



Noel Browne, TD

the worker

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Paper of the Socialist Workers Movement

FIRST STEPS FOR THE SLP

THE SOCIALIST labour Party conference which was held in November differed in one respect from the old Labour Party - it was run democratically. There were no orchestrated standing ovations; no long windy speeches from the leadership; no elimination of controversial resolutions. The existing leadership was defeated several times in the voting.

And that sums up a lot about the SLP. Of all the major parties on the left, it is clearly the most democratic. This was particularly evident when delegates accepted the rights for 'tendencies' (organised groups in the party which will argue for particular positions) - to exist within its ranks. In doing so, they took the first step in ensuring that the policies of the SLP are the product of real debate and discussion by the rank and file.

The constitution of the SLP is probably the most radical and revolutionary of any major party since the Republican Congress in the 1930s. Delegates overwhelmingly rejected the policy of an independent 6 county state and called for immediate withdrawal of the British Army. They pledged themselves to work to "build strong rank and file organisations on the shop floor and within the unions, in order to enlarge democracy and ensure the unions fight in the interest of the ir membership." They also agreed on the need to fight for "workers control of hiring and firing and workers control of production speeds and manning levels." In passing such resolutions, the majority of delegates showed that they were not interested in establishing simply an updated version of the Labour Party.

RESOLUTIONS

But the real test of a party is not the resolutions it passes. The decisive break with the Labour Party tradition can only be made in the methods and activities of the new party. It is only by fighting in the unions for direct action to solve the problems of unemployment, repression and falling living standards that the SLP will make its break with the reformism of the Labour Party.

Yet it is precisely this that the existing leadership of the SLP does not understand. Matt Merrigan claimed that the function of the party was not

to 'interfere in the internal affairs of unions.' Yet it is only by organising inside the unions against a bureaucracy that continually sells out and for rank and file action that the party can implement its own resolutions which call for workers control. Organising in the unions and

in the workplaces means building where the working class has its real strength. And it is the power of union and workplace organisation which needs to be harnessed if we are to begin to implement radical resolutions.

In the coming months, the SLP has a golden opportunity to establish its credibility and its base among trade unionists.

WAGES

The bosses and their friends in Fianna Fail are trying to shackle us with a 5% limit on our wages. Hooked on compromise, the trade union leadership will bend and shadow box until they capitulate to a new version of a National Wage Agreement. But a party like the SLP can prevent such a sell-out. If its members organise in each union and build rank and file groups with their fellow trade unionists to oppose the Wage Agreement, then they can swing

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Let's make it a New Year resolution...

NO MORE WAGE CUTS!



London building workers march to a firmen's picket to show their support. The firemen are leading the fight to smash British wage restraint.

WE CAN BE SURE that the bosses and the politicians were relieved at the decision of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to open up negotiations for a new National Wage Agreement.

But workers can take very little satisfaction in their dwindling pay packets or in the prospect that more of the same faces them in 1978 if Congress (and the bosses) have their way. The Central Bank estimates inflation at 14% for the year. That means a loss of around 7% for a married man on £50 a week with two children under the terms of this Agreement.

NEGOTIATIONS

The WUI and the ITGWU had already voted for entrance into negotiations. The national ballot of ITGWU members took place against the background of a recommendation from its National Executive Council for a "yes"

vote and a set of guidelines, which the nEC claimed they would follow in the event of new negotiations, but which they have ignored since 1975.

CRITICISM

Some trade union bigwigs have responded to criticism of National Wage Agreements, especially the present one, by calling for a different kind of wage agreement or one with another name. The main so-called alternatives are—a Social Contract; the extension of bargaining away from wages alone and into tax, jobs, social welfare etc.; or a looser agreement allowing some local bargaining outside the national guidelines. Any such agreement means wage restraint—wages tied to a rise below prices, above which workers cannot claim.

The only true alternative is free collective bargaining—the right of workers on the shop floor to seek the rises they see fit, with no restrictions on their right to strike in pursuit of those claims. Points raised by delegates at the conference included the removal of residual; setting of a 30% increase as a target; deletion of the no strike clause. All these are needed. They will never be achieved through the Employer-Labour Conference—but by workers fighting for them.

PROFITS

The economy is on the up. Our wages have been on the down. The profits of the 67 public companies reporting in the first half of the year showed a 37% increase to £61.6 million.

Seven years of it, and unemployment in November 1977 is rising again. Fianna Fail want us to swallow a 5% swindle. We must say "No way."

Even now wage restraint can be broken by workers' determination; as seen by the recent victory by 35 clerical workers at Phillips Electrical in Dublin, who won £6.50 on the average wage and 12 weeks' paid maternity leave. We must begin organising now to regain what we've lost and set our sights on £15 not 5%.

ON 29 NOVEMBER, a small group of workers occupied the Ferenka factory, whose closure had been announced the day before. This occupation was needed to prevent the firm moving machinery out of the factory.

Why did the small group of men who own the ENKA group take the decision to close? They were attempting to destroy the hopes and the living standards of 1400 workers because they dared to question the bosses' rule. Everything about their decision smacked of brutality and callousness. The men were sacked the day they returned to work; they were told to go home to hear the announcement on the radio; they were sacked within one month of Christmas.

And it's a decision that every multi-national and Irish boss will try to copy. Already Vincent Feeney, President of the Limerick Chamber of

FERENKA

Commerce tells us that the lesson of Ferenka is that "there has been too much talk about workers' rights and not enough about protection for businessmen to make profits."

The only reason why Ferenka came here was to extract massive profits from a docile workforce. They came for the handouts and the tax-free profits. In the six years they existed they got:

- £6.5 million to help set up.
- £1 million in training grants.
- A contribution of £750,000 from the I.D.A. towards the share capital.

Together with Irish banks, they fiddled the tax system in order to get loans of £2 million at low interest rates in the form of "preference share capital".

In the last few weeks, before they announced the closure, they were negotiating for further additional grants

for "new machinery and re-equipment." It is extremely likely that one of the reasons for the closure was their failure to blackmail the state into paying out another million or so.

But above all they needed a workforce that could be chained to their machines. That's why they did a deal with the ITGWU even before the factory opened. And the deal looked as if it was working well for a few years. In return for having their dues deducted from the wage packet, the ITGWU acted as the company's police. They negotiated the notorious Works Agreement which among other things includes:

- Rule 19.12 The following may warrant immediate suspension or dismissal: . . . d) instigating or participating in an unofficial work stoppage . . . j) deliberately restricting output . . .

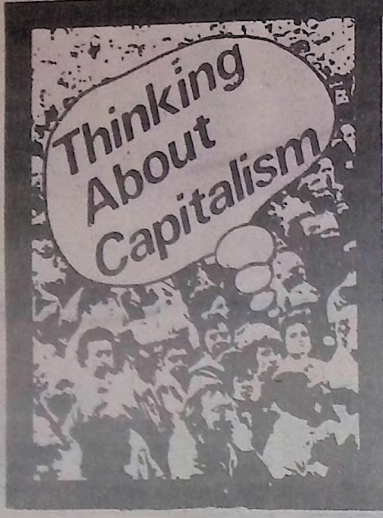
Rule 19.5 The distribution of any literature unauthorised by management is forbidden and may mean immediate dismissal . . .

Rule 20 A Shop Steward shall not approve of, and shall be seen to do everything in his power to prevent, unofficial work stoppages.

The basic wage stood at £49.71. The management refused to pay the Wage Agreement on a few occasions. Herrema denounced the meagre increases in the Agreement as "madness." On top of the basic, workers were entitled to a shift premium of time and a third. But that was for a continental four cycle shift which was so complex that workers needed a special card to know what days (or nights) they were on and off. It meant that they had only twelve weekends off in a year.

The first major resistance to this cosy set-up came with the recent strike. Workers made it clear that they were

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By DERMOT BYRNE

Divide & Conquer

FOUR WORKERS met in Dublin in a pub one night. One was Australian, one was English, one French, and the fourth an American. They had a lot to talk about, and as the night came to a close the barman came over and sat down and proceeded to tell a joke.

"Did you hear about the Kerryman who came up to Dublin and applied for a job? The first question on the application form was: 'How many legs has a three-legged stool? Give your answer to the nearest leg.'"

The barman gave a laugh that was tantamount to an elephant's roar: Everyone else remained silent.

"Did you hear it before?" asked the barman. "Yes," replied the Englishman. "We tell that one about Irish workers in Britain."

"Yes," replied the Australian. "I heard it before a bout English people entering Australia for the first time."

The Frenchman looked astonished by the whole thing, saying: "And we used to tell that one about Australians during the Second World War."

The American said he had heard it before in reference to Jews, blacks, Mexicans and numer-

ous others.

The barman fixed himself a drink.

The point about this little story is that capitalism divides workers, and turns one section or nationality against another. A few laughs at the expense of another nationality may seem harmless enough as an ego booster, but in fact if we examine the workings of capitalism we can unearth reasons why one section or nationality makes fun of another.

I suppose the most obvious is when the ruling class is at war on an international scale. Workers are manipulated into thinking that their fellow workers in another country are atrocious robbers, who are out to engulf the world. Jingoistic posters, despicable jokes and the like about other nationalities distort the true cause of war—capitalist greed.

Another fatal weapon used by our ruling class is to divide on religious or racial lines by improving wages and housing conditions for one section of the working class above those of another. Connolly's writings on the way Protestant workers in Ulster were induced into mistrusting Catholic workers, and Catholic workers were turned against Protestants by this method,

are still essential for our understanding of the Ulster situation today.

Capitalism as a system exists only so long as workers produce the wealth for the ruling class, and so long as workers are diverted by various tricks from uniting to overthrow it. One device that is used is for our rulers to breed insecurity, and turn workers against workers.

In England many workers come to feel that if only there were less black people looking for work, things would be better, and wages would increase. Slanderous rhetoric by groups like the National Front sustain this view. The real cause of unemployment and low wages, the profit system, is thereby not recognised.

To a lesser extent workers who travel to Dublin from rural districts seeking work are often treated with disparagement by Dublin workers mainly because competition for jobs is high, and workers unite not against the bosses who create this mess but around a mythical localism and a false superiority which they feel over other cities or counties.

In the United States in parts of Boston one is bound to hear antagonistic remarks made by Irish-American Catholics about black people. Proverbial slanders about blacks being lazy, dirty etc.

It's ironic that when Irish workers first went to America seeking work they were called the white-niggers. To keep workers divided and trade unionism weak the bosses upheld the myth about Irish workers being lazy, dirty, and just about everything some Irish workers now call black workers.

Undoubtedly another method of dividing and conquering fostered by the media is sexism. The media instils the illusion in our minds that women must always play subordinate role in society to that of men.

We are given the impression that women are interested only in superficial objectives. For example, "Are you using the right night cream? If not, your life is hell." "Are your hands soft, do you wash your floor in three minutes with new Bash washing powder or do you take three days?"

Men on the other hand, we are told, are indifferent to such trivialities. He's the courageous builder of a brave new capitalism, always willing to use the right oil in his sports car, and drink a man's beer.

This all helps to bolster male chauvinism, and endorses the view women have of themselves as housewives, or housewives to be, seeing politics as a man's prerogative. How often does some charlatan write an article for the press telling us a woman's place is in the home?

So, capitalism, because it is a class system, induces the oppressed to turn on those who are even more oppressed. Therefore we get derogatory remarks about the unemployed never having it so good, derogatory remarks about rural workers being all shifty, people waiting to grab any jobs that the capitalists offer in Dublin.

It is all part of a class system that breeds self-conscious prejudices. Workers will not rise above such prejudices. When workers form a trade union it is in part a realisation of the fact that whatever other things divide them whether it be sex, nationality, locality, or whatever, we are all pawns in the bosses' chess game.

Finally, it will be in our struggle for power that all our varied prejudices will begin to be destroyed through united working class action.

STUDENTS ON THE MARCH

MARTIN O'DONOGHUE, Fianna Fail's new blue-eyed boy, packed in his job as Dean of the economics faculty in Trinity College in June of this year and went off to make his name in Dail Eireann with the rest of his cronies. He left Trinity promising that Fianna Fail would bring the grants awards in line with inflation since 1968.

Since he left, food prices in Trinity have gone up by 15% (a further 8% increase was fought by students) and the university council have recommended that library services for most students end each night at 5 p.m.

Dental students are suffering chronic overcrowding of facilities, which means that essential teaching is only given to half the numbers that need it, which in turn means that their course will be lengthened by 6 months.

Since he left there have been four occupations, a catering boycott, and a picket of the university council. But such direct action finds itself

as a part in a much bigger picture of a national students' struggle.

Cork — 200 students picket council. The grants have not been paid this term because of a wrangle between the Department of Education and the County Council.

'FIELD - DAY'

Galway — Students there perhaps have the greatest grievance with no basic recreational or entertainment facilities and a severe accommodation crisis. They bring their plight to the centre of public attention by holding a 'field day' in Eyre Square in the centre of Galway city, pitching tents to highlight the accommodation problem. This was followed by an occupation by 200 students of an administration bloc.

Carysfort College, Co. Dublin — 1800 students march to insist that their degrees are given the academic status that will enable them to go on to further study.

Most of the ingredients are there for a national campaign of protest against the conditions students are expected to live and study under. Students are protesting about specific grievances and general grievances but the disputes all have a common solution in increased finance. If a national campaign is to be waged it must pull together all those fighting back now. All energies must be channelled to force the government to pay up.

But all those militants in colleges up and down the country should realise that reliance on the U.S.I. leadership to weld together such a campaign is a recipe for repeating previous ineffective campaigns.

Student campaigns have a tradition of the 'day of action' in which a large march is seen as an end in itself, and not as a means of rallying strength to go back into the colleges and begin effective direct action. Instead, apathy is promoted by the fact that there is little difference between the day preceding the

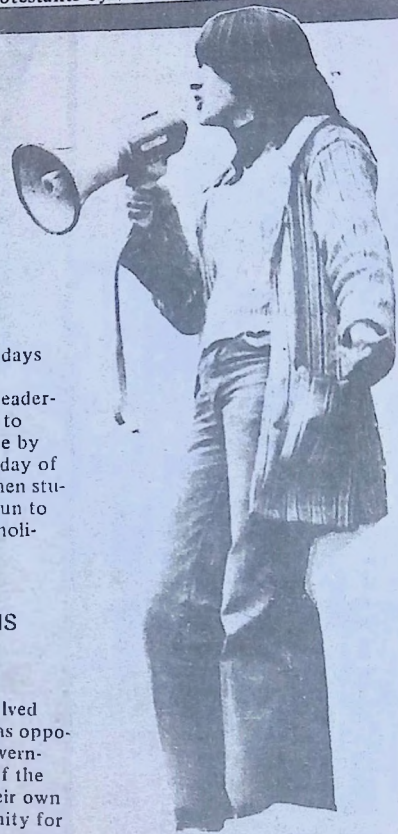
day of action' and the days following.

The present U.S.I. leadership deliberately plans to repeat this performance by calling for the famous day of action in December when students have already begun to go on their Christmas holidays.

OCCUPATIONS

Many of those involved realise that they have as opponents not only the Government and the boards of the colleges but also in their own union officers. In Trinity for example Ian Wilson, the president of the Students' Union, has launched a vicious campaign against all those involved in occupations he claimed were unofficial.

It is clear that the U.S.I. bureaucracy is more than 'dragging its feet'. If the campaign is to be successful then the energy and the organisation will have to come from below.



■ A national bulletin that informs students of all struggles taking place can provide the necessary focus.

■ A national conference should be called bringing together students involved in occupations, pickets and action groups to forge the strategy and tactics necessary for a successful campaign.

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POSTERS
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3 Wellington St.,
(just off Dorset St.)
Dublin 1.

"Bloody Lenin again! Why can't you dress up as Father Christmas like everyone else's Dad?"

Kilmartins

VICTORY AT LONG LAST!

After picketing for 8 months the women workers in Kilmartins have won a fair resolution to their strike.

The strike - one of the longest in Dublin - has forged new ground for other trade unionists to follow. They rejected the redundancy imposed on them when they struck for decent working conditions.

First of all they all held out and got good severance terms - three weeks pay per year plus the legal requirements.

Then 28 women continued the fight for the right to their own jobs. Any bookie who took over a Kilmartins shop inherited the picket. Solely on the strength of this, the new shop owners were forced to hire the women and now all 28 have got good jobs.

TRADE UNIONISTS ORGANISE AGAINST REPRESSION

THE WORK of the Trade Union Campaign against Repression (TUCAR) has continued since its conference in July (reported in The Worker no. 45).

The Campaign has attempted to involve itself in particular cases of repression, such as the threat of imprisonment to the Gouldings strikers. The newspapers refused to publish a press statement on this.

TUCAR requested trade unions to demand that the government should not renew its powers of seven-day detention under the Emergency Powers Act. Statements to this effect were in fact issued by the General Secretaries of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and the Local Government and Public Services Union.

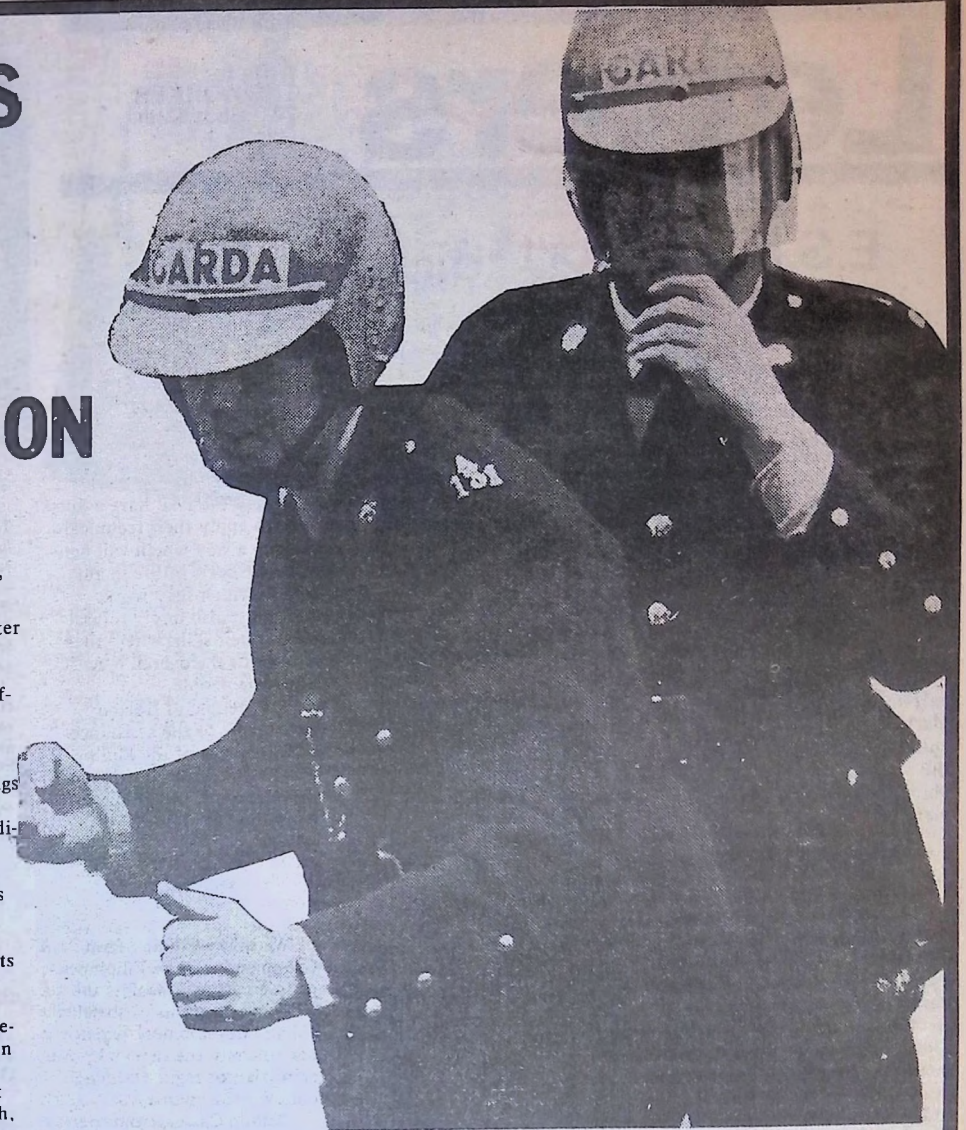
As reported in the last issue of The Worker, TUCAR protested against the acceptance by Ruaidhri Roberts, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, of a place on the government's cover-up committee on allegations of Garda brutality. This secret committee will not be investigating the allegations, but only how the good name (!) of the Gardai can be protected against those making such allegations. Roberts's acceptance of a place on the committee, without reference to the Congress Executive, is being raised on some Trades Councils.

In view of the government's refusal of an inquiry into prison conditions, TUCAR is contacting other

bodies such as the Prisoners' Rights Organisation, which recently handed in to Leinster House a petition calling for an independent inquiry.

In order to expand its influence and ability to intervene in such situations, TUCAR is consolidating its organisation. Public meetings were held recently in Cork and Waterford, at which additional members joined TUCAR and branches were set up. A Dublin branch has also been formally established.

We urge all trade unionists to join TUCAR and support its efforts to build a solid base in the trade union movement which can give a lead in the fight against repression. TUCAR can be contacted at 39 Lissadell Drive, Drimnagh, Dublin 12.



SUPPORT THE COALISLAND CONFERENCE

IN MANY areas throughout the North activity is growing around the issues of political status and repression. Over 200 people attended a conference in Ballymurphy to discuss "The Way Forward for Political Status". Short Strand RAC held a successful press conference to protest against the lifting and torturing of several young women from the area.

Many local RAC meetings and protests are being planned to highlight the conditions of the men in H Block and the women in Armagh jail. The Belfast Central RAC is also planning a conference on brutality to be held in December. This conference will focus on the continuing use of torture by the RUC, by which they extract "confessions" and send more men and women onto the blanket.

The Coalisland RAC, formed several months ago following the torture of a number of people in the area — notably 64-year-old Peter McGrath — has taken the initiative of trying to bring together all those who are fighting against the torture. The Committee says: "As families of those who have already suffered under interrogation we cannot accept torture as an 'allegation'. It is a cruel and unacceptable fact, the effects of which we have seen with our own eyes. We have taken the initiative of calling this six county-wide conference to provide a focus for highlighting the nature and extent of the use of torture and repression, and begin the work of a coordinated and united campaign to bring it to an end."

The conference in Coalisland is planned for the second week in January. United action throughout the North is necessary to win political status and to oppose the brutality of the RUC and the repression on the streets. All who want to fight on these issues should help build the conference and take the first step towards united action to bring rampant repression to an end.

For further information on the Conference, write to: P. McGrath, Derrytresk, Coalisland, Co. Tyrone.

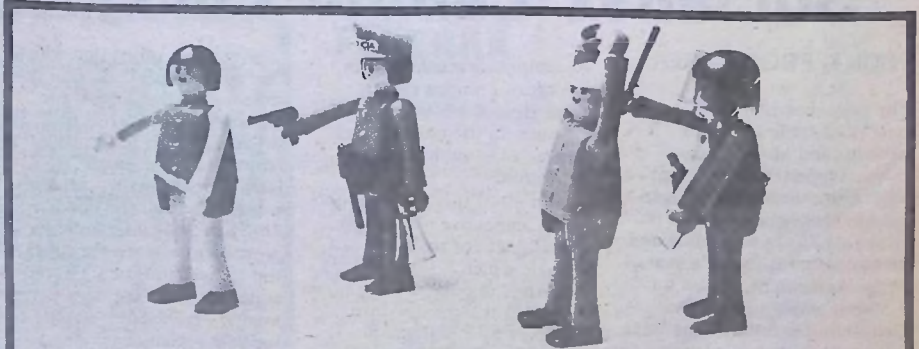
Strabane R.A.C.

ON 20th November a group of people in the Strabane area met to discuss the possibilities of setting up a Strabane branch of the Relatives Action Committee. Two RAC members were present from Belfast and gave a brief history of the Belfast RAC up to the recent conference on the Whiterock Road.

It became clear that many in the Strabane area are eager to see an RAC established. There are presently 14 young men from the area on remand. If convicted, most of them will be joining the men on the blankets. Other friends and individuals at the meeting were inspired by the fact that the RAC is a growing

and democratic organisation; all agreed that support for the prisoners must be built.

A decision was made to have leaflets published in Belfast giving the basic facts on the political prisoners. Immediately after these are distributed a further meeting will be held to formally establish a Strabane RAC. All relatives of political prisoners will be invited to attend this meeting.



Look what Santy is bringing the heavy gang for Xmas

One Spanish toy manufacturer has decided to bring his product lines up to date. Instead of toy soldiers, he's making demonstrators and policemen. The policemen are 4 inches high and come complete with helmets, shields and

guns.

A professor in Barcelona calculates that in this way, children will get accustomed, from the time they are very small, to looking on the forces of repression as necessary to the maintenance of

law and order.

There is no truth in the rumour that the Gardai are putting pressure on the Industrial Development Authority to open up negotiations with a certain Spanish...

Letters

Write to:
THE WORKER,
24 Talbot Street,
Dublin 1.

E.S.B. support dictatorship

THE FILIPINO-IRISH GROUP once again wishes to bring to the attention of the people of Ireland the work which our national body—the ESB is carrying out to the detriment of the people of the Philippines.

The ESB, according to their own communication to the press, is in consultancy with the National Power Corporation in the Philippines—

(1) The NPC is controlled by the Marcos-Romoudez family.

(2) It has been granted extraordinary powers under Martial Law. Several presidential decrees have ordered the arrest of any persons objecting to its expansion plans.

Evicted

The NPC is most active at the moment in the Northern Philippines. It has received a loan of £50m from the World Bank to implement a hydro-electric scheme known as the Chico River Basin Development Project. Without care, or concern for, or reference to the people living there, this area is to be completely taken over for the scheme. One hundred thousand (100,000) people—Kalinga-Bontoc tribes—from 16 villages will be evicted and 12,000 acres of rice terraces will be devastated.

On the surface, the NPC scheme seems acceptable to the ordinary observer, it appears a simple case of electrification and irrigation for the Northern Philippines. Indeed the ESB have stated that to bring electricity to this area is a great service to the people and not to participate would be to commit them to a worse standard of living than they could otherwise expect.

In actual fact, the main beneficiaries of the scheme are the Foreign mining companies and the big landowners—especially the Marcos-Romoudez family who own most of the land in the immediate benefitting area. The local tenants and farm workers and labourers in the mines and factories cannot afford electricity, their wages are 80p daily or less.

Abuses

The people of the Northern Philippines have protested continually

(1) Against the NPC and their implementation of the Chico Project.

(2) Against the abuses by the dictator Marcos of presidential authority in giving the NPC extraordinary control and power.

(3) Against the appropriation of communally owned land and the shifting of thousands of people out of their dwellings with the resultant loss of livelihood. Another tribe in the same area who were evicted for a similar project were not relocated as promised and thousands were forced into the slums of Manila.

Jailed

The ESB claim that they are helping a poor nation and a poor people to get a better standard of living through provision of electricity. The workers of the Philippines and the tribespeople will actually see the ESB consultancy as part of the whole exploitation machine. The ESB should realize the effects of participating. They are co-operating with a dictator who

permits no protest and has jailed and harassed the people who have objected to the NPC's Project.

Skills

Surely the ESB have a duty to apply their technical skills in a way which will benefit all aspects of life in any area in which they work. This must also imply refusal to use their skills where they are not to the overall benefit of all the people.

The people of Ireland must come to the assistance of the people of the Philippines in this matter by demanding that the ESB withdraw from the Philippines.

Regime

We in the Filipino-Irish Group support the Filipino people's struggle against the NPC and all forms of so-called aid and development which benefit only the rich and powerful Marcos regime which controls the country.

Bishop Claver, from the Philippines gave a Press Conference recently in Ireland. He stated that the ESB consultancy with the NPC would not be helping the people. He has previously written of the NPC's project

'This can mean the death of the Bontoc as a people—this is genocide.'

Yours sincerely,
Patricia Larkin
p.p. Filipino-Irish Group,
Room A,
11, Meath Street,
Dublin 8.

PS. Reading material on the Philippines are available from the above address.



THE UGLY FACE OF CAPITALISM

THEY CAN AFFORD money for lots of things, but not for children. Play areas in Ardoyne and the Bone (above) area of North Belfast are knee deep in muck. Broken swings, or a rubber tyre for a seat. No wonder they are empty.

It's a different story for the Queen. There's lots for her to spend on fun and games. She got an 18% increase (broke the pay limit there). The Treasury explained that the increase was caused by the "jubilee year with

extra spending for entertainment, higher staff wages and inflated housekeeping expenses."

And for their horses . . .

ANNE has built a new centrally heated stable complex including a centrally heated swimming pool—for horses only. It's packed with mineral salts and there's infra-red heaters so the horses won't catch cold after their swim. Pool and heaters cost a mere £100,000.

ASBESTOS KILLS

"ASBESTOS KILLS"; "Raybestos brings killer dust to Ovens".

For the past few months, the people of Owens, Co. Cork have been fighting the proposed asbestos dump that is planned for the area. A court injunction has been taken against them picketing the

proposed dump. The IDA have said that if this factory is stopped it will further ruin our chances of attracting new industries to Ireland. "Experts", both Irish and international, have been marched out to say that the dump will not be a health aid. There has even been a trade union march in favour of the factory.

The protesters have been dismissed as being middle-class and just worried about the fall in the value of their properties if the dump were established. This is no doubt true but it is also true that their protest is a valid one—*asbestos is a killer whether you live beside it or work with it.*

Below: the swollen fingers of a man with asbestosis



Today we are told that there are 'safe' levels of asbestos. Dr David Nowlan, medical correspondent of the Irish Times, wrote: "The safe level was no more than two asbestos fibres per cubic inch in the factory air. But even that according to a new report by Julian Peto (an Oxford researcher) is not low enough. One man in a hundred breathing half that level of dust over a lifetime's work will, according to Peto's calculations, die of asbestos or carry a risk of lung cancer 25% greater than the average.

"Lower the permissible level still further," I can hear reasonable men suggesting. Fair enough—in respect of lung cancer and asbestosis. But that will not do away with the risk of the sinister discovery to which I just referred: this was the link established between asbestos fibres and a cancer that used to be very rare indeed called mesothelioma."

By 1961 in South Africa, where asbestos is mined, 89 cases of mesothelioma were recorded. Many who died of this cancer had merely lived

AGEMOU rank & file

LAST MONTH we reviewed the recent pamphlet of the ITGWU rank and file 'New Liberty' Group. Since then a group of members in another union have got together and brought out their own rank and file paper. The union is the Automobile, General Engineering and Mechanical Operatives Union—a union of 6000 members affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The AGEMOU Worker is by no means an anti-union or anti-union-officials paper. The members who are involved in the paper are obviously proud of their union. But they are annoyed at the lack of communications within AGEMOU.

They reckon that the only way to improve the situation is to produce a paper which mainly carries stories of AGEMOU strikes and involvement in the ICTU and the Wage Agreements. And the AGEMOU Worker does this neatly, by giving accounts of the various strikes—without the gloss that union officials sometimes add.

The first issue also contains the point articles on the National Wage Agreements and on the ICTU. And a large part of the paper is given over to announcements about AGEMOU activities and branch meetings.

So all in all the paper is well on its way to fulfilling its main objectives of improving communications within the union, providing support for striking members and providing a platform for members' opinions. The actual paper is small and is produced on a shoestring budget, but it will no doubt improve and grow with the support of other AGEMOU members.

If you want copies or want to send an article to the AGEMOU Worker the address is: AGEMOU Worker, c/o 50 Ardara Avenue, Donaghmede, or phone 856647 (evenings).

near asbestos mines or mills, or had lived in the same house as an asbestos worker, or as a child had played near asbestos dumps.

Professor Robert Morgan of the University of Toronto wrote: "Asbestos causes cancer. Of that there is no doubt, with lung cancer the commonest result and gastrointestinal, laryngeal and mesothelial tumors a lesser hazard."

During the last few years there have been a number of major industries including Raybestos Manhattan and the Asahi plant in Mayo established here. Internationally, because of disasters like the Flixborough plant explosion in England and the Seveso escape of gas in Italy, people have been less willing to accept these dangerous industries. Because of the high unemployment and the lack of awareness of the dangers of these plants there has been little opposition to them here in Ireland.

We all of course want jobs—but we should demand that all these jobs be safe. There are alternative products to substances like asbestos which could provide as many jobs as asbestos manufacture—there would just be fewer deaths to go with the jobs.

WILLIE CUMMING

Socialist Labour Party

CONT. FROM PAGE 1.

the tide. For there are plenty of trade unionists who are fed up with the Wage Agreements—but the opposition needs to be organised in each union if the bureaucrats are to be defeated in any attempt to sell a new Wage Agreement.

Some might call that interfering in unions; but other would say it is the membership exercising their democratic rights.

THE SLP IS ALSO WELL PLACED TO INITIATE REAL ACTION AGAINST REPRESSION. Its size and influence on the left, means that a call from it to build a united front of socialist, anti-imperialist and trade union organisations against repression would have to be listened to. Its membership can also be directed to join and build the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression. By

co-ordinating resolutions in the various unions against repression, it can put the pressure on the union leadership to do something about repression.

But all of this means adopting a perspective which sees the struggle for socialism as a struggle which is fought for in the here and now and not something that is legislated into existence by a parliament. It means that the SLP must view itself as an organised party within the class that continually fights to nurse the confidence of their fellow workers. Above all it means a real break with the parliamentary methods of the Labour Party.

But it is on this point that the leadership of the SLP are most suspect. They believe that parliamentary representation must be combined with action on the streets and in the workplace. That is only

obvious to a generation which has got nothing from Dail Eireann but hypocrisy and promises. But the real issue is whether socialism can be implemented through the parliamentary road. After all, Allende and the Popular Unity in Chile also mobilised workers on the streets but they did so only to BACK UP and support the attempts by parliamentary representatives to legislate socialist measures.

They failed precisely because they did not understand that control of the parliament does not mean control over the state apparatus. The bosses and their class will maintain control over the army, the judiciary and the state bureaucracy. Most importantly, as long as they own and control the wealth and capital of the country, they can sabotage any legislation passed by a socialist majority in the parliament.

A WORKER IN A 'WORKERS STATE'

IMAGINE YOU HAD a bottle of poison at home labelled 'Medicine'. To call Hungary—and the other Eastern bloc countries—'socialist' or to label them 'workers' states' is like putting a 'medicine' label on a bottle of poison. Because life in Hungary for the working class is far removed from what life should, and would, be under socialism.

Miklos Haraszti shows that living and working conditions for a worker, in this particular 'workers' state', are even further removed from socialism than the conditions and rights industrial workers and trade unionists have in the West. Haraszti was, in fact, brought to trial for merely writing this book—a look at factory conditions similar to any expose article in the pages of *The Worker*.

What type of 'socialism' is this that is more oppressive than capitalism? A read of this gripping book will show that it is not socialism at all, but capitalism pretending to be its opposite.

The core of the book is an examination of the piece-rate system of wages. As such it not only shows how Hungarian workers are exploited, but it is an immensely clear and readable exposure of the piece-rate and bonus systems under which many Western workers labour.

Haraszti hits the nail on the head on the first page: "I read up the statistics and found out that most industrial workers were on piece rates; I also discovered—but who didn't know it anyway—that this chemically pure form of socialist wage-labour was the privilege of such workers alone: their bosses had to get by on much more antiquated forms of pay."

Basically the system works

like this: the worker is paid a small basic wage—set arbitrarily by the head foreman, within certain limits. But his take-home pay, and his standard of living, depends on how much he can bring this up through the piece rate—payment for each piece milled, cut or whatever, in a certain time. The time per piece is also decided, and changed, at the complete discretion of management.

But, working in the Red Star Tractor Factory in 1971, he made an interesting discovery. "Instead of the 3.3 minutes [written on the work-sheet] which I am supposed to be able to meet, I have taken about 4 minutes a piece, and that does not include the time needed to set up the run."

Safety

The result is that, to make any money at all, the workers have to LOOT. Looting is working the machines faster than is allowed by the safety and technical regulations, using every conceivable shortcut, regardless of the safety or the exhaustion of the worker or the quality of the product.

Each working day is a deadly battle to complete each piece within the specified time. And it is physically impossible to keep within the official time while observing the safety and technical regulations.

The consequences for safety can be seen in one worker's techniques: "One of his favourites is to lay the huge, heaviest pieces on the milling table, without fastening them down, and to lean against them with the whole weight of his body while the table moves to and fro, and the cutters screech. Just to watch

him sends cold shivers down your spine. A grain of impurity in the material, or a fault in the casting, and the insane speed of the head will rip the piece from between his hand. But if he doesn't do it that way, he will lose the two minutes to be gained from every ten."

Management know looting goes on. Management in reality depend on looting to keep down wages and continually step up production.

As the men devise ways of completing pieces in shorter times ("to make our living, we are forced to provide the rate-fixers with irrefutable arguments for the revision of the norms") and as the average production rate goes up accordingly, management revise the time-per-piece rate down again.

Usually every quarter. They have complete power to do this.

It is obvious that many of the workers' troubles come from their lack of organised power as much as from the piece-work system. Genuine trade union organisation would at least prevent the bosses from changing the norms whenever they felt like it.



During the Hungarian Rising of 1956: workers gather in Miskolc, where the first soviet was set up

The foreman supervises trade union activity in each section. The trade union secretary "does not have to work. He is nominated for the job by the head foreman. To put up or vote for another candidate would be a direct provocation of the head foreman. Anyway, what could possibly come of it?"

"After the election, the head foreman fixes the pay of the secretary, who in any case has a second master as well: his superior in the union hierarchy, who works from a desk in the factory office building." "Before the production meetings, he prepares suitable interventions, on the basis of directives given to him by the head foreman."

Haraszti's book shows how Hungarian society is a wider image of the class divisions and expropriation to be found in the factories. He describes a line of limousines waiting for the directors and executives to whisk them from the factory to some

meeting, and television debates which seek to convince that everyone in Hungary is a worker.

A Worker in a Workers' State does not end with any political programmes or perspectives for change. Part of the book's value is that it is simply a factual account of things as they are for the workers.

But Haraszti is no Solzhenitsyn, looking towards the West for salvation. He is a marxist with a long history of persecution from the Hungarian state. And his alternative to the present system is made plain.

Profits

"The first goal of a technical science under the control of workers would be an increase in production that reduced the amount of work nec-

essary to bring it about. Of course, that would be possible only if what happens to profits also came under their control." He also offers a vision of work as it could be—a "Great Homer (nixer)".

I would like to know how somebody who believes Russia and its satellites to be workers' states feels after reading this book—especially this sentence: "Anybody who works, in a factory knows, without need of statistics, that for those who work to norms, complex arguments about whether or not they own the means of production are nothing but empty talk." Well worth buying, even at 93½p for 175 pages.

A Worker in a Workers' State, by Miklos Haraszti. Pelican. 93½p.



New Belfast pamphlet on repression

THE BELFAST Workers' Research Unit has published its second bulletin, "Repression—the Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove". The WRU was formed last June to service working class organisations with the sort of economic, social and political information not readily or easily available.

Its first bulletin, "The Queen Comes To Belfast" coincided with the Royal Scrounger's visit to the North and took that as its main theme by contrasting the enormous wealth of British royalty to the poverty, unemployment and poor housing of the Northern working class.

This second bulletin analyses the general thrust of British 'security' policy and points out that the apparent liberalism of Melchett, with his financial largesse for community type organisations, is as much part of the repressive machine as Mason's RUC and army thugs. One is soft repression designed to de-politicise the population: the other, hard repression to crush further resistance. The bulletin also demonstrates

that the counter-insurgency tactics developed by Kitson and his ilk have, almost in their entirety been implemented in the North. With a detailed analysis of sectarian assassinations, the WRU shows how Kitson's strategy of 'counter gangs' (ie: UDA, UFF, UVF) was put into operation and with such spectacular success.

Other articles on the general economic situation in the North and on strikes show how the present crisis is biting deeper into the living standards of the North's already impoverished working class.

One very interesting and well researched article is on the use of Electro-convulsive Therapy in the North's psychiatric hospitals—a form of treatment condemned widely but still used regularly in Ireland. Such areas are often neglected by the Irish left and it is good to hear that the next issue of the WRU bulletin will be examining the provision of health services in greater detail.

All in all, a very well produced and researched document. It's available (50p) from the Worker Book Service or from the Workers Research Unit, 52 Broadway, Belfast.



FERENKA

CONT. FROM PAGE 1.

going to stand up against the victimisation of their elected representatives—the shop stewards' committee. They walked out of the ITGWU Ferenka claimed that they now had an "unworkable situation on their hands—despite the fact that the membership of both the ITGWU and the MPGWU had gone back to work.

But that's a load of rubbish. In many factories up and down the country, different unions represent production workers—and management find no problems in negotiating with them. Amongst the white-collar section of Ferenka staff, different unions represent the same category of workers.

The real fear of the Fer-

enka bosses was that their workers were now marching back to work with an increased self-confidence. As Philip Byrnes, chairman of the shop stewards' committee put it: "We are coming back with our self-respect: that is vital for every worker." But it is that self-respect that the Ferenka bosses could not take. It stood in the way of maintaining lousy wage rates. It threatened to lead to the re-negotiation of the whole works agreement.

The only answer to Ferenka is nationalisation without compensation. They have already made a mint from the Irish PAYE taxpayer. The state must be forced to take over the company and diversify the production if necessary. A massive campaign throughout the union movement must be launched to force the hand of the government to take over the factory.

BLACK FACED CAPITALISM IN ZIMBABWE?



IF THE PRESENT rate of emigration of whites from Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) continues, there will be no whites left there in the year 2006.

However, the Africans are not willing to wait that long. The guerrilla war continues. The liberation forces control three quarters of Rhodesia, according to Bishop Donal Lamont in August. This indicates a high level of support among the local people.

The government of Ian Smith has partly acknowledged this by gathering 580,000 rural Africans into 203 "protected villages", i.e. concentration camps from which they are let out only to look after their crops and animals.

Africans in the cities have also demonstrated their support for their leaders in vast numbers. 200,000 supporters greeted Bishop Muzorewa in Salisbury in July. 100,000 people welcomed Joshua Nkomo to Bulawayo in October.

Imperialist

However, more than a show of strength is needed to stand up to Smith and to the imperialist interests behind which he shelters. The American government has realised since the days of Kissinger that the best chance capitalism had of surviving in Rho-

desia was to adopt a black face. Smith must be persuaded to hand over the reins of office to moderate Africans who would build up black capitalist businesses as junior partners for British and American firms.

But while imperialism keeps Smith in office for the time being, he is not a puppet. He defends the interests of the Rhodesian whites who have a very high standard of living.

It is this situation that lies behind the constant to-ing and fro-ing of British and American politicians and of the British Resident Commissioner designate, Field-Marshal Lord Carver (who, among other things, wrote the fore-

word to General Frank Kitson's notorious book *Low intensity operations*).

Front-line

Meanwhile the black nationalist politicians are put under pressure by the leaders of the "front-line" African states, whose economies are in turn subject to imperialist pressure. Several attempts have been made to bring into office "moderate" leaders like Bishop Muzorewa and the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole. These leaders make it clear that they are willing to work with a white-dominated economy.

They claim that they have much more popular support than the guerrillas. This would hardly be surprising, seeing that the guerrilla leaders have been in exile, on the run, or in prison, and have not had much of a chance to build up a political machine.

Guerrilla

The majority of the guerrillas appear to support ZANU, led by Robert Mugabe. But, since the Zambian government adopted a more relaxed attitude to guerrilla action, an increasing number of men have been put under arms by Joshua Nkomo's ANC-ZAPU, whose support

is strongest in the part of Rhodesia bordering on Zambia, and which had previously been engaging in talks with Smith.

ZAPU appears to have the sympathy of the Soviet Union. Its rivalry with ZANU has only been papered over in the Patriotic Front and the Zimbabwe People's Army.

It does seem that on balance, Mugabe's party is more radical. But they are still some way from being thoroughgoing socialists. Mugabe has stated that "at least in the short run, Zimbabwe will have to have a mixed economy."

Mozambique

But if you tolerate capitalism in the short term, it will stay to dominate you. This has been found by the pro-Moscow regime in Mozambique, which dare not take action against South Africa because its economy depends on South African trade through its territory and money sent home by emigrants working in South Africa.

The guerrilla war must receive our support. But unless the black working class organises itself inside Zimbabwe as well, it is liable to find itself sold out when negotiations are over.

JOHN GOODWILLIE



Soweto, South Africa. Will the black working class in Zimbabwe go into action?

JOIN US IN THE FIGHT

If you want to join or to get more information about the Socialist Workers' Movement, send to: THE WORKER, 24 Talbot Street Dublin 1.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

SWM What we stand for

THE SOCIALIST Workers' Movement is a revolutionary workers' organisation which aims to organise the working class in the struggle for power and for the overthrow of the existing social order.

Capitalism produces war and poverty, racial and sexual oppression. It is based on the exploitation of those who produce the wealth. It is geared to profit and not to human need. It wastes resources — above all, human resources. It is driven into ever-deeper crises.

Only the working class can destroy it and build a socialist society based on workers' control of production. Our political action to prepare the working class for that is based on the following principles:

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM:

Capitalism cannot be changed by piece-meal reform. Increasingly it is unable to bring in even those small reforms which some sections of the ruling class think necessary. We support all struggles of workers against capitalism, seeking to co-ordinate them and direct them towards a fight for workers' power.

CAPITALIST STATE MUST BE SMASHED:

The state machinery — courts, parliament, police, army — is used to maintain the domination of the ruling class. Working class revolution produces a different kind of state — one based on councils of delegates from work-places and localities who are democratically elected and subject to recall at any time.

SOCIALIST ANSWER TO THE NATIONAL QUESTION: Imperialism dominates the country, preps up the Northern state and keeps the working class divided. But the problem can only be resolved in the working class's struggle for power. Only a united working class can defeat imperialism and capitalism, leading the fight to end repression, to force withdrawal of the British Army and against every aspect of the bosses' system.

NO SOCIALISM IN ISOLATION:

Capitalism is an international system and can only be overthrown by the working class internationally. Socialism in a single country cannot survive. We work for solidarity with workers in other countries and support the struggles of oppressed peoples against imperialism. Along with revolutionary organisations elsewhere we aim to build an international of working class parties.

RUSSIA AND CHINA NO MODEL:

The attempts of the Russian working class to build socialism were halted by the failure of their revolution to spread. The Stalinist rulers established a new type of society based on exploitation and oppression. Russia, the countries of Eastern Europe, China and Cuba are not socialist or "communist" — the workers are not in control. We oppose these regimes as we oppose Western capitalism.

The main area of political action for socialists is in the mass organisations of the working class, particularly the trade unions. We fight to make them — independent of all ruling class influence and any state interference and to make them effective organs of struggle for the workers.

In the trade unions, we fight for the right to organise free of restrictions, and against all laws and agreements limiting the right to take industrial action. We fight for democratic control of union affairs and the election of officials.

We oppose all forms of wage control and wage restraint; we oppose unemployment, compulsory and voluntary redundancy, and closures. We fight for shorter hours, five day's work or five days' pay, and demand the nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control of companies which cannot guarantee job security.

We fight for a national minimum wage of £45 per week, for equal pay for women, and for the adult rate from 18 years of age. We oppose attempts to lower living standards by cuts in social services, health and education.

FOR A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

which draws together militant trade unionists willing to oppose the class collaboration of the union leaders.

FOR FULL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

which can only be won if women themselves are organised to fight for their demands and if that struggle is part of the fight for workers' power.

FOR SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE in order to break the hold of reactionary ideas on workers, and remove a principal obstacle to women's equality. We support the demands for contraception and abortion to be made available on request.

FOR DEFENCE OF ANTI-IMPERIALISTS who face the full force of state repression. We fight for the abolition of repressive laws and for the withdrawal of the British Army. We support the self-defence on working class areas against military and sectarian attack. We fight to build a united front of working class and anti-imperialist organisations for those aims.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' PARTY which can draw the most advanced, class-conscious workers together to fight for the political leadership of the working class. A revolutionary socialist leadership based in the working class can have a decisive influence especially in periods of upheaval.

The Socialist Workers Movement is working to build such a party. It is a democratic centralist organisation open to all those who accept these principles and objectives, who agree to work in one of its units, and recognise its discipline. We urge those who want to fight for the socialist, working class answer to the mess that is capitalism to join us.

Join us in the fight **SWM**

F.F. PROMISE TURNS SOUR

TRAINEE TEACHERS' HOPES DASHED

THE DAYS when a degree from a university entitled young middle class men and women to a life of relative luxury are over. Today, hundreds of graduates find themselves signing on the Labour Exchange. Those who have trained to be teachers have possibly suffered the worst.

Students who wish to become teachers in secondary schools usually take an extra year's course of training—the H.Dip.Ed. During that year they must work a particular quota of teaching hours each week.

But in most Church-run schools, they are paid absolutely nothing for this—despite the fact that the state-run vocational schools pay their student teachers. As a result, these schools often employ up to 40 student teachers, in order not to employ a permanent teacher. It's not just cheap labour—but free labour which has added to teacher unemployment.

The teachers' unions have never effectively opposed such scandals. They have done little or nothing to launch a real fight against unemployment. Resolutions have been passed for years at the INTO, ASTI and TUI Congresses on the high teacher-pupil ratio—currently over 40 pupils for one teacher in the primary schools. Yet nothing has been done about such resolutions.

Fianna Fail then came up with a bright idea. They sought to use this pool of unemployed teachers and graduates as a source of cheap labour, in order to fulfil their election promises. 600 jobs for graduates, announced Wilson, the new Minister for Education. Headlines in the press about Fianna Fail fulfilling its promises. But nobody was

looking at the terms Wilson was offering.

Wilson's first scheme for special trainee teachers was based on the following package:

- The trainee teachers would spend three years working on ¾ of the basic pay of teachers. Then they were to get a year's training!

- They were to have absolutely no job security for those years. And when they were finished, they were to start another two years on probation. They could be sacked instantly at any time in that six-year period!

- They were to attend weekend and week-long courses in their own time throughout the first three years.

The INTO executive accep-

ted the scheme immediately—without even consulting their own membership. But the rank and file were having none of it. After forcing the executive to call a special conference they threw out the scheme.

Yet many of the objections to the scheme were made from a professional elitist position. Primary teachers felt their status was downgraded by the scheme, compared to other teachers. Such professional jealousy has been deliberately fostered by the state and the Church between the three teaching sectors in first and second level schools.

What was rarely mentioned was the effects such a scheme would have had on trade union organisation in

the schools. A large pool of teachers working as cheap labour, and with no job security, can be a millstone around the neck of trade unionists. A trainee teacher who can be sacked instantly is not going to be the first out the gate in a strike situation.

It is precisely because the rank and file of the INTO opposed the original scheme purely on a professional basis that Wilson has been able to come back with a scheme which is not much better from the trade unionist's point of view. This time around the package includes the following:

- Special trainee teachers now get their year's training course at the very beginning. This is designed to appease

the professional objection that untrained teachers downgrade the primary school teachers' status.

- However, unemployed graduates who want to go on the scheme must pay for their own fees and books. They must raise over £200 before they can even start.

- The pay throughout the training year and for three years afterwards is still believe it or not—¾ of the basic teachers' rate.

- Again they can have no guarantee of job security. Again they can be sacked instantly at any time up to six years.

- The trainee teachers have already been forced to sign a contract accepting these terms as they are represented by no union.

The teachers' unions had

placed themselves in a weak position as regards Wilson by their bad record on fighting unemployment. All too easily, they can be portrayed as not giving a damn about their unemployed brothers and sisters.

But the first steps towards remedying that can still be taken. The trainee teachers on this scheme must be unionised immediately. Opposition must be built to the terms of the scheme and to Wilson's attempts to introduce 600 other trainee teachers next year on the same terms.

Wilson must be told that as and from a particular date, the teachers' unions will refuse to teach huge classes. He must be told that trained teachers must be recruited on full union rates.

Pupils leaving school. Will there be enough teachers for them?



IPOEU rank & file fight sellout

THE RANK AND FILE in the Irish Post Office Engineering Union are showing their dissatisfaction with the sell-outs of their Executive in the recent series of disputes with the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. The No 2 Branch in Dublin has passed a motion of no confidence in their Executive by 250:13. The No 4 Branch in Dublin are holding a meeting for a similar ballot. As reported before in

these pages, the Department, for some time, has been pushing rationalisation, productivity, new machines and private contracting through without consultation with the Union. And they have been using a high-handed disciplinary procedure to do this:

There have been two phases of disputes this year. In August the suspension of 13

IPOEU members led to an official strike with an "All-Out" picket. The Employer-Labour Conference (of bosses and Congress leaders) produced a "settlement" formula. A few weeks later, over 100 IPOEU members were under suspension for similar reasons: the Executive did not call an official strike.

On Monday 7 November,

the Executive accepted proposals which arose from a meeting of ICTU representatives and the Minister, under which all members would return to work, under protest, and then discussions would take place.

The effect of this settlement on the Dublin members and their reaction to it is spelled out in a leaflet issued by two officers of the Nos 2 and 4 Branches, N. Johnson

and M. Hearn. The leaflet states: "22 members of the Dublin No. 2 Branch are currently suspended for refusing to use Russell Street as either a Garage or a Depot."

Some months ago the Executive directed the members not to use Russell St. "until the Department decided to consult the Branch and have discussions in the normal way with the Dublin District Committee."

The Executive have now ordered the members to use Russell St. and the leaflet states: "This situation will not be tolerated by the Branch, as we will not accept that the Department can acquire a new Depot, and without any consultation whatsoever with any Section of the Union, instruct Staff to occupy the new Depot."

The leaflet also protests against the Executive for agreeing that new procedure by worked ("under protest") at the Tallaght, Clontarf and Whitehall Repair Services, which entail increased productivity and efficiency. Again there's been no discussion with the union. The leaflet says: "The Branch is adamant that this new procedure will not be introduced without agreement and

compensation."

On the Executive's decision, also arising from the 7th November meeting, that the new Autrax computer be introduced "under protest" it states: "The Dublin No. 4 Branch is adamant that this Autrax Computer will not be introduced until the Re-Organisation Claim is finalised, and we are compensated for its use."

The general feeling is clear: "Both Branches did not adhere to the direction 'Back To Work' as they felt they would be completely losing. The Executive have used the Branches involved, and treated the members who were suspended on foot of Executive direction, dreadfully... The attitude of the present Executive is one of complete incompetence, as they continue to change support to opposition."

It's possible that similar meetings will be organised by branches outside Dublin also. The leaflet ends by saying to IPOEU members: "These are not the first Disputes the Executive have reneged on, or perhaps the last... But they are certainly not going to get away with it this time. Get your Branches to support your Brothers. Write to the Executive. Voice your feelings about this injustice."

28/11/77

Gouldings victory!

IN NOVEMBER the marathon struggle of the 21 Gouldings workers ended in victory for them. As the deadline ran out when some of them were to be committed to jail for defying a High Court order against their picket on the Gouldings Jetty, a meeting between the ITGWU and Gouldings was held. A long list of their Union was representing them—and in the nick of time to avoid the jailings which might have led to active campaigning from many workers.

A few weeks before, the strikers' long-standing demand to meet the National Officers of the ITGWU had been

granted when Michael Mullen, General Secretary, finally met them. Pressure from some Dublin Trades Council delegates is believed to have played a part in bringing this about.

The strikers' demands were met in full: they are now back working in Gouldings clearing up the six months' work they reckon is there. They received a guarantee from Gouldings that, in the event of the plant re-opening, they would be the first to be taken on. Their redundancy money (which they rel-

used to claim throughout the long months without strike pay) has also been paid to them.

Although they have not won back permanent jobs in Gouldings, their courage and perseverance has triumphed in the end: over Gouldings, the Courts, the police, and their own Union leaders who chose to leave them out in the cold (literally, at times). The Gouldings 21 can give the two-fingers to them all.

It was the speculation and financial juggling of men like

Tony O'Reilly, Nicholas Leonard and Vincent Ferguson—the heads of Fitzwilliam, owners of Gouldings—which led to the loss of 365 jobs in Dublin. As long as industry is in the hands of sharp sharks like these, closures and lay-offs will continue.

Unless, that is, the trade unions resist. The ITGWU—and most trade union leaders have shown themselves unwilling to fight redundancies. That is why the rank and file must organise to gain democracy in the unions so that never again will a handful of members have to fight for so long, on their own, for the right to work.

the worker

Paper of the Socialist Workers Movement



Firemen: their fight is our fight

"Courage and loyalty won't help us in the super-market." The picket lines are solid and public support evident as firemen in Belfast and Derry enter the third week of the first official firemen's strike.

This massive strike, has brought a showdown between the British government and the first of the public service unions to attempt to break the 10% pay guideline. The government has taken an extremely hard line toward the firemen. The government is just hoping for a massive fire disaster to swing public opinion away from the strikers. At the end of the first week, the Fire Authority offered the union a £15 rise, but the government said NO. In the first week of the strike, the government and the press were falling over themselves in publicity about the old and the sick people. But they haven't won the battle for public opinion. The government has turned to their usual solution - call in more troops. 4000 more untrained troops were brought out in Britain, and 12 special flying squads. All are part of the government's attempt to use the firemen to smash all the public sector claims that are to come yet - like nurses, ambulance drivers, bin men.

SUPPORT

In Belfast, horns blare as drivers show their support for the picket lines. Petitions are being signed and the collection boxes filled. Support has come from several unions, from ICTU, and from firemen in the south. Firemen in Dublin collected money around the stations and sent it north. A union representative told the firemen they should hold out as the 650 Dublin and Dun Laoghaire men did nine years ago, winning the best pay scale in Europe today. In Derry, the students union at Magee organised a march, supported by workers in a local shirt factory. The crew of a ship in Belfast docks came to the picket lines and handed

over £30 for the firemen's fund. The firemen in the north have come under particularly heavy pressure because of the "troubles". They are an essential part of the government's equipment to fight the Provo bombs. But the 500 full time firemen here resisted pleas not to join their colleagues across the water in the strike. Claims were made that the Northern Ireland firemen should be a special case because of the troubles.

FIRES

The firemen know better than anyone that they are a special case in that they lose their lives and suffer injuries in fighting fires. They refer to the bomb-fire fighting as civil defense work. "That's not our job." As well they are a special case

Solidarity march

because of the extremely low wage packet they get. A fireman at Chichester St. told us that he takes home £41. He's married and trying to pay a mortgage on that. New recruits get only about £36. And they work 48 hours for that.

The strikers in Belfast are still confident that they will win their 30%. But this strike will do much more than increase their wages. The strike has highlighted their

miserable working conditions. One worker at the Ardoyne station said, "Things will never be the same." In every station there are complaints about the lack of men and the faulty equipment they have to work with. The Fire Authority plans to build two new stations in Belfast. But the men ask, "Who will work there, and at these wages?" The Ardoyne station was built in 1903. The Whitla St. station used to be a flour mill. The pigeons still live in it - leaving little clean room for the workers. After the strike the men are determined to keep fighting to change these conditions.

BROKEN

All working people should support this strike. We all stand to gain by the firemen's victory. It is strikes like these that are showing the government's pay policy can be broken. Last month British Oxygen workers won rises of between £16 and £23 a week - 25% - because they took mil-

A group of people marched with their banners from the Ardoyne and Bone areas to the local fire station to show their support for the strike. "The firemen fight fires in our area and the government should pay them a decent wage." The group gave donations to the strike fund and were planning further demonstrations of support.

itant action. It did not include a productivity deal. That settlement is being kept quiet so the government can protect their pay policy.

In the fire strike it's not lives that are at risk. It's the government's pay policy. A victory for the firemen will give heart to all those other groups of workers who have been struggling against the 10% limit and all those who have yet to come.

SEVERAL HUNDRED trade unionists marched from their workplaces in West Belfast to the city centre in November to protest against the continuing use of torture by the RUC in Castlereagh. Every week men and women are dragged to Castlereagh where they are beaten in the RUC's quest for easy confessions.

The West Belfast workers from Strathearne Audio, building sites, Hughes Bakery and many other locations represented several different unions. These men and women gave up several hours pay in order to tell the government they were fed up



A tearful and exhausted fireman walks away from a warehouse where two firemen were killed - both were married with young children.

T.U. MARCH AGAINST REPRESSION

with the brutal treatment people are receiving from the RUC. But their impressive march down the Falls Road was stopped at King Street. As usual the RUC and security forces barred the way to the city centre.

This march was an important step in developing real opposition to the repression

carried out by the British Army and the RUC. During the same week, the Belfast Trades Council decided to support the Amnesty International inquiry into the brutality in the North. Trades Council support is welcome, indeed long overdue.

INQUIRIES

But much more needs to be done. Amnesty International inquiries can be easily ignored by the Northern Ireland Office. Trade unionists themselves could conduct an inquiry into the activities in Castlereagh and into the treatment of prisoners in H block. The government could not easily ignore the findings of Northern trade unionists. As well, trade union leaders would be better able to mobilise opinion to protest against the torture.

The West Belfast workers can make sure the trade union leadership does not just make nice statements against repression. They can organise to make the leaders take action.

WORKPLACE

The march was the first step. Demands for a trade union inquiry must now be pushed in every workplace, in every trade union meeting and at the Trades Council meetings. The workers in the North have the organisation and the strength to be a real force in the fight against repression.

WHERE WAS PADDY?

ONE TRADE UNION leader who showed his hypocritical self on the occasion of the trade union march was your man Devlin, ITGWU organiser.

He phoned-up the ITGWU workers in Antrim Crystal and urged the not to support the march. Unfortunately they followed his advice and voted against going out. A few workers joined the march as individuals.

It is suspected that Paddy was trying to be friendly to the management of Antrim Crystal. He is in the midst of an inter-union dispute. The staff members of the Crystal factory want to join APEX. Paddy is opposing them, claiming that only his union should be there.