terms in a "free-for-all" — this was the best that could be got in the present situation.

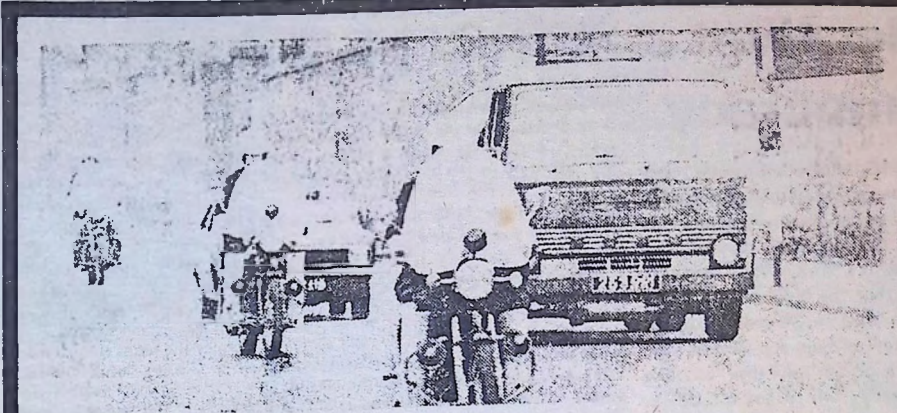
All that tells us is how much damage the previous agreements have done to the confidence of trade unionists, how much our leadership has let us down. This agreement was negotiated from a position of weakness — and it certainly shows.

Nobody doubts that this agreement provides no guarantees for "industrial peace", as they like to call it. The attitude of the bosses is a clear warning of disputes ahead — disputes about the payment even of the minimal terms. In 1973, 85 per cent of strikes were unofficial. In 1975 the proportion will certainly be higher.

That's what makes it doubly important that militant trade unionists do not simply accept the vote as a defeat but go on now to build solidarity at the rank and file, in places of work, between different unions, and across whole industrial estates and towns.

The trade union leadership has nailed its colours firmly to the mast of collaboration between employers and unions. We have to build an alternative leadership at the base of the trade union movement — factory committees, combine committees and local shop stewards committees which can take up the struggles which will be needed to maintain our living standards and our working conditions.

More on the Wage Agreement and the way ahead: See Page 2.



ARMY SCABS

GARDAI escort an army tender past pickets on a Dublin oil depot during the truck-drivers strike. They were getting "emergency supplies" — not for any social or medical purpose but to maintain their increasingly active patrols on

the Border and on the streets. It was only one of the recent signs of a tougher attitude by the state to strikers.

More on the oil workers dispute: see page 2.

CAR JOBS LOST

THE REAL tragedy about the big loss of jobs in the car industry is that we all saw it coming so long ago — and very few preparations were made to resist it. The shop stewards in Britain's had only the best intentions, no doubt, when they called on their fellow-workers to work on after the lay-offs. But to do it three days before the closure is like trying to change direction when you're careering downhill with no brakes — and no steering.

The stewards did not trust the rank and file enough to argue openly and consistently for all-out resistance. They talked secretly of a work-in or a sit-in, something which by definition cannot be secret.

Yet they represented the best of official union attitudes, for all along the union leaders held out hopes of some government action, or some easier way out — or else accepted in advance that there was no way out. They were not willing to encourage and lead a fight at the work-place. Only reluctantly did the other unions agree to the ATGWU's call for a black on some imported cars. And that was far too little, far too late.

Indeed, it was an insult to the Reg Armstrong workers that the 'black' on Opel imports was not put on until after their sit-in had been defeated.

Justin Keating called on car workers 18 months ago to take a strong line and give him backing in the fight to save jobs. They didn't — and he was off the

hook. For all the meetings, delegations, demonstrations, he was never put back on the hook again.

Already the effects of the lay-offs in car assembly are being felt in supply industries — upholstery, glass and others. And the effect of these defeats will be felt more widely in the Dublin area. Many workers had come to believe that the car workers could lead a fight against redundancy and unemployment.

Earlier this year, the Dublin Council of Trade Unions — under pressure from the ATGWU — took one hesitant step towards organising such a fight. But since that one 'consultative meeting' nothing more has been heard about it. Now is the time to take it up again, for a body embracing all unions can foster much-needed solidarity in this struggle. Get on to your stewards and representatives to demand that the DCTU organise a campaign based on delegates from the shop floor.

PORTUGUESE ELECTIONS

THE PORTUGUESE election results will have little direct influence on the course of the class struggle there in the next couple of months. The Socialist Party did better than expected while the Communists and their allies gathered in only 17 per cent of the vote, leaving the revolutionary Left with about 8 per cent.

It is clear, however, that you can't have such a high degree of workers' mobilisation for long side-by-side with private and state capitalism. The Armed Forces Movement, along with the Communists and Socialists, may use the election results as an excuse to move against the working class and undermine the movement's independence. Active solidarity with the Portuguese workers is needed.

MORE ON PORTUGAL — SEE PAGE 7.

Rita O'Hare Jailed

THE SOCIALIST Workers Movement condemns the imprisonment of Rita O'Hare on the flimsiest of evidence and the harsh treatment she has been receiving in Limerick Prison. We urge readers to support any activities in her defence.



"Prices up, unemployment up, stable wages!" If I didn't know better, I'd think we'd all died and gone to heaven!

SWM reply to threat

FOLLOWING a warning to the members of the Socialist workers movement in Waterford from an Official Sinn Fein representative to cease their public criticisms of the Officials, the local branch of the S.W.M. issued the following statement:

"At the Official Sinn Fein (Gardiner Place) ceremony on Easter Sunday in Green St. to honour the two freedom fighters shot by the Free State authorities in 1922, a warning was issued by Mr. Billy McCarthy, Chairman of the local Sinn Fein organisation to the Waterford Branch of the Socialist Workers Movement. "We must assume that these

outbursts were provoked by two articles which appeared in the last edition of our paper THE WORKER. One of these articles took issue with and criticised Sinn Fein for their defence in their newspaper 'The United Irishman' of the shooting down of worker freedom fighters in Hungary in 1956. The other article defended the right of the newly formed Official Sinn Fein breakaway group, the I.R.S.P. to organise without fear of harassment or intimidation.

"As a socialist organisation we expect criticism from outside sources and, indeed, encourage it within our movement, and as a Marxist organisation we maintain that Socialists should always solve their differences by discussion and debate, and not by veiled threats and vague warnings.

"These outbursts by Mr. McCarthy are a very good indication of how far the Officials have moved from their once-held Socialist commitment. They have become increasingly self-centred and therefore react excessively to any criticism, whether it comes from within their own organisation or from outside. It is characteristic of the Officials that in the absence of a shared political understanding it fosters a religious type loyalty to the organisation.

"Therefore, we must conclude that their call for working class and socialist unity at the Cemetery ceremony later on the same day is sheer hypocrisy."

HOW THEY GOT THE CHAINS ON US

I.T.G.W.U.'s Exercise in Selective Democracy

THE APRIL issue of "Liberty", the ITGWU paper, headlined the ballot on the National Wage Agreement as "an exercise in democracy". And that's how it's seen. When workers complain that the NWA is forced on us we are told — "there's a democratic vote; a majority accept it". Let's take a look at how this "exercise in democracy" which got the bosses and the government another NWA was carried out.

Over the past few months, as figures for unemployment race upward neck and neck with record price rises, the government and the employers kept up a kind of Greek Chorus of doom. Hardly a day went by without the familiar moan of "crisis, inflation, tighten your belts, pull up your socks etc. etc. etc." When the time came round for negotiations to begin for a new Agreement the message had been well and truly slammed home: "Don't expect much".

At times it seemed that the bosses were in two minds about whether they wanted a new Agreement or not. They complained that the cost-of-living increase in the last one had been more than they reckoned on paying. They didn't mention that prices had risen by more than twice that 10% payment during the same period.

But a NWA is about more than just wages. It is part of a whole apparatus with which the trade unions are compromised and tied up with the interests of the bosses and state. From the bosses point of view this buying of the unions independence is priceless. And despite their moans about cost-of-living increases, the NWA is one of the surest ways of holding down wages.

"As well as making for a nice bargaining ploy, the fact that the bosses seemed to be playing hard-to-get made it appear that any NWA, no matter how lousy, would be a victory for the trade union leaders — and so helped them to sell it to their members.

FIRST SHOTS

The first shots in the selling of the 1975 Agreement were fired by the ITGWU in the autumn of 1974 the leaders of that union carried out a cynical exercise which they later described as "consulting the entire membership on a nationwide basis so that a fully democratic approach to a wage policy can be reached".

The impression given was that there had been an 'analysis' based on a detailed "questionnaire" which was replied to by 1/4 of the union membership. This was simply untrue. The "consultation" of the "entire membership" was really just a random choosing of a few branch members to ask them what they thought of a NWA. From this "survey" — which few ITGWU members knew was taking place — the leaders drew up a seven-point guideline for a new NWA. The vote of at least one general meeting against the plan was ignored by their delegates.

On the basis of this document the bureaucrats extracted a mandate to negotiate a new Agreement. It is interesting to note the speed with which that seven-point guideline was buried once it had served its purpose. None of the seven points were fully achieved in the eventual Agreement, yet the ITGWU leaders recommended that it be accepted.

The propaganda aimed at guaranteeing acceptance was kept up while the Employer-Labour Conference negotiated the new Agreement. As the shadow-boxing between the bosses and trade union leaders continued the numbers of unemployed rose by the tens of thousands and in speech after speech bosses and Government Ministers hammered out the same message: "Be grateful if you've got a job don't expect anything more."

By the time the terms of the new agreement were announced it was obvious that the trade union leaders job of getting a YES vote was a mere formality. Even had the anti-NWA campaign been up to scratch it is doubtful if the vote could have been swung against acceptance.

However, the trade union bureaucrats took no chances. The meetings to announce the terms were in most cases called at very short notice, discussion was kept to a minimum, and — in the ITGWU especially — meetings were confined where possible to shop stewards and committee members, excluding the general membership from any discussion where the case against the agreement could be put. The vote-swinging tricks perfected during the ballots for previous agreements were used to good effect. Ballot boxes were brought to some jobs, not to others — the choice of which jobs being based not on distance from Liberty Hall but on the expected nature of the vote from each workplace. In at least one Branch fistfuls of ballot papers were brought to certain workplaces where there's a traditional YES vote and were returned in envelopes "sealed" with rubber bands! An exercise in democracy? — that's stretching it a bit.

Surprise! — the vote was in favour of accepting the agreement. However, the charade of "democracy" continued as the ICTU delegates solemnly debated the question on April 15th, though they had the YES vote secure in their pockets.

As though they hadn't been told that the game was over, the bosses were still making reluctant noises about whether they should sign the Agreement or not — until the union leaders gave them the

nod to cool it, don't cause a fuss, take your winnings and shut up.

ORGANISE THE RESISTANCE

Resistance to the National Wage Agreement and the full-timers' sell-outs must be encouraged and organised. At present strikes and sit-ins against wage restraint and redundancies are few and far between, and those occupations that have occurred are not of happy memory. But the tighter shackles of the new National Wage Agreement, along with the running out of pay-related benefits to workers on short-time, could very well lead to plenty of aggro, independent action by workers in the face of inflation and enforcement by the trade union officials of the agreement. Workers must be given the confidence to act without official backing and these rank and file battles must be linked up at shop steward level.

The first job, second to none, of the members of the various Shop Steward Committees around the country must be to make these TRULY REPRESENTATIVE. They must be composed of the most active shop stewards, Branch Committee members and rank and file leaders. At this stage any reason why the present Committees are off-putting to militant shop stewards must be faced squarely and remedied.

In order to do this there must be discussion within the shop stewards committees. The 'Trade Unionist' and the committees should become a forum for discussing the role and structure of a shop stewards' committee, how to change the unions and how to build the shop-floor organisation needed to win the struggles that lie ahead.

The Committees must get down to work within the unions. At this level, and at this time militant resistance can be

brought together to fight for democratic unions—monthly branch meetings, election of delegates, control over negotiation by the ordinary members, more responsibility to the shop stewards etc. Rank and file opposition to the sell-out leadership in a union must be organised first of all in that union. Then the link ups can be made. ONLY a vital rank and file movement can give leadership to the workers in the next few months so that they can fight effectively for —

- an end to the National Wage Agreement. Claims that exceed the limits of the Agreement, without productivity strings attached, backed up by unofficial action if necessary.
- refusal to pay for the crisis by strikes and occupations against lay-offs and short-time.
- industrial action and pressure in the Branches to back up equal pay claims.
- all strikes for wages, conditions and trade union rights to be made official.
- democracy in the unions.

Let's say it again slowly, for the record; over the past few months as unemployment shot to record heights, as inflation tore the value out of workers wages, as the sound of factory gates clanging shut rang out across the country, the major activity of the leaders of our unions has been to use the resources of those unions to tie us up tighter with another National Wage Agreement. That must be changed. Certainly we must smash the National Wage Agreement, and no doubt sections of workers are preparing to do that now, but that's not enough. The state of our unions, the lack of democracy, the fact that they are controlled not led, is the reason that our "leaders" can so easily wrap the chains of the NWA around us.



Army trailer gets 'emergency' supplies

OIL STRIKE; WHO THE CULPRITS ARE

THE VICTORY of the oil-workers and the reaction of the state to their fight contains many lessons for the working-class. When the Wage Agreement prevented the full-time officials from backing the strike the rank and file formed their own Oil Workers Committee, made up of stewards from all companies and the two unions concerned. The workers were solidly behind it. When the ITGWU called a ballot over the heads of the Oil Workers Committee NOBODY turned up to vote. Later the Committee voted to exclude Kirwan, the National Group Secretary from a negotiating session. Country workers followed the Dublin-based Committee.

The strikers were incensed by the use of Army seats and if the State had sent in troops for general servicing there would have been trouble. The Army and the police moved in NOT to protect the sick or the needy, but to get fuel for border patrols and squad cars. The use of troops came only days after SWM had released a Press Statement on the prosecution of strikers at Carraroe and O'Connor's.

Here, a SHELL-BP OIL WORKER outlines the strikers' side of the struggle: "THE GREATEST industrial crisis in the history of the state," (as one RTE commentator called it) ended on Sunday, April 27 after 11 days total stoppage of oil and petrol deliveries

(except to hospitals, etc). Settlement was reached 'on the very brink of economic disaster'. Loss of jobs and financial losses had already been sustained by industry.

The crisis was not due to any natural or economic disaster, but to the failure of workers tied by a productivity agreement, after seven months negotiations, in Irish Shell-BP to get parity with similar workers in outside industry and these other workers were NOT shackled to productivity while earning far more.

Having failed (after seven months in which the company and the union negotiators stalled) to obtain any rise we gave seven days (unofficial) notice of reversion to pre-productivity conditions. The Shell workers were backed by the workers in all other oil companies. All oil workers were available AT THEIR JOBS to deliver oil each morning under the old system. This was not acceptable to the companies.

Here also we parted company with our official trade union representatives because national wage agreements do not allow changes in conditions of employment and keep you as they find you. That's one of the prices paid for the 8 per cent next June. Throughout the strike we were represented by our shop stewards on the unofficial Oil Workers Committee.

At the very first meeting with a

LOOK OUT WORKERS! HERE COME T.W.P.M.I.T.T.S.C.

Can you imagine thirteen obscure people sitting in a room, writing a pretentious, moral statement and getting the headlines in the local paper and a good mention on the television news? Pretty hard — but then it depends on whether the media has an interest in pushing their ideas or not.

The thirteen who succeeded call themselves "Those Who Pay More Than Their Share Campaign". They are a bosses' front run by bosses and their hacks.

Labour Court officer it was agreed that a just claim existed. This just claim would not be recognised by the company till oil ceased to flow.

From then on all efforts were concentrated on getting the oil workers back. Labour Court, ITGWU, Labour Court again, ICTU, intervened without translating the 'just claim' into cash terms.

All this while the crisis mounted, the Government threatened and the papers ranted about small groups of workers holding the country to ransom. FINALLY a cash offer (£125 lump sum), pending a proper settlement was made and accepted.

Your job was placed in jeopardy, not by the oil workers, who were available at all times to make deliveries by the methods used before the productivity deal but by the absolute refusal of the company, during seven months of negotiations to recognise any claim.

To those workers not as strongly placed, the lesson is obvious. Productivity Agreements, plus National Wage Agreements, are not designed in your interests.

SHELL OIL WORKER

The group claims that increases in the Welfare Insurance Stamps are due to "dolers", "unentitled holders of medical cards" and other "social parasites". They claim that at a mass meeting of Connaught laundry workers, a resolution was passed to this effect.

They called a subsequent meeting in the factory canteen for employers and employees to urge a campaign against "spongers". Thirteen people attended. Not a single shop floor worker was there. Only one of them claimed to be a Trade Unionist; he said that he had been delegated by his boss to attend! The rest of them complained about how difficult it was to get men to work for them when the dole was so high. Two enthusiastic semi-fascist types travelled all the way from Kildush in the hope of finding a growing small business man's movement.

There were two individuals behind the setting up of this committee. Connaught Laundry personnel manager, Miss Mary Day was one. She spends most of her time sending ads into the Connaught Tribune for workers who can

take the rotten wage rates in the factory. The other was Councillor Bridie Flaherty of Fianna Fail who owns a shop in Mervue and who finds it difficult to recruit staff due to being in competition with the current dole rate!

The organisation bears all the signs of a fascist type grouping. They blame the current economic crisis on a scape-goat "the dolers" who can be singled out very easily. They call for a common front of employers and employees to attack the undeserving "dolers". The venue of their first meeting was donated free of charge by the Connaught Laundry manager. They have already been condemned by the Galway Trades Council. All Trade Unionists must mobilise to smash them.

In fighting such attacks on the unemployed, we must demand the right to work. In fighting attacks on unentitled medical card holders, we must demand a full and free National health service where there won't be anyone "unentitled" to free medical care. We must answer attacks on the increase in welfare Stamps by calling for a steeply progressive wealth tax to force the employers to bear the burden.

Above all this crowd of parasites must be exposed for what they are: a bosses front and an attack on Trade Unionism. Unemployed workers must not let them get away with their slander. We must learn one lesson from them: the need to organise to prevent such people getting a foot-hold anywhere.

SWM

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Right: Manager's car drives through the picket-line

LAW USED AGAINST SIT-IN STRIKERS

DURING MARCH, the bosses at Thomas O'Connor and Sons Ltd. of Harolds Cross Dublin, manufacturers of jewellery, told their workers that they were laying people off. An O'Connors worker talked to THE WORKER about the sit-in that followed.

A meeting of the craftsmen, members of the National Union of Gold, Silver and Allied Trades, decided to occupy the premises and to demand that all the workers were to be up against the fury of the boss, Vincent O'Connor, and the might of the State. A number of workers occupied while others kept up a picket outside the gate. Vincent O'Connor drove his expensive car straight at the pickets actually hitting one bloke though luckily not injuring him. The strikers wanted to charge O'Connor - who had driven his car at strikers before - with attempted murder, but the legal machine was only prepared to entertain a charge of assault.

The workers occupied only a section of the factory. In the rest of the factory and outside, guard-dogs patrolled and scratched at the doors. The only way to the jax was by way of a drain-pipe. One of the lads was on his way to relieve himself when he was hit on the back of the head - behold another O'Connor with a wooden club in his hand.



The office staff and the women workers passed the picket throughout. But how many of these stand to lose their jobs in the plans of O'Connor? United with the N.U.G.S.A.T. members all sections of workers would have been in a stronger position to fight back.

A court injunction was gained by O'Connor on March 27th to restrain the workers from sitting in. At first the workers decided to stay on but then they felt that if they ignored the injunction the police would move in on them. Nevertheless Mr. 'Justice' Hamilton of the High Court wasn't pleased by the fact that the strikers didn't clear out immediately. If the sit-in had been bigger and less isolated, if there was a functioning Dublin Shop Stewards Committee, if the trade union leaders on the Dublin Trades Council were any use, then the sit-in

could have given the two fingers to the law. Because if the law took action many other workers might have come to their aid.

At the end of April the strike seemed in danger of fizzling out as morale was sinking and the official backing had weakened. In fact, right-wingers in NUGSAT had got through a resolution in the Executive accepting redundancies. The District President, Eamonn O'Brien, who is also a shop steward at O'Connor's and was the main leader of the strike, resigned his position in protest.

IRSP: SHAKY MOVES TO A POLICY

THERE WAS a slightly chaotic air about much of the first conference of the IRSP. But, in spite of the many strange procedures adopted, it did settle down to some serious discussion. To some extent, however, the achievements of the conference have been overshadowed since then by the public emergence of the Peoples Liberation Army as "protectors" of the IRSP. The feud with the Officials will continue to make it difficult for the party to put forward the policies adopted. And the confusion of the IRSP in relation to the dispute will take away from the seriousness of the conference.

The failing momentum of both wings of the republican movement has pointed to revolutionary socialism as the way forward. The IRSP has declared itself for that way. But there are still many of the steps to be worked out. For instance, a phrase like "unity of the class and national struggle", which sounds fine, can mean different things to different people. Seamus Costello, for instance, asserted that "there is no struggle going on against capitalism" and that "we must not fool ourselves and think there is." If the everyday struggles of workers to defend jobs and living standards, as well as the fight against repression and imperialism, are not seen as part of the struggle against capitalism, then we are left with the stages theory, with maybe the civil rights stage dropped.

BRITISH WORKERS

There seemed to be a tendency to treat imperialism and capitalism almost as two things apart, rather than seeing one as a particular form of the other. The class struggles on the nearest island were never mentioned. It is in the attempt to form links with British workers both on questions of repression and on united action against specific companies that the need for organised internationalism will be seen most urgently.

This discussion, like many others, stuck with principle rather than going into the practical implementation of policy. So there was a long discussion on women, and particularly on the right to abortion, which gave the party a nine-point programme on the question, but no suggestions as to how to carry it out.

One discussion - on culture - showed up some of the greatest weaknesses. For delegates harped on the notion of "national culture" a notion which makes no class distinction and can, indeed, be used to bind workers to bosses. Inside Ireland and England, there are "two nations" (not in the BIC's sense), one of which monopolises the access to training, education and certain aspects of developed culture. The job of socialists includes fighting for wider access to those things. It does not include fighting to defend the culture of the native bourgeoisie when it is threatened by foreign competition. Working class culture in a socialist society will be developed from the best aspects of all bourgeois cultures - and from entirely new bases. This argument could open a back door to nationalism.

CONVENTION ELECTIONS

As far as the press was concerned the only matter of any interest at the conference was the decision not to put forward candidates at the Convention elections. Given the short time the party has had to present itself to the voters the decision was perhaps inevitable. But the reasons given against standing covered an enormous range. Some were abstentionists in principle on class grounds ("bourgeois elections") others on national grounds ("British elections"). So the party took no clear line on the elections in the absence of IRSP candidates - although they have been putting one forward since then.

None of this unevenness was surprising - least of all to the delegates themselves. It appeared, too, on the issue of a broad front/united front against repression: there was no discussion of the methods to set it up. But this was a first outing for many members - the first open discussion of political ideas they had had at such a meeting for several years, and quite different from the stage-managed Ard Fheiseanna of Sinn Fein.

The party's commitment to "democratic centralism" as a principle of internal organisation may also be understood in different ways. That subject took up several hours of the conference time, reflecting the fear of many members that they might be about to repeat the experience they had with the Officials of manipulation by an elite which stifles discussion. For some members democratic centralism had to include the "right to form internal groups which can organise inside the party for a change of policy". But that motion was narrowly defeated. Will it now be forgotten because the same people form a majority of the new National Executive?

The need for both democracy and centralism was very plain a few days after the conference when an IRSP spokesman admitted at the graveside of a comrade murdered in Belfast that some party members had dual membership with the Peoples Liberation Army. What is the central IRSP line on this? Whose discipline are dual members under? Are the membership not bound by democratic centralism. If any part of the organisation or its membership is not bound by democratic centralism, the whole idea is meaningless.

It was, nevertheless, a tribute to the concern the members felt in general about safeguards in their internal organisation that they spent a whole day discussing their constitution and democratic centralism.

The IRSP seemed to make a clean break with the Officials on one thing: the theory of "socialism in one country". One motion urged that blanket support should not be given to the "so-called socialist countries", however praiseworthy some aspects of their economic structure might be, because of their bureaucratic and dictatorial regimes and opportunistic foreign policies. But when another motion wanted to take that a step further by committing the IRSP to the need to build an international organisation to lead workers' struggles internationally this was defeated by a narrow margin.

EDUCATION

The follow up is vital: the organisation of political training and of educational discussion throughout the party membership. For that's the only guarantee of democratic centralism: an active, conscious membership able and willing to take part in the internal life of the organisation and in projecting the party to its working class audience.

But if there is any danger that the most important decisions are being taken out of reach of most of the membership then the whole thing will be in vain. It should be a cause for concern to the revolutionaries in the IRSP that at no stage when it was possible, did they seek to isolate the Officials by political means, to organise meetings and demonstrations detailing and condemning the harassment against them. Having made that original mistake it is, unhappily, all too easy to be dragged into a well-worn republican routine. And that would drag down not only the individuals involved, but also many of the important ideas they are debating.

For any organisation to carry through a commitment to revolutionary socialism it has to break with the republican tradition. To do that it has to base itself on the activity of the working class. That part of the discussion was postponed - and that is where the key is.

AGM(anipulation)

THE ANNUAL General Meeting of the No. 14 Branch, ITGWU, took place in Liberty Hall on Sunday 13th April. The attendance was as low as at some recent Dail sessions and was much deplored by the Branch President, Pa Dunne, at the beginning of the meeting. It never crosses union officials' minds that they are one of the main reasons for the tiny attendance. And just to prove the point a third of the audience left at two minutes to half-twelve (just enough time to reach Barney's pub as it opened) while the Branch Secretary, was still giving his Branch Report (mercifully shorter this year). And later on, a line of Unidare workers walked out after getting no satisfaction on a bonus query.



Mickie Mullen: out of place

Right enough, this was a 'domestic' issue, but if there were more union meetings domestic issues would not have to be raised at the Annual General Meeting.

No fewer than SIX resolutions were refused to be taken by the chair. That's the bulk of the resolutions from the floor at the meeting. In most cases Pa Dunne couldn't or wouldn't give any explanation why he refused to put them to a vote. A resolution against voluntary redundancies was ruled out of order; a call for a special general meeting of the Unidare Section (where the Branch officials have instructed the ITGWU workers to pass pickets of AUEW-TASS) was ignored; a resolution for action against the importation of Swedish sinks wasn't taken; a resolution for the setting of definite dates for the Quarterly Meetings (as the last Quarterly Meeting didn't take place) wasn't acceptable to Pa Dunne.

A resolution for the setting up of a Branch news-bulletin, under a Branch sub-Committee, really got Pa Dunne and Arthur Kelly worked up. Again the chairman refused to entertain the resolution - proposed and seconded - and this time Arthur Kelly ranted on about 'nobody is going to dictate how to run this union' and about 'groups' trying to take over the Branch. And lastly, a resolution in support of Michael Mullen's stand against the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Bill in the Senate was thought to be out of place by the chair. Yet the National Group Secretary's speech before that was on the need for trade unionists to concern themselves with political issues outside their own job.

A question was asked why the five delegates from the No. 14 Branch had voted FOR the seven-point plan on the National Wage Agreement at the Delegate Conference. A 50 to 2 majority had voted AGAINST the plan at a Branch special meeting in December. Arthur Kelly's answer was that he was not mandated how to vote by the Branch, which is legally true. Which is another way of saying that under the present rules the rank-and-file have no say in how their delegates vote, even when the rank and file clearly vote their stand.

HOSTS TO MINING MOGULS

THE A.T.G.W.U. premises at Keizer Street, Waterford, hold not only the offices of that union but also the offices of Amax Mining Exploration. It is the opinion of many workers in Waterford branches of the union that the lease for these offices should be terminated as soon as possible. The committee of one branch passed a resolution to this effect two years ago and sent it to the General Secretary, Regional Secretary and the District Secretary.

The trade union movement is demanding nationalisation of mineral resources, so it is hypocritical that we should be supplying this

private enterprise company the base from which to run their activities. It must be an embarrassment to Matt Merrigan who has at successive Labour Party conferences put the argument for the complete

nationalisation on mineral resources. It is thought that this lease is due for renewal soon, so it's up to every member of the A.T.G.W.U. to ensure that it is not renewed. Send motions to this effect to Matt Merrigan, District Secretary, John Freeman, Regional Secretary and Russ Aiken, Financial Advisor.

ATGWU MEMBER

Strikers in court

EIGHT MEMBERS of the I.T.G.W.U. who work at Westcon (Carracoe) were prosecuted and brought before Doire an Fhilia District Court early in April. They were charged under the 1861 Malicious Damages Act and the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, with causing damage to Westcon property. This damage, it was alleged, was done in the course of an unofficial strike and as part of the picketing process.

The 'super', Gallagher, knew that a sentence could mean a fight back from Gaeltacht and Galway City workers. After hearing him the judge adjourned the charges for a year with freedom to re-enter. This is a way of keeping the suspended charges over the heads of the eight trade unionists as a means of intimidation.

The use of the State's repressive apparatus in the Westcon dispute connects with its use in O'Connor's Jewellery factory in Harold's Cross.

The Gaeltacht Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committee must take up the Westcon issue and demand the dropping of the charges against the eight workers. And both the Galway and the Gaeltacht Committees must affiliate to the Galway Anti-Repression Committee and help to build a real United Front against repression in the region, led by the working class and by politically independent working class politics and methods of struggle.

PEADAR O'DONNELL THROUGH STRUGGLES AND SPLITS

MICHAEL McINERNEY, former political correspondent of the 'Irish Times' and before that again editor of the Communist Party paper has written a badly organised and badly edited book about an important subject. Peadar O'Donnell is now over eighty and has had long experience of radical republican agitation and propaganda, particularly in the period from the Tan war to the mid 1930's. After the Republican Congress collapsed in 1935, his political activity tailed off and he concentrated more on literary work with only occasional forays into political agitation.

As he admitted to the author, O'Donnell's role in the trade union movement was "brief" and "minimal" and on more general political questions he says that he "never did enthuse over that slogan - a Workers' Republic. It was too city-minded a term and my world was essentially that of a small farm countryside." As McInerney points out: "perhaps Peadar O'Donnell's contribution to Irish history was that, like Fintan Lalor, he perceived a deep revolutionary tradition among the rural workers and small farmers of Ireland which neither Labour nor Sinn Fein nor the IRA appreciated.

It is necessary to emphasise this dimension of O'Donnell since he was often taken to be a socialist or communist, descriptions which he resists, preferring the term "radical Fenian". He was always most at home with the struggles of rural workers and small farmers, some of them heroic indeed as in the land annuity campaign of the late 1920's or in his work on behalf of the Western small farmers who went yearly to Scotland to pick potatoes in the most atrocious conditions.

But his involvement did not end there, for he was one of the most prominent IRA leaders in the late '20's and early '30's and the IRA has historically been closely, if not exclusively associated with the small farm countryside.

After the civil war the republican side faced a painful process of political differentiation reflecting divisions apparent even before the Treaty was signed in 1921. De Valera formed Fianna Fail in 1926, taking the bulk of anti-treaty activists with him and leaving Sinn Fein as a pathetic rump organisation. But he was not so successful with the IRA which had been formally independent of Sinn Fein since 1925, effectively so for much longer. The I.R.A. had up to 20,000 members throughout the country. It published a weekly newspaper - An Phoblacht, edited by O'Donnell, which had a circulation of 40,000.

O'Donnell was one of a group of radicals - George Gilmore, David Fitzgerald, Frank Ryan, Sean Murray, - in the leadership of the IRA. They were concerned to extend the organisation's activity from the purely military or formally political into class and social conflicts. At a time when repression from the Cumann na nGael government was severe, when the world economic recession had thrown up to 200,000 out of work and when small farmers throughout the west were resisting the payment of land annuities, it would seem that they had a lot going for them. But they were unable to re-orient the IRA Executive to these struggles.

Tailing Dev

When the 1932 election was called the IRA leadership threw themselves into the campaign to "get Cosgrave out" and found themselves tailing De Valera. His skill in out-manoeuvring the more radical republicans and consolidating his hold on power is documented once again in these pages.

SO THE question was posed for O'Donnell and his group: how to relate to Fianna Fail's consolidation using the forces of the Republican movement in alliance with the working-class and trade union movements. After a final attempt to move the IRA executive from the inside, O'Donnell's group split away and in April 1934 called for a Republican Congress to assemble in September of that year. Contact was established with an impressive array of trade union branches and trades councils as well as with branches of the Labour and Communist parties and, of course, sympathetic rank and file republicans.

But during the course of separation from the Congress a split emerged in the organising committee. One group, led by Michael Price, Roddy Connolly, and his sister Nora Connolly O'Brien, proposed a programme based on a clear statement that the objective of the Congress should be a Workers' Republic. This was to be achieved under the leadership of the working class and arising from a full involvement of the Congress delegates in the day-to-day struggles of that class. "The Irish working class is the only class that cannot be bought by the economic concessions of the British imperialists, because the satisfaction of its full demands is impossible within the confines of any system under which it remains subject to wage earning and profit-making exploitation", they argued. They proposed that the Congress form the basis of a new political party "prepared to attack the capitalist system in every sphere in which it operates to the disadvantage of the exploited.

The other group, led by O'Donnell, Gilmore, Ryan and Sean Murray (who was now secretary of the Irish Communist Party which had been reformed in 1933) had a different perspective. They were concerned to expose De Valera in the eyes of the mass of Fianna Fail's popular followers, and the slogan 'Workers' Republic' would antagonise the mass of Fianna Fail followers especially since many of them were remote from the working class movement. It followed that a different kind of organisational form was required. Not a new party, but "committees of workers and small farmers to conduct working class and farmers' struggles and to express the political aspirations of these growing forces" increased and urgent campaigns to achieve the republic... which becomes a workers' and small farmers' republic because the organs of struggle become the organs of government...

Congress

WHEN THE Congress assembled in September 1934, the issue was closely debated. O'Donnell's motion was eventually carried by 99 votes to 84 after which Price's supporters withdrew. In the words of George Gilmore "It soon became apparent that we had lost that section of the trade union



The beginning of the Civil War: first of the major splits between republicans

movement whose support is essential to success" and in particular a significant group of workers from Belfast. After this split the Congress survived for about a year

McInerney, who supports O'Donnell dismisses the arguments over the Workers' Republic as sterile and abstract displaying thereby his own political philistinism. In fact, many of the political issues facing Irish revolutionaries today were raised in the discussion. The fundamental question revolved (and still revolves) around the role of the working class in the struggle against imperialism and capitalism in Ireland. O'Donnell, as reported in this book, repeatedly emphasises the leading role of the working class in this struggle. He understands that this is not just a verbal commitment but that the leadership must be of the working class and centrally involved in that class's everyday struggles. He is contemptuous, and here we would agree with him, of organisations such as the Official Republicans, which put great store in preaching workers' unity, but are only marginally involved in working class struggles.

The present-day leadership of the Officials has been characterised recently by "young centrists who have all the vices of the new-left student demagogues - mindless populism, economism, third worldist romanticism, cynicism, intellectual arrogance and a fondness for petit-bourgeois intrigue. They have learned just enough to be dogmatic without having learned the first thing about political principles." (Gerry Foley, Intercontinental Press).

International

A COMPARISON of them with the Republican radicals of the 1920's and 1930's shows the present-day leadership in a very poor light. But there is a certain political continuity. McInerney does tell us that the O'Donnell group was not isolated from political movements in Europe and elsewhere. O'Donnell himself chaired a European Peasants' Conference in Berlin in 1930 which was organised by communists.

Fitzgerald and Gilmore paid a number of visits to Moscow looking for aid in the nineteenth twenties. There was also the involvement of Ryan and O'Donnell in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. Underlying this was the fact that the group was closely in touch with the Irish Communist Party leadership throughout the period. O'Donnell was particularly close to Sean Murray.

C.P.: CHANGING D

"IT IS NOW fashionable to re-write Irish history," writes Tom Redmond in his introduction to the Outline history of the Communist Party of Ireland. So anxious are the Communist Party not to fall in with this fashion that they give us a painstaking factual account, with several appendices on specific aspects of their work, without ever stopping to ask some of the fundamental questions which hang over their stop/start history.

For example, organising a communist party in an overwhelmingly agricultural country (which Ireland was in 1921) presented problems. In the heady atmosphere following the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the rural radicalism of the land war was still in people's memories, miners, bakery and creamery workers set up soviets in small towns and villages. Large estates were occupied by the landless. The War of Independence might have spilled over into a class war. The large number of rural Labour T.D.s in the 1920s and the existence of Communist groups in Counties Longford, Leitrim, Wexford and Kilkenny in the 1930s, show what might have been achieved if the Communist Party had had a stronger base among the urban working class.

The lack of a strong base in Dublin was in some measure due to the failure of both Connolly and Larkin to understand the need for political organisation. But, as we are told, Larkin formed the "Irish Worker" League shortly after the Workers' Union of Ireland was founded. But "as an organisation it

What McInerney fails to do is make clear the momentum of developments in the international working class movement as it related to Ireland. This was dominated by the triumph of Stalinist counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and by the more or less rapid accommodation of national communist parties to courses of action dictated by Russian foreign policy. There is an echo of the Trotsky-Stalin clash in the Republican Congress debate on strategy and objectives. By this time the Communist parties throughout Europe were committed to building a popular

front against fascism and the isolation of Stalinist Russia. The desire to curry favour with French foreign policy. It is the objective of socialist workers' power, was put off by and in Spain and France and brutally discouraged.

The Stalinist analysis of the question is based on a policy which puts off the raising of demands to a further struggle. That this resulted in union representation walking out of the Republican Congress app

(the League) never functioned. It never became a basis for the development of a Marxist Party." Yet the Communist Party "decided to terminate the Party existence in early 1924 on a proposal of the Communist International and resolved to play their part in the building of the 'Irish Workers' League'". Was the Party right to burn its boats like that? The matter is not discussed. Was the Communist International right to put all its money on Larkin, when after a few years, as we are told: "Larkin senior drifted from the Communist movement and in a short time he was seeking accommodation with the social democratic movement."

The correctness of the Communist International is not questioned. Indeed, one of the features marking the Communist Party of Ireland in its various re-births has been its faithfulness to the changing line of Moscow. And the degeneration of the Russian Communist Party from a revolutionary organisation to a power apparatus is faithfully mirrored in this slice of Irish history.

In the C.P.I. Manifesto of 1921 we read: "The only true commonwealth of Nations is the World Federation of Workers' Republics. Only as a unit of such a World Federation can Ireland achieve her freedom." In regard to the 1930 Irish Trade Union Congress "the call was made for 'the militant elements within the unions to come together on a common platform of class struggle to break the sabotage of the bureaucrats.'" Andy Barr please note. In 1932 "the de Valera Government imposed a series of tariffs to curb imports... The R.W.G. (Communist Party) criticised this policy." Editor of the 'Irish Socialist' please note.

Stalinism's change of policy in the 1930's led it on to the popular fronts, under which the Communist Parties held back the order to carry favour with the middle class. Nowhere tragically shown than in the illustration of the 'His' reproduces the newspaper of the tremendous united front in Belfast Protestant and Catholic class in the unemployed in 1932. The second story, a line which must have in Protestant readers - "with Britain fail - Forward Republic!" - states: "The Empire and not a per imperialist; no arbitration imperialism; non-payment to the ex-British bureaucrats R.I.C.; the abolition of the the disbandment of the C are the demands of the of Ireland." Not a socialist sight! Anti-imperialists working-class must not

Twists

The 'History' follows and turns of Stalin's without calling attention. Indeed what is missing that there has been at the Communist Party discussion or divisions of there was some reflection Trotsky's opposition in late 1920s and his other Communist parties word of it appears in this b

BASIC QUESTIONS of strategy in struggle have been raised by the IRSP - even though he sple present feud. They have been raised and career of Peadar O'Donnell - her GILLESPIE - and in the chequered his Party of Ireland - which JOHN GOOL

strategy in the national and class split between the Officials... these are largely covered by the raised before in the lifetime... here considered by PAUL... history of the Communist... JOHN GOODWILLIE looks at.

have moved the O'Donnell group, even in retrospect. The same propositions are accepted today by the Communist Party and by what is left of the Official Republicans. This is why O'Donnell is less than frank in resisting classification as a "communist". All along he was very close to the C.P., and especially so to Sean Murray, the source of many of his strategic ideas.

Small Farms

WHERE HE is to be distinguished from mainstream Stalinism is in his continuing preoccupation with the small farm countryside of the west of Ireland. His most successful agitations were carried out in this area and its everyday life is documented in his novels. De Valera once remarked petulantly that O'Donnell was always criticising him about emigration — even if O'Donnell had been in power it would have continued. "Yes", replied O'Donnell, "but the same people would not have emigrated". It is as well to remember that up to a million people have emigrated from the 26 Counties in the last 50 years, largely from the western seaboard. As O'Donnell remarks, "the small farmer was left out of the growing area created by tariff imposition, grants, loans, tax remissions to build up a native capitalist class. City workers scarcely noticed the country youths on their way to the emigrant ship".



Peadar O'Donnell

This left a society starved of resources, with its population structure weighing towards the very young and the very old, a prey to mental illness arising out of a celibacy rate of over 40 per cent, and beholden to a network of gombeen politicians operating a brokerage system of gifts and favours the net result of Fianna Fail rule and its consolidation of a native capitalist class.

But it does not follow from this, as O'Donnell thinks, that "the point of a rally against a Government is always at the point of sharpest attack on the most people. That makes the West the point of rally today." The small farmers have, in fact, never really been able to force themselves into the centre of Irish politics. During the Tan war for instance, the small farm areas were relatively quiet with the exception, perhaps, of West Cork. O'Donnell admits that Donegal was marginal to that war. This was partly because the Griffith/De Valera leadership actively discouraged land seizures in the small farm areas. During the Civil War the Republican leadership refused to take up the class issues of the time eventually remaining militarily isolated from workers' and small farmers' struggles.

This refusal was, indeed, Peadar O'Donnell's point of departure. But for all his often brilliant advocacy and propaganda he was left to initiate and sustain the land annuities campaign in the late 1920's virtually single-handed.

It was Fianna Fail which reaped the political advantages from the campaign, at first through the shrewd intervention of Colonel Maurice Moore which was later taken up by De Valera. Since the 1930's there have been few examples of small farmers

organising in their own interests and this remains true of the present period in which the E.E.C. farm modernisation scheme is decimating their ranks still further.

While it is true that the West of Ireland peasantry has been the most oppressed sector of the population for the last century, this is not to say that they have been the most exploited section. O'Donnell, of course, never considered the small farmers in isolation. He continually argued for the unity of small farmers and urban workers under the leadership of the working class. But he seems to understand this unity as one between two almost equally strong social forces. He has resisted the slogan and the programme for a workers' republic precisely because he felt it would antagonise the small farm countryside. In fact, of course, the workers are a qualitatively different social class. They are collectivised where the small farmers are scattered. They have access to national leadership and national cultures in the cities while the small farmers are remote from this.

Workers Power

Fundamentally it is only after the workers have achieved power that the problems of a small farm countryside and the structure of its agriculture can be tackled. This will be a long and necessarily slow process. This is not to say that there is no future in creating links between small farmers' and workers' struggles. It is to say that the origin of the most effective links that can be built will be located at the points of production where workers and small farmers meet, for example at meat factories, or through the increasing number of small farmers who are now working part-time in industry.

McInerney's book is organised around a long series of conversations which the author had with O'Donnell. The highlights of his career are broken down into chapters and very extensive quotations from O'Donnell are scattered through the text. This makes for an awkward presentation and often a very uncritical one, partly no doubt explained by McInerney's fulsome sympathy with his subject. But in a book from such an experienced journalist, one would have expected far better editing. There are scores of literal and printing mistakes throughout the text and more important, the style is repetitive in the extreme. It is nonetheless an important book and the history it records is well worth the attention of socialists and workers.

Peadar O'Donnell: Irish Social Rebel. By Michael McInerney. O'Brien Press £3.50

SIT-INS: A LOT TO LEARN

THE MOST effective response from workers when they are laid-off is to refuse to go and occupy the workplace. None of the sit-ins that have taken place — Armstrongs, Camac, Sunbeam etc. — were extended outside the particular factories and only the Armstrong and O'Connors sit-in demanded the retention of jobs. The rest were fought on secondary claims, like compensation or seniority. In no case was production carried on under workers control. All the sit-ins could have achieved much more. Here we take one example — Camac Casks — and go into the reasons behind the bosses' victory there. The Socialist Workers Movement were glad to lend support to the Camac workers and all criticism is made in that spirit and so that we all learn lessons from the mistakes of the past (most of which were repeated in all the sit-ins).

In the last issue of THE WORKER we had articles on the Guinness Cask-making factory (Camac Cask Co.) where thirty metal workers had decided to sit-in against a management who cut their wages by £11.00 or more. In the same article we reported the Sit-In which had taken place in the same factory, where 40 general workers were made redundant. Both Sit-Ins took place within a short time of each other, both groups of workers kept their action separate from each other and in both cases the Unions concerned gave the men no support. Instead they divided the men by going to the Labour Court, whereas the management stood firm, united and determined to win these battles. Both ended with what could be only described as a victory for the bosses. The first action ended with 40 redundancies, as the Labour Court recommended a lump sum, and a threat by Guinness of further sacking. The second action ended with something the same as what the men decided to reject five weeks earlier and an offer by Guinness of £100 loan to each man, (which if sacked in the meantime he will not have to pay back).

Why was the Sit-In tactic not realised to its full potential in both cases? Was it the best tactic in these cases or did the men not realise its potential? Often Sit-Ins are purely seen as a tactical improvement on conventional striking. It's warmer inside and so on. Such a view of the Sit-In tactic may have been the case here. But these views are dangerously narrow and lead to token occupations.

Let's look back at the Guinness Group... and particularly Camac Casks before the Sit-In. It's obvious to anyone that Guinness has been attacking its workers from all angles recently; voluntary redundancies, early retirements, sackings over minor things and a general testing of the workers' strength at every opportunity provided

the warm-up to the recent strike, the first in Guinness's in many years. In Camac the bosses were letting out rumours of total closure while at the same time building up stocks of casks (kegs). When the management said they were sacking 40 workers the workers replied by asking to be put on a 3 day week, a request which was refused. This was a reflection of the confusion of ideas within the workers' ranks, i.e. the tendency to accept managements thinking that they have a right to sack workers or to cut their wages because they're not part of managements plans for future profits. The prevailing ideas and attitudes of the workers involved largely determine the tactical development of the Sit-Ins.

TOKEN

In the event the Sit-Ins developed into token occupations which lead to boredom and demoralisation. The workers occupied the cold floor while the bosses sat up in their offices. Not all the workers stayed in at night. The factory continued to function; Camac vans were still on the road, imported casks were being used by the brewery. When a small group of actors wanted to put on a play for the workers management refused to let it take place. Management opened and closed the doors when they liked. In a statement by the workers they emphasised the peaceful nature of their actions, thus the Sit-In became quite respectable while at the same time remaining passive which of course the employers preferred. All calls on other workers were made mainly for financial help not for further action. The workers in Camac were reluctant to contact shop stewards in the brewery a few yards away. The unions ignored the demands of the men by going to the Labour Court. All these things helped to defeat the Sit-In.

Sitting in by itself is not enough. The occupation must be used as a centre for organising support, sending out pickets and arranging blacking. It should be the centre of work, not to be used for sulking but for action. The failure in Camac was that the Sit-In was not used to the full extent. From our mistakes we must learn our lessons: Use the Sit-In, Extend the fight, contact other shop stewards, form a joint committee against redundancies.

In issue 27 of the Worker we have a centre page spread on Sackings and Sit-Ins of which back copies are still available.

DAVE LLOYD

... DIRECTION

... change of line in the... led it on to the theory of the... fronts, under which the Comm... parties held back the workers in... to carry favour with a section of... middle class. Nowhere is this more... ally shown than on the cover... of the 'History', which... edition of the newspaper issue after... tremendous united victory of the... Protestant and Catholic working... in the unemployed relief riots of... The second story, under a head... which must have impressed any... instant readers — "Negotiations... Britain fail — Forward To United... 'Public!' — states: "Neither Oath... Empire and not a penny to British... socialism; no arbitration with British... socialism; non-payment of pensions... the ex-British bureaucracy and the... C.; the abolition of the Senate and... the disbandment of the C.I.D. — these... the demands of the toiling masses... Ireland." Not a socialist demand in... Anti-imperialists who were not... 'working-class must not be alienated.

Some problems obviously arose during the War. "In November 1939 the C.P.I. called for the withdrawal of the Six Counties from the war." A 1940 Manifesto declared: "No truce with capitalists who attack your wages" However, we are told, "the German Nazi attack on the Soviet Union... transformed the whole character of the war and of the world situation. The defeat of German Nazism became the overriding objective of the working people of the world... The opening of a Second Front (against Hitler) became the central feature of all the Party work... Any action which tended to retard or hold up the realisation of this aim was opposed by the Party. Industrial action for the solution of grievances was one of these and the Party was soon faced with just this kind of a problem." A dispute arose over the sacking of two shop stewards in an aircraft factory. "The Party leadership was faced with a difficult problem during this dispute. Some members who were shop stewards were only a short time in the Party and were faced with an agonising dilemma, with the Party policy of calling for a return to work and the pressure of their workmates in the factory to stay out. Party members were regarded as defecting from the traditional standpoint of supporting the workers at all times against the bosses." You can bet they were!

It is in the North that we see one of the Party's chief failures: they could get support on simple trade union issues, but their view of the national question ensured that this support never became political. From the thirties onwards, they insisted that "the national struggle is the way to the smashing of the class power of the

capitalists" (1933 speech of Sean Murray General Secretary). This is simply upside down. The national struggle cannot precede the class struggle, for Southern workers will not fight for the right to be exploited by Irish capitalists, and Northern Protestant workers will not fight for a united capitalist Ireland, from which they have nothing to gain. ONLY IF THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE IS FOUGHT AS A CLASS QUESTION can there be any hope of Protestant workers broadening their trade-union militancy into a struggle for working-class power — a struggle which would break down the sectarian barriers.

Distance

Instead of working for this, the Communist Party since the 1960s has preached the primacy of the civil rights struggles — which on its own has got nothing to offer the Protestant workers. And the Party's increasingly close links with the trade union bureaucracy prevents them even gaining from industrial militancy. It is some reflection of this distance from their once revolutionary past that the 'Outline History' gallops through the later period and skids to a halt about 1969. It's easier to live on past "glories".

Communist Party of Ireland. Outline History. New Books. 45 pence.

Galway Shop Stewards Begin The Fight

OVER 20 GALWAY City Shop Stewards and a few from the Gaeltacht attended a meeting in the Atlanta Hotel on Saturday, 22/3/1975. The first part of the meeting was addressed by a member of the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee. This speaker described the organisation of the Dublin Committee, the work it had done in getting the first form of the 1974 National Wage Agreement rejected, the work it was doing in fighting against the 1975 National Wage Agreement and the degree to which it had become a focus for workers who were on strike, helping them to win the support of other workers and co-ordinating strike support collections.

In the second half of the meeting the proposed 1975 National Wage Agreement was analysed and discussed. The following resolution was unanimously passed by the meeting: "That this meeting resolves to set up a Galway Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committee, to elect interim officers and to work to make the committee as representative as possible of rank and file workers in Galway City". Interim officers were then elected to form an interim Organising Committee. It was decided to distribute the leaflet of the 'National Federation of Shop Steward and Rank and File Committees' against the proposed 1975 National Wage Agreement.

Since then the organising committee has called a useful public meeting on the 1975 Agreement. The need to hold

discussions on its terms in work places and to insist that ballots be held at work was stressed and National Federation leaflets were issued for distribution. Speakers from the Dublin, Drogheda and Galway Committees analysed the details of the 1975 Agreement and explained how it would depress living standards and increase unemployment.

Shop Stewards and Rank and File representatives from Galway Gaeltacht present at these meetings are now coming together to set up the first Gaeltacht Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committee and have contacted the National Federation to send speakers to an inaugural meeting. The Connemara Gluaiseacht Cearta, the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Organisation, is putting resources into the organisation of this committee in joint action with the S.W.M. These committees must now begin to develop a fighting programme on wage control, unemployment, inflation, unionisation, democratisation of unions, repression, equal pay and opportunity for women etc. This must be an independent working class programme around which a vanguard can be created which, having broken with reformism and bourgeois ideas, can give political and organisational leadership to masses of workers searching for a complete and real solution to their problems.

Twists

The 'History' follows the twists and turns of Stalin's foreign policy... that what is missing is any idea... that there has been at any time inside... a Communist Party any internal... of opinion. But... a Communist Party in Ireland of... there was some relation in Ireland of... Trotsky's opposition... and his sympathisers in... the Communist Party, and not a... word of it appears in this book.

**JAMES
CONNOLLY**

Fighter for women's equality

THE ANNIVERSARY of James Connolly's death is always an occasion for leaders of the trade union movement and Labour Party to impudently claim some connection with this great revolutionary leader. Here, SHEILA DUNCAN looks at one neglected part of Connolly's thought and action - his commitment to the struggle of women to end female oppression.

IT'S amazing that Connolly took the woman question so seriously - not because socialists shouldn't take it seriously but because they so often don't. When they are up to their eyes in poverty, debts and politics there is more excuse for them than most. That's how Connolly lived most of his life, but he continually stressed the importance of organising women; he argued that capitalism used women and oppressed them in severe and specific ways.

If actions speak louder than words then Connolly's actions spoke out loud and clear. In March 1911, he had moved to Belfast after a long period in America. He became organiser of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and was involved in unionising dockers initially. In October, the mill girls came out on unofficial strike. They worked in grim conditions, were paid half of a man's wage and now had to work under new rules: no talking, no singing, no laughing and extra penalties for lateness.

A textile workers union already existed but it was for the more skilled - mainly Protestant - workers and showed no interest in helping

the girls. Connolly organised them, spoke at their meetings, raised money for their strike fund. The bosses wouldn't negotiate so Connolly convinced the girls to go back to work and disobey all rules - which they did, to a woman. 18,000 women had been organised:

IWWU

Larkin had been mainly responsible for setting up the Irish Transport Workers Union in 1909 - when Connolly was in America - and the rules said that no women could join. In 1911, Larkin along with Connolly set up the Women Workers Union which was seen from the start as being under the umbrella of the Transport - essentially as its female section - and remained such until 1918 when women could join the I.T. proper. Women in printing, laundry and general trades were organised into the I.W.W.U. - many of them working in the worst industrial conditions in Europe.

In 1914, when Delia Larkin left the Women Workers Union and the country in disgust, Connolly found two rank and file members of the I.W.W.U. to take over, gave them help and encouragement and an office in Liberty Hall. He spoke at meetings, helped get the union established in local factories and started internal re-organisation of the Women Workers Union. He was involved in organising women in Jacob's and helped them in their 1913 strike. Never did he see women as a hopeless cause. Never did he see them as second, third or last priority.

But Connolly's concern with women didn't begin and end at the factory gate. He saw that women's oppression, spread out from the factory, spread over and above it. He saw that women's oppression was part of the whole system. So he supported women's organisations

agitating for women's rights. At this stage the main such organisations were those of the suffragettes.

Socialist condemnation of middle class suffragette movements has echoed down the years of history easily to be taken up and applied to the new women's liberation movements which started in the 60's. Connolly wasn't fooled. He addressed suffragette meetings, he sent messages of support to Franchise Leagues in England. He spoke on Women's Rights Platforms. All this at a time when many active women in the national struggle were saying that the fight for the vote was a diversion.

"We must cheer all the louder", he said "If the woman's army forges ahead of the militant army of labour. But whosoever carries the outworks of the citadel of oppression, the working class alone can raze it to the ground".

He realised that the struggle for the vote wasn't enough but, more than that, he realised that when an oppressed group began to move they had to be supported. Interestingly enough, it was not trade unionists or socialists who arranged for the children of the 1913 Dublin Lock-Out to go to England away from hunger and misery - it was a group of Labour Party suffragettes.

Connolly was an activist but his activity was always tied up with his theory. He drew political conclusions from his working class agitation and he approached his activity directed by his political understanding. He didn't just organise women. He attempted to understand their position in society: "Capitalism means that the weakest go to the wall and the weakest means in practice, the most scrupulous, the gentlest, the most humane... militant women couldn't fail to see that capitalism penalised human beings for just those characteristics of which women themselves were meant to be the most complete embodiment."

He saw that girls were conditioned to be sweet and gentle and then had to work in filth and squalor - in factories or on a small farm. Many of

them would have to take the boat to England. Here Connolly's occasional moralism slightly gets the better of him. Bad and all as conditions were for Irish girls - and they were bad - to talk of the "moral murder of countless Irish maidens" in the sordid cities of England plays too easily into the hands of Catholic bishops and bigots who believe that an Irish soul is forever lost when it has been contaminated by Protestant English air. But Connolly's point still stands. Imperialism meant emigration and young country women - the most common emigrants - were

he tried for the length of his life to marry religion and socialism. It had to be an uneasy marriage, for religion affects the way people see the world and often makes them feel that as human beings they do not have, nor can they have, any control over the world.

This did affect Connolly's position on women for in some ways he was tied to the view of goodness, motherliness and kindness as basic characteristics of women. He did not argue that these qualities were merely social not natural, but rather that capitalism made women suffer for these qualities



Women's working conditions as Connolly knew them

the least prepared for the life of hardship and loneliness that awaited them.

Connolly saw too that the family was not sacrosanct in capitalism for all that was talked about it. Greed and misery ate into it. But unlike a lot of socialists, he did think that families and monogamy would carry on under socialism; indeed, that socialism would perfect them.

He believed that a socialist revolution would only solve the economic side of the Women Question. Many other ideas would have to be resolved after it. Similarly, he did not think that socialists had to be atheists and

which were naturally theirs.

Criticisms can be made of this position. I have indicated some. But James Connolly must go down in history as a man who never dodged the women question, who recognised female oppression and fought it where it can most effectively be fought - on the factory floor.

It took a great man to see and do these things, to realise that the oppressed must be supported, to quash all desire to be dogmatic even with all his knowledge and experience. The last word is his: "None so fitted to break the chains as those who wear them; none so well equipped to decide what is a fetter."

Victory in IndoChina

PHNOM PENH has fallen, and Saigon is about to fall. Or should it be "risen" and "rise"? While the Press has been screaming about the "Reds rolling on", the real facts about popular support for the Khmer Rouge and the NLF have been trickling out. The state troops in Phnom Penh didn't resist the liberation of the capital. They quickly ran up the white flags and went out to meet the rebels, handing over their arms and taking off their uniforms. There were mass demonstrations in support of the rebels. In Saigon, a journalist was shot by police for daring to write the truth about the "fall" of a Southern Vietnamese town; that it was taken over by a popular revolt against the Thieu regime.

These further defeats for American policy in South-East Asia can only add to the crisis of confidence in the US ruling class already evident from the deep divisions about war credits. But it also adds to the problems of the Russian ruling class in securing a "detente" on a world scale. The Russians were slow to recognise the Cambodian rebels as the legitimate representatives of the Cambodian people - it took them over three years, in fact. They gave the rebels no military support - in spite of the "red scare" and in spite of the fact that some of the leaders were pro-Moscow communists. Representatives of the Lon Nol regime were in Moscow until late March of this year.

But neither the defeat for the Americans nor the embarrassment for the Russians means that we are about to see genuine workers' states established in either Vietnam or Cambodia. The leadership of the national liberation forces in both cases is mainly middle class, nationalist and/or Stalinist. And if revolutionary working class movements can now develop in both places - of course, their possible base is much stronger in Vietnam than Cambodia - it will be in spite of this leadership, not because of it.

If the press go on with their horror stories about the "Reds" as they did with their sick stories about orphans, remember most of those weren't orphans at all but the children of South Vietnamese officials who had been got on to the planes. When that was revealed, the press buried the news at the bottom of their stories.

I NOTICED without surprise the remarks of Cathal Newcombe, a never-before-heard-of Official Republican candidate in the Convention elections, on the disappearance of the two members of the UDA - Messrs. McVeigh and Douglas. Newcombe expressed his deep concern at the unfortunate event and said he hoped the two men would be returned 'safe and unharmed'. McVeigh is a member of the UDA's inner council which two days prior to Newcombe's comments ordered the bombing of the Strand Bar in East Belfast in which four women and two men were killed. The UDA has promised even more sectarian killings in the near future, on top of the dozens - they have already committed this year. The Officials, however, choosing to ignore reality, continue to harbour dangerous illusions in the 'proletarian' UDA which they see as a potential revolutionary socialist organisation.

YOU PICK up news in the strangest places. A few days before the Wage Agreement vote I got a lift to Navan from a truck driver from the ITGWU No. 16 Branch. He showed me a letter which had been sent out by the Branch Committee to every Shop Steward. It seems that old hard-line Branch Secretary Mick McDermott, is determined to crack down on rank and file militants. The letter threatened any member who placed an unofficial picket and any member who REFUSED TO PASS such a picket with expulsion from the union. There's a choice for a trade union to give it's members: scab on your mates or lose your job.

By a strange coincidence this letter arrived in the same post as the info on

the National Wage Agreement which had its own anti-strike clauses. So now the members of No. 16 Branch have not only to deal with the frontal assault of the NWA but also Mick McDermott's stab in the back.

Not that I'm always against people being expelled from unions. The No. 7 Branch of the ITGWU passed a resolution recently aimed at expelling that well-known "worker" Conor Cruise O'Brien.

Last month I told you about the £75,000 p.a. paid to Danish shipyard guru Ivor Hoppe in his post as managing director of Harland and Wolff. The salary was tax free and paid into a Swiss account. Now I see that the house supplied to Hoppe, gratis, by the yard, has come up for sale. If you're interested, it is situated down in the Mournes, has six main bed-rooms, four bathrooms, its own library and an indoor swimming pool. Price? a mere £120,000, which, on a 25 year mortgage, will cost you only £300 per week. Losses on contracts entered into under Hoppe's benign management are now expected to cost the tax payer £60 million.

IAN PAISLEY, that renowned pacifist, launched a bitter attack on the loyalist paramilitaries for their recent murder campaign. Apart from the fact that no-one really took him seriously, it should be pointed out that the hooded UVF officer who appeared on TV at the same time claiming responsibility for the murder of a number of Catholics, was once the organiser of Paisley's Ulster Protestant Volunteers. Rumour has it the two men are still on first name terms.

Snooping about

'THE Trade Unions, North and South, are totally against this type of legislation. The Labour Party is totally against it. Every anti-Unionist element is also against it.' So said Michael Mullen, Sec. of the ITGWU explaining to the Senate his reasons for voting against the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Bill.

Right on Michael, I'm 100% behind you on that one. But hold on, wait a minute! What's that fella over there doing? It can't be. It is! Fintan Kennedy, General President of the same union, voting FOR the bill. I hope that one or the other of them had the grace to blush.

Talking about repressive legislation, I wonder how many people are aware of the provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Bill 1973, which Brendan Corish recently re-introduced in the Dail. Section 23-26 allows Gardaí to search any building, land, vehicle etc. at all reasonable times, without a search warrant. The only necessary justification is that the Gardaí think or suspect that the law has been, is being, or is about to be broken. And as if that didn't give our baton-swinging guardians of peace sufficient powers to protect us against the horrors of drug abuse, the proposed legislation allows them to inspect and take copies of any documents they may find. And there was I, thinking it was drugs they were trying to control...

ABOUT 18 MONTHS ago, the general workers in Waterford Glass won an increase on their basic rate which was above the terms of the National Wage Agreement. This year again they had no option but to look for another increase as price rises were stripping away the value of their wage rises. But at a meeting with Managing Director, Noel Griffin, they were informed that there was "no more cake".

But only a week later enough cake was found to sponsor a race at Goodwood in England, to the tune of £7,000. The race will be called the Waterford Crystal Mile, and prizes will include pieces of hand-cut crystal. A further £4,000 was found to sponsor two other races, at £1,000 each.

The chairman of Goodwood - a Lord of course - now has a "more optimistic interpretation of the future." You bet (he bet) he has. But the general workers in Waterford Glass have good reason to be pessimistic about the ravages of inflation on their wages. The company's profits of over £2 million (after tax) is enough cake to start eating into - National Wage Agreement or no National Wage Agreement.

MARY BURNS

'ABORTION' is a forbidden word in Ireland. However, many women know only too well what it means — for 2,000 women from the 32 counties it meant a boat trip in 1973. The issue has for so long remained under the carpet, occasionally emerging in a barrage of hypocritical moralising on the part of those who do not suffer the social and economic problems which drive millions of women throughout the world to visit backstreet shops whose lethal methods often result in death for the woman.

The situation is more immediate in the rest of Europe — at present, five countries allow abortion on demand in the early stages of pregnancy, (Austria, Denmark, France, Holland and Sweden); three more allow abortion, under flexible conditions (Britain, Norway and Finland). There is however, a widespread tightening of the abortion laws, in keeping with the general economic, social and political repression which has been gathering in the last few months. In Germany, abortion remains a punishable crime, subject to imprisonment of up to ten years. There have been court cases in Italy and the U.S.A. and the law is being tightened in Britain.

There are a number of lessons that Irishwomen can learn, particularly from the Italian situation. The abortion issue was first raised in September 1973, when a number of advisory centres were established. The founder, Signora Adele Faccio, was arrested in January of this year, but not before the abortion issue had become a heated political controversy.

Abortion; a world-wide issue

Demonstrations, petitions and the revelation that three million women annually visit the back-street butchers, with over 2,000 fatalities, contributed to the ruling of the Italian Constitutional Court in March of this year that the constitutional rights of the mother take precedence over those of the embryo, which "is not yet a person". All the constitutional parties are at present drafting Abortion Bills — stung into action by the highly organised and effective pro-abortion lobby in Italy, and despite the pressure from the Vatican.

The British Abortion Laws are at present under review. The proposed changes would have widespread consequences. The present law has enabled working class women to obtain what better-off women had always been able to afford. Further restrictions will reverse the situation: if you had money, there was no problem, if not you might die at the hands of the backstreet butchers. The probable introduction of residence qualification for foreigners will, of course, apply to women from the 26 Counties. The number of Irishwomen seeking abortions in Britain is high: in 1973, 1,193 from the 26 Counties and 1,007 from the 6 Counties — and the true figure could be estimated at 20% higher than this.

These Irishwomen who have gone to Britain, and the many more that have suffered in the Dublin backstreets, know only too well the attitudes to abortion which predominate in the 26 Counties. It is constantly alleged that abortion is murder, or worse.

The attitude of the Catholic Church has not always been consistent on this thorny problem. Eminent saints such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas declared that termination of pregnancy was permissible 40 days after conception for male embryos, and 80 days after conception for female embryos, as it was at this stage that the embryo magically acquired a 'soul', and then became a sacred being.

The Church has changed its attitude so that the potential life of a semi-formed tissue, is of more importance than the life of the woman who is carrying it. She is dispensable, if she is not enacting her assigned role — motherhood. There is no adequate way of showing that the embryo already possesses characteristics entitling it to equal rights of human beings. If compulsive pregnancy causes actual misery, or the misery a potential mother is likely to experience, surely her rights come first.

hypocrisy

The attitude of the Catholic Church and the political establishment towards murder is in any case riddled with hypocrisy; it is not murder when a man dies on a building site because of inadequate safety precautions, it becomes "a tragic accident". It is not murder when a soldier shoots a civilian in the back, it is "self-defence". The same criteria applies to old-age pensioners who starve and freeze to death because they cannot afford warmth and food, because the values of our



German law-lords pronounce ruling on abortion

WHEN THE French Cardinal Marty declared earlier this year that abortion could in no way be legitimate, he got the following answer from a Dominican priest Father Roqueblo:

"What could justify abortion is that it might, under certain circumstances, be the only means to restore the threatened health of a woman or of a family."

Father Roqueblo presented his case "against those who for so long have based the Church's teaching on the repression of sexuality and who try in this way to impose burdens on others — right into their private lives — burdens which can't affect them in the slightest."

society do not extend that far. Yet it is murder for a woman to have an abortion, in an attempt to remain alive and sane, in a society where she has only two alternatives — virgin or mother.

The education system, the economic system and social attitudes are all geared to the idea that women stay at home producing babies, and thus provide a stable basis for the consumer society. Anything that upsets this social and economic inequality, is resisted by the church, which attempts to maintain the status quo with the idea that sex which does not result in reproduction is sinful.

Anyone is free to hold the opinion that sex is bad, and to abstain from sex as an individual, but what right do they have to inflict that view on others? A woman's ability and freedom to control her reproductive organs is essential for her liberation. At present, women are legally prevented from having this fundamental choice.

Contraceptives are not the only answer. Many women are physically unsuited to the pill. Other methods of contraception are notoriously unreliable. So that still leaves the question of an unwanted pregnancy.

Women should fight for the right to determine their own lives. This involves organisation in the fight for contraception and for abortion on demand — that means when a woman wants it. It is only when these demands are met that women will be able to take a full part in the struggle against social and economic discrimination which classes 51 per cent of the population as second class citizens.

The real murderer of a foetus is never the woman carrying it but the society in which we live.

CATHERINE WHITTY



Maoist rally in Lisbon — before MRPP was banned

after they had been asked by the government to study a plan to reorient production from cars to tractors. The workers immediately occupied the plant, locked out the management and proceeded to draw up their own plan to keep the factory going, producing tractors with state investment but under workers' control of day to day production.

The Ford workers' experience is by no means unique. At the end of April some 300 factories were occupied throughout the country for the most part to prevent redundancies and economic sabotage by the bosses. In the Lisbon area a committee has been formed to co-ordinate the struggles in some 43 different factories.

On the wider political horizon the workers have also demonstrated their strength and independence. Immediately word was received of the attempted counter-coup on March 11th, check points were erected all around Lisbon and workers surrounded barracks and fraternised with the rank and file troops.

Since then the government has announced the nationalisation of up to 60% of industry, largely in response to the workers' initiatives.

Marxists use the term 'dual power' for situations of this sort — when the workers are in effective control of the economy and can prevent the state from taking the political initiative in the interests of the ruling class. Spain in the summer of 1936 and Russia in the autumn of 1917 are examples. The main lesson to be learnt from these experiences is that unless the opportunities are seized rapidly to take state power the ruling class will regroup and take the offensive again; there can be only one victor in these situations.

But organisation is needed to enable the working class to take these opportunities and this is what the Portuguese workers lack. To the left of the Communist party there are a wide variety of groups, some of which have a significant degree of support among workers. Indeed the party has had to shift its propaganda leftwards to prevent an erosion of its base. But the groups are too splintered and insufficiently broadly based to give real leadership to the class. Remedying this is the most urgent task facing Portuguese revolutionaries.

ALLIANCE

Some of the Maoist groups refer to the C.P. as 'social fascist' a term used in the late 1920's by Stalinists to describe the social democratic parties, which they regarded as a greater danger than the fascists proper, since they stood in the way of revolution. It is a mistaken characterisation of the Portuguese C.P. however, which should be regarded as a mass reformist party with a Stalinist core. The party is doing its best to consolidate an alliance with the radical officers in the Armed Forces Movement. In so far as this is successful it will be at the expense of the independent workers' movement. But the armed forces are not aloof from conflicts in the wider society. Although the A.F.M. is in the ascendant and receives the lion's share of publicity the majority of officers are probably moving to the right. This has been counteracted by the A.F.M. turning to the private soldiers many of whom will refuse to move against workers in struggle.

DUAL POWER IN PORTUGAL

ONE RECENT incident highlights what is going on in Portugal. As in other unevenly developed right-wing regimes — Indonesia and Brazil are examples — the multinational car companies were attracted there after the war to supply the local middle class market. In the last year new class and production priorities have emerged. The country's agricultural system is grossly underdeveloped for example. If vehicles are to be produced what is needed are tractors not private motor cars.

Now the multinational companies were slotted into the fascist regime both economically and politically and they have been unwilling, to say the least, to adapt since. There is plenty of evidence, indeed, to show that collectively they have been sabotaging the economy in an attempt to facilitate Portuguese reaction. The car companies, in particular, have been loath to go along with the new priorities. Recently Fords in Lisbon showed signs of wanting to close down their plant and move their machinery out of the country

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I WAS interested in Mary Burns' comment on 'Keeping It In The Family' in a recent edition of THE WORKER. This mentioned the workers in Shaw's Department Store, Waterford, and said that they had looked around before joining a union. This particular reference was made to the workers who joined the ITGWU.

I have been a member of this union for nearly a year and I have come into many conflicts with management. On one occasion when I had to leave work because of illness, the manager threatened me saying I might not get my job back on Monday. Immediately on return I informed my shop steward (whom I had tried to contact many times on the phone but was cut off each time) of the situation and produced a doctor's note as proof of my illness. But he refused to represent me and would not contact the Branch Secretary.

When I produced the doctor's note to the manager and asked for an apology he admitted to threatening me with the sack but refused to apologise. However, after a week of trying to contact the Branch Secretary my case was taken up and an apology received.

Being a new member of the union I was shocked at the lack of shop-floor representation. After consultation with other members I was informed of many dissatisfactions with the committee and the infrequency of the Branch Secretary's visits. Many girls had received similar treatment from the management and no union protection.

With this in mind, I called on the Branch Secretary to hold a meeting where these criticisms of the committee could be discussed. It appeared to be the general feeling that the shop steward was in no position to represent the shop floor workers as he was a Buyer. At the meeting only two girls spoke of the general dissatisfaction with the representation. The girls were not used to going to meetings and in fact were never encouraged to voice their opinions, but the majority of them agreed and had asked the two girls to point out their case. The Branch Secretary insisted that he was the only one getting

paid for doing the job and claimed we could not expect immediate action off any of the committee. But if a girl is threatened with the sack is immediate action not necessary?

The Branch Secretary would do well to remember he is paid for that job by the members of the union.

As my experience of the union grew, so did my dissatisfaction. At another meeting before Christmas a firm decision was taken to turn down a management request to stay open till nine o'clock. At this meeting the shop steward said that all should abide by the decision. But the very next day he tried his best to have the decision changed and told shop assistants it was up to them if they wanted to work. This caused disagreements between members of the committee.

In a further attempt to get the workers to change their minds the shop steward arranged a meeting on the premises and invited the manager to speak to us.

I immediately contacted the union office, couldn't get the Branch Secretary and was put on to his assistant. He encouraged me to play along with management and used the very tricks the management were using, saying that jobs were scarce and I would want to hold on to my job.

It's true, as Mary Burns said, that there's a choice of unions in Shaw's and Mr. Reid's union (I.U.D.W.C.) which she mentioned would appear to be already playing management's game. Their shop steward is a shop assistant who will also become a painter or an electrician if requested by management.

The workers in Shaw's must demand adequate representation and elect a committee which will do the job. They must also stand behind any decisions taken at meetings. And only by attending all meetings can they be sure of the right decisions being taken. It's not enough to criticise the committee without committing themselves to fight to maintain and improve conditions which the trade union movement has fought for so long.

SHAW'S WORKER

British CONvention

IT MUST have been some particularly nasty streak in the British Labour Government that made them fix May Day as the election day for the Northern Convention.

The Convention, according to a British government spokesman "will be a forum expressing the wishes of all the Ulster people and it is the British government's intention to implement whatever decision this forum arrives at so long as power-sharing is at its core." But such a statement only covers the reality behind the government's hypocritical concern for "the people of Ulster".

May strike

It was the reactionary, right-wing, anti-democratic Ulster Workers' Council strike last May which showed the British government (and some socialists and republicans, too) that the Six County state cannot be reformed and that any attempts to do this - for whatever reasons - are doomed to fail. At the time of that strike it became clear that the Labour Government had backed down to the loyalist thugs. In doing this they strengthened and unified loyalism which had been fragmenting: they gave loyalists reason to believe that they could win an outright victory.

The British government has changed pace and direction in order to 'hold the line' against a total capitulation to loyalism. They are attempting to "ulsterise" the conflict. The main purpose of the Convention is to convince all those taking part that they have to compromise on their most "extreme" demands - the SDLP on the Irish dimension, and the loyalists on their complete opposition to any form of power-sharing. The only thing that could come out of the Convention would be a re-constituted Northern state, may be different in words but still the same in essential detail - discrimination, unemployment, sectarianism, repression, low wages. The SDLP will be part of the new State as the sauce disguising the rotten meat.

The British government has been helped by a number of things. There is a strong feeling for peace among the anti-Unionist working class - the bombing campaign has contributed to that. The Church has, of course, weighed in heavily for a ceasefire. The continuing sectarian killings by loyalists (and the inevitable reprisals) have only increased their credibility.

At the same time, the splits among the loyalists have shown them incapable of sticking to a "respectable" working class loyalism. Many on that side are frustrated by the gangsterism.

The British have hoped for a strengthening of the influence of the moderates as a result of these things. And the Provos

have accommodated to the situation by prolonging the second ceasefire. They saw, unclearly as always, the deep confusion within the Catholic section of the working class - and the dissatisfaction over the question of internment, still the single most burning grievance. None of the organisations claiming to lead Catholic workers has been able to maintain a movement against it. The military struggle seemed to many to be at this point in time self-defeating.

But for the ceasefire to strengthen the "moderates" politically other factors also had to be guaranteed. The sabre-rattling of the loyalists had to stop, but while Paisley Craig and West were quieter the rate of sectarian killings increased enormously. The ceasefire was no defence for the Catholic population. Indeed, British Army activity in Catholic areas was maintained. Whatever the intentions of Merlyn Rees, the Army was still pursuing its aim of defeating the IRA as a step to reaching a compromise with loyalism.

The British Army regards the ceasefire and the Convention as irrelevant to its tasks. Their way of avoiding a confrontation with the loyalists is to do a deal over the dead body of the Provisional IRA. Only then can the compromises be made.

The U.U.U.C. sees the Convention as a way of consolidating the victory won last year on the streets. They intend to restore Orange-Unionist control. The SDLP, Alliance and Faulkner Unionists, who never tire of congratulating each



Vanguard Leader William Craig

other, are left with the job of salvaging something from the Sunningdale era, indeed salvaging anything to appease their followers. Even SDLP members feel unhappy about the lowering of their sights. As the crisis deepens - and the Convention itself may only delay the process slightly - splits are bound to occur.

This, then, is the context in which the elections take place, one in which every major force is divided, but the loyalists clearly have the upper hand and can call the tune. It makes it absurd for the Official Republicans to talk of using the Convention to talk to loyalists openly and seriously. Certainly they have to be talked to, certainly the cracks which are obvious have to be exploited to encourage a radical break from the sectarian leadership. But that will not be done through the Convention.

The Convention elections, and the Convention itself, might, however, have been used as a platform to expose British designs and to put forward the need to organise united action against repression and workers' action against unemployment, wage cuts and all attacks on living standards and democratic rights. Not, of course, to convince others in the Convention, but to reach those who because they have been wearied by other failures will still look towards such an institution for some guidance. Whether we like it or not, the majority of working class people will vote. And if there was any part standing on a clear anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist platform we would have said: make your protest clear by voting for them.

There is no such party with an organised coherent voice among even a small section of the anti-Unionist workers. We have in the past urged a protest vote for the Official Republicans where they have stood, but their compromises are now so great that we cannot do that, and their actions have largely prevented another organisation, the IRSP, from putting its programme forward. The Official's stand in the Convention elections is marked by an even larger dose of opportunism than most of their actions. So, the Socialist Workers Movement called for abstention in the elections. (The adventurist stand of the C.P.I. (Marxist-Leninist) doesn't change that).

But that decision - to vote or not to vote - pales into insignificance beside the major tasks of the day, which would have to be taken up one way or another. The first one is the building of a united front against repression and the British Army's presence. This is the only way of uniting workers, republicans and socialists and creating a movement which can resist any loyalist attacks. The Convention may make that more difficult, but it resolves nothing. The struggle for a mass movement against imperialism goes on.

EDWARD BELL

Technicians take on Unidare

ON THURSDAY 10 April a Unidare striker lay down in front of a Greenore Ferry truck which was driving through the pickets. The driver got out, kicked him in the ribs and pulled him out of the way. The police did the same dirty work. According to the 'Irish People', the strikers "were manhandled by police who intervened to allow trucks to pass the picket line." While many lorries passed the AUEW-TASS official picket - which the company stated was unofficial - many more respected it, with obvious effects for Unidare.

Unfortunately, the general workers were instructed by their union, No. 14 Branch ITGWU, to pass the pickets and they continued to work while the draughtsmen, computer workers, technicians, fitters, electricians and some supervisors were out on strike.

Technicians and draughtsmen represented by the No. 1 Branch of the Technical and Supervisory Section (TASS) of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers were falling way behind the CPU Planners and outside technicians in pay. The planners have less qualifications than the technicians and draughtsmen. TASS had a claim in for parity for TWO YEARS.

Some managers and supervisors joined the No. 3 Branch of Tass and these were seeking union recognition. Some of these have been scabs who mocked ITGWU strikers in the past and some had left the ITGWU before rather than strike. There are some, too, who are proper tyrants towards the workers underneath them. The ITGWU have an Agreement with Unidare that clerical and supervisory workers be represented by the No. 2 Branch of the ITGWU. Also, TASS is suspended from Congress. All this led to the instruction of the ITGWU to its members to pass the pickets when the two claims - parity for one group and recognition for another - were put together and strike action taken. The official reason given for passing was that TASS was outside Congress (and therefore couldn't apply for an all-out picket). The unofficial reason - the red herring - broadcast by ITGWU branch officials and those in favour of passing was that the managers were scabs in the past. The real reason of course is that these same officials have always opposed industrial action in Unidare.

Whatever about managers scabbing in the past what about the TASS technicians on strike for money? Should they be passed? One of the TASS managers said, "I passed pickets in the past, but that's

because I wasn't in a union." It would be better if the supervisors were in the ITGWU (we workers could keep some kind of check on them that way) but its also better that they are in TASS THAN IN NO UNION AT ALL. They could be, mistaken and even snobbish in not joining the ITGWU, but in the end they have the right to join the union of their choice. Many of these people were never in a union before, Unidare is not a union or closed shop for clerical workers, and this Agreement that only the No. 2 Branch of the ITGWU represent those workers is just like the Site Agreement for the general workers - an agreement made over our heads. The action of the managers - bad and all as some of them are - in joining TASS is spreading trade unionism to new members, not attacking it. These twenty or so supervisors in fact applied for membership of the No. 2 Branch over a year ago. They were refused their own section and joined TASS instead.

possible rift

But the worst part of passing these pickets is the possible rift it will make between the craftsmen and the general workers. Some fitters stayed out reluctantly, but others who didn't have to and were advised not to do so by their unions (AUEW, NEETU & ETU) also stayed out. It will be all that much easier for them to pass our pickets in the future. In fact, the picket line - as an all-out weapon of trade unionists due the respect of every worker - was reduced at Unidare to a healthy stroll for the picketers up and down the gates. The ITGWU were TEACHING THEIR MEMBERS TO PASS PICKETS.

strike-breaking

We are not for one moment saying that the ITGWU rank-and-file were scabbing at Unidare. But the actions of the ITGWU officials could very well merit that word. Two weeks strike notice was given by TASS yet the ITGWU Section Committee only met on the day (Sunday) before the strike. There was no information or opportunity for discussion given to the general workers before they were instructed Monday morning to pass the pickets. A Section general meeting was scheduled for the following Thursday, but was then cancelled. A call was made at the No. 14 Branch AGM to have a general meeting of the Section. It was ignored by the platform. Whatever about instructing US to pass, the advice of Liberty Hall to all outside drivers to pass the pickets is pure strike-breaking.

Needless to say working-on goes against the grain of many Unidare ITGWU workers. On the first day some Unidare drivers stayed out. One of them, Christy Conroy, stayed out for three days and was told in Liberty Hall that he could get nothing, and had to do with £28 that week.

The TASS picketers did not lean on the general workers and understood the position they were in. But the ITGWU workers could still help the strikers. They should ensure that no maintenance men's work is done by foremen, which happened. They might have pressed for an immediate mass meeting of all general workers to review - democratically - the situation. At this they could have called for an unofficial sympathetic strike. Even one half-day strike a week (a different day in each factory) would have bitten at the company.

The TASS handling of the strike must be criticised. One, the two strikes together led to confusion. A separate fight for the parity claim would have received more sympathy from the ITGWU rank and file. Second, if TASS did issue leaflets explaining their case to the general workers - which is uncertain - they made little effort to get them into everybody's hands.

The lack of communication between general and craft workers before this strike shows up the shortcomings of the Unidare Joint Works Council. ALL shop stewards should be on this and all common issues should be fully trashed out at Council meetings.

And who benefits from all this disunity? The Unidare management who said in their last annual statement, "Profits are still not high enough" and who use lies and the police against workers looking for what is theirs.

UNIDARE ITGWU WORKER

LATE NEWS:

THE Tass members received a measure of union recognition from the company and the ITGWU and TASS are working out an agreement. A new pay scale was also won by the technicians. The strikers returned to work while the Labour Court deals with further negotiations. The Labour Court will not meet on the issues until late May.

MORE FOR SACK AT CROWN CONTROL

AFTER THE SACKING of 83 men Crown Control Management launched an all out attack on shop floor organisation in the factory. Faced with difficulties in a slump situation, they have decided to cut down on "labour costs" and, therefore, on union organisation in the factory.

As we reported last month, management dismissed one of the leading shop stewards for using "bad language" to the foreman. It was a clear case of victimisation. The union took his case to the Labour Court. Crown Control management quickly realised that they had no case against the steward so they pulled out of the Labour Court procedure.

However, immediate action was taken by the union - The Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW). An official strike was called, demanding that Crown reopen the submission to the Labour Court.

The Galway branch of the SWM issued a factory bulletin: "If you have the power to push the management

in a way they don't want" we said, then why not call for the immediate re-instatement of the shop steward?" In other words, instead of suffering the delays of the Labour Court, workers at Crown should rely on their collective strength to get the shop steward back in.

Another issue looms behind the strike. The Crown management are preparing to push another 20 workers through the gate. They are counting on smashing all potential opposition first and then weeding out other men as they see fit.

The only way workers can fight these redundancies is by demanding work-sharing on full pay. Demanding that the first in are the last out is no solution. If workers win this battle, they will have more confidence to fight all other attacks on their jobs and organisation.

The Crown Control strike has been taken up as a major issue by the Galway Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committees which has representatives from most of the big factories in the city. They have issued appeal sheets and called a general meeting of all Galway stewards in an effort to co-ordinate the solidarity campaign. In this way the committee is proving itself to be a new and valuable weapon in the arsenal of the Irish working class.