

THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

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United, militant action by the workers involved is the only answer.

Waterford Paper Mills— A BITTER LESSON

THE WORKERS of the Paper Mills in Waterford have learnt a bitter lesson, a lesson that all Irish workers would be advised to take note of.

Put simply, the lesson is this:

There is only one way to fight a threatened closure and that is militant united action by the workers involved.

Any acquiescence shown towards partial closure or redundancies, supposedly to stave off total shut-down, merely leaves the workforce a sitting duck when the bosses wish to fire the final shot.

The events in the Paper Mills indisputably bear this out.

The closure of the Mill section in 1978 was presented by management as a little bit of rationalisation to ensure the survival of the plant.

What they meant was that the Mill section would be sacrificed to maintain the box section.

There was nothing rational about this "rationalisation".

Both sections were profitable and integrated. The Mill section processes raw materials—waste paper and wood pulp—into corrugated paper which went to the Box section to make boxes!

Manipulate

With the bosses successful in closing the Mill, the Box was more at their mercy, being now dependant on imported raw materials.

Multi-Nationals can manipulate the price of imports upwards and use the inviability argument.

"Sorry boys, jobs will have to go due to market difficulties etc, the plant is no longer viable."

But what were the bosses real

plans from the outset.

Into the arena steps a Mr Bunting of UPP (Ulster Paper Products) who was going to take over the ailing NBPM and pull it up by its bootstraps.

But Mr Bunting is said to have stated that UPP and Kileen (Clondalken) could quite adequately supply Irish demands.

It now seems that this Bunting guy is a front for a Scandinavian Multinational outfit and more than likely will attempt to grab a monopoly of the Irish market in corrugated boxes, with surplus going for export.

And more streamlining and trimming will take place. (Kileen Clondalkin workers—BE PREPARED.)

Wolves

Why this sudden resurgence in investment in corrugated packaging?

With the increased oil prices,

plastics, an offspin, is losing its attraction as a packaging material in some areas.

So the wolves move in again to grab a share of the action they had largely deserted.

So now we see Multinational chess with Irish Paper Mills' workers as pawns.

Why then was there no fight-back in Waterford? What were the workers doing while these machinations were going on?

Platitudes

The answer is very 'cle. Such a move as the bosses made could have been beaten, and all the ingredients were there for a workers victory and one with tremendous ramifications for the rest of the working class at that.

If ever we had a call for "occupation demanding nationalisation would have struck a chord in the ears of ordinary workers and was not simply a slogan of the Ultra Left, the Paper Mills issue was it."

Even in Fianna Fail's capitalist view of things it made economic sense. With a raw material of waste paper and pulp from inferior timber, the Government could have lobbed off foreign capitalists fears with platitudes about re-cycling and forestation policies in this instance.

And if the the Paper Mills workers would have fought what kind of support could they have

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PRESS GANG ON RAMPAGE

THE UNION bashers are back. Dessie O Malley kicked it off to a good start with his warning about the "anarchists" at work in industry. Now the press and the Trade Unions are falling over themselves to spew out the same line.

Barely a week goes by without a screaming headline against the "unofficial strikers" or shop stewards.

Here's how the campaign has got going with some recent strikes.

ALCAN.

NOT for a long time have a group of workers come under such a shower of abuse. True to its traditions the 'Independent' lead the campaign. It jumped in at the end of April with a massive headline on "The Wreckers". Right through the dispute it ran stories of shop stewards "just back from England", linking up with subversives and talked about the need to weed out "troublemakers".

To cap it all off when the settlement came in, the headline in its sister paper The 'Herald' was "Alcan jobs at £16,000 a year".

Of course its absolute rubbish — and hypocritical rubbish at that coming from well-heeled hacks on over £150 a week.

THE NURSES.

KEEPING up to its usual standards of high objectivity, the Herald had a front page story on a psychiatric patient dying as a result of negligence during the nurses strike. And the Independent screamed at the cheek of those damn Cork Nurses taking over doctors jobs.

AER LINGUS.

MOUNTAINS of words were churned out about the numbers of jobs and contracts lost or the holidays ruined.

It all came straight from the mouth of D. Kennedy — the boss of Aer Lingus. Not a word written about the whys or the causes of the dispute. "Asking too much" is how the editorial had it

The Independent and Herald are owned by the likes of Tony O Reilly. Last year it turned a pre-tax profit of £4 million with Tony himself making a cool £90,000 from his shares.

The Evening and Irish Press are dominated by the De Valera family. Last year profits jumped 51% to £1.22 million.

That regular bias against unions shows through continuously. It shows through in reporting which concentrates on the effects of strikes rather than the causes; through a presentation of trade unionists as aggressive and demanding while bosses are continually on the defensive; through a style of language that makes workers look like greedy unthinking morons.

But the present campaign goes well beyond the regular bias. Each year the media does its bit to help bring about Wage Agreements. And there is no better way than by giving out the impression of public hostility to any union that might be "asking too much".

It's also got the task of preparing the way for anti-strike legislation. The media is now out to point its finger at where those laws should be directed — at the shop stewards and the rank and file. Harold O Sullivan's attack on shop stewards was a godsend. The Evening Press headlined it: "Shop Stewards: the strike facts."

More than fifty years ago Connolly christened the papers of the day the "Yellow Press". He had good reason, too. It was the same Irish Independent that clamoured the loudest for his execution.



Have you been smeared while on strike? Been labelled a wrecker? Well, there is something you can do about it. The National Union of Journalists operates a Code of Conduct where it outlaws 'distortion' and 'discrimination'. Trade unionists can and should use this code to make their protests. So get in touch with the local NUJ shop steward at their national office at Liberty Hall, Dublin

Paper Mills
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expected from the rest of Waterford workers?

In response to a Trades Council, the answer was given. Virtually every worker in the city and its hinterlands joined a half day strike and demonstration supporting action to resist the closure.

1913

During this huge show of workers' solidarity, reputed to be the biggest since 1913, we also had a look at the role the supposedly neutral State takes in worker/boss confrontation.

For the first time in recent history we had the spectacle of the Armed Forces complete with armoured cars et al, confronting a peaceful Trade Union Demo.

But still the PM workers would not fight. Despite the urgings of the minority of militants demanding occupation, the majority instead was swayed by the scare talk of its erstwhile leaders - "Any militant action now would lead to total closure, scare off future take-over bids, and lead to the loss of redundancy entitlements."

Demoralised

The latter argument was particularly daunting for the older workers, many of whom had worked there since the start.

So the Mill was allowed to close and we had to watch the unseemly rush for the "gravy-boat" of redundancy with more workers opting for it than the Company required, leading to the unlikely situation where they actually had to recruit people.

There are many contributing factors as to why the PM workers were so demoralised and lacking in unity and confidence, to have followed such disastrous leader-

ship. Not the least of them being a protracted 16 week strike in 1966, when the place was then owned by Du Pont, a US Multi-national whose method of handling strikes in the States was the employment of armed thugs against the pickets.

Their methods in Waterford then were no less vicious. They simply disappeared early in that strike and left poverty, hardship and division do the rest.

Eventually the workers were forced back, a crushed and divided force.

Shop-floor

Confidence on the shop-floor was never truly rebuilt which led to a slavish dependance on the full-time T U officials for leadership, never a good position to be in, at the best of times, but disastrous, as it transpires in the PM.

And so in the present mess, what was Mr Bunting to do to achieve his aim of total closure? There's a standard procedure in these circumstances; provoke a strike, bleat about a recalcitrant workforce - impossible to continue in such circumstances, claim that there must be sweeping changes or total closure.

That this is increasingly common practice ask the workers of Clover Meats, IMP (DUBLIN) ALCAN etc.,

In this instance the management simply withheld the bonus payments due to the general workers the Labour Court found for, the men, the union ITGWU promised backing,

Disunity

Incidentally these bonus payments had been held back for several months before the workers tried to force payment. But after years of disunity, inter-section hostility and suspicion they simply didn't know how to fight.

Confusion reigned, work to rules voted on and then rescinded, more limited action like overtime bans and refusal of transfer to different grade areas of work, was decided on.

To bring things to a head, the bosses struck 3 men off the payroll, which after some dithering produced the result they wanted i.e. unofficial pickets on the plant.

When this decision was reversed 3 days later, Michael O'Brien, the union full timer phoned a management spokesman to inform him that his (ITGWU) members would be calling off the action and would unconditionally return to work next day.

"What members?" replied the spokesman, "you have no members here, they are all sacked."

Redundancy

Finally management, on the 6th June gave notice that the factory was closed and that those involved in the dispute were not eligible for redundancy, state or otherwise.

So there is stands, with the Union shouting for Public enquiries and the workers left to look to Redundancy Appeals Tribunal for the paltry statutory payments, with Waterford's third biggest industry gone along with 461 jobs, (281 in 1978, 180 now), and the Company after blatant asset-stripping and diverting of orders; successful in their ploy of engineering a closure.

As I said at the start, a bitter lesson.

Lets make sure it never happens again.

**OPPOSE ALL REDUNDANCIES
RESIST ALL CLOSURES
DO NOT BE DIVERTED FROM
DIRECT ACTION AT THE OUT
SET.**

**BY WATERFORD BRANCH OF
SWM**

Miriam Daly



Miriam Daly

The Socialist Workers Movement offers its sympathy and solidarity to the family, friends and comrades of Miriam Daly who was murdered recently in Belfast.

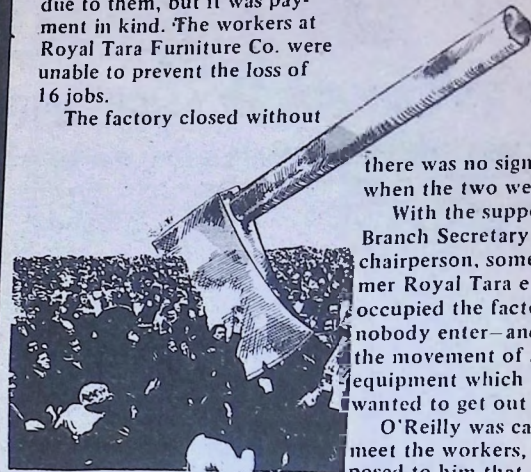
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Page 8 Eamonn O Dwyer.

NAVAN: Workers Occupy

A one-day factory occupation by Navan Members of the National Union of Woodworkers last month helped secure them holiday pay which was due to them, but it was payment in kind. The workers at Royal Tara Furniture Co. were unable to prevent the loss of 16 jobs.

The factory closed without



NUW Branch Secretary, Jim O'Brien, was called in an hour before the closure was due to take place. O'Reilly told him he would need a fortnight to raise the holiday money. But

there was no sign of any cash when the two weeks were up.

With the support of the Branch Secretary and Branch chairperson, some of the former Royal Tara employees occupied the factory, letting nobody enter - and preventing the movement of stock and equipment which O'Reilly wanted to get out

O'Reilly was called in to meet the workers, who proposed to him that they would take several suites of furniture as payment for holidays, leaving the union officials "to press for the other outstanding items through the standard channels."

The suites have since been sold to raise the holiday pay.

Jim O'Brien

HOUSING ACTION

WATERFORD is facing one of the worst housing crises in its history.

There are well over 600 families on the housing list.

Many of these are living in quite appalling conditions in derelict flats and small old houses built over a hundred years ago.

The City Manager and other officials have admitted that you would not keep grey hounds in the conditions in which some of these people are living.

The Corpo officials believe that there is a desperate need for at least 200 houses to be built immediately.

Yet despite all this and the fact that Waterford has the oldest housing stock in the entire country, there is no intention to start building any more new houses.

The Corpo has plans drawn up and the tenders cleared for 75 houses to be built in Ballybeg, but central government are holding them up - they will not part with the funds.

This is a direct result of their policy of cutbacks in public expenditure.

The problem is further compounded by the Department of Finance who have stopped the Housing Department developing sites and giving them to groups of workers who are in a position to build their own homes.

All this in an area where there are many hundreds of building workers unemployed. This is just another example and indictment of the crazy system under which we live.

But what can be done?

The Waterford Branch of the Socialist Workers Movement are preparing to try to give a lead and hope to help in setting up of a Housing Action Group.



Glad to be Gay



THE YEAR was 1969, the city New York, the place Greenwich Village. For some time the meeting places and pubs of gay people were being constantly harassed and raided by New York cops.

One night in June of that year, gays decided that enough was enough.

And they fought back.

For two nights two nights the cops were driven out of the pubs they'd come to raid and pitched battles took place on the streets outside.

For us gays, it was our Bogside, our Bristol, our Soweto.

From it sprang the Gay Liberation Movement.

It inspired gays the world over to come out and organise themselves and to proclaim their sexuality to a hostile society.

Some reforms were won in the

United States and Europe, but complete liberation is far from being won and cannot be won in present society.

In Ireland, the impact of gay liberation has been minimal and it never seemed to have the militancy or staying power of the women's movement.

Perhaps it is because the most radical gays have got out of the country, finding the oppressive moralities of the Catholic South and Puritan North too much to bear.

The only action on the political front at the moment is Norris's constitutional case which is aiming to repeal the 1860 laws, which for-

bid homosexual acts between consenting male adults.

Macho

There has never been a substantial presence of gays in the revolutionary left wing groups in Ireland and the experience of gays in such groups in Britain has been far from happy.

For politically conscious gays, the "macho" style in personalities and organisation of these groups has been off-putting as these are the very symbols of the oppression of gays in the wider straight world.

But there can be no full sexual liberation of any kind outside a socialist society, but a socialist society that doesn't have an element of the personal politics of the new gay left will not be a liberated society.



URANIUM MINES FOR IRELAND?

GEORGE COLLEY, with his playing down of the nuclear option and sudden interest in alternative energy has taken the wind out of the mills of many anti-nukes.

Reports from around the country indicate that many groups are dead or dormant.

Argument rages within the movement as to what game Colley is playing.

Is he diffusing the issue now with a view to reintroducing the nuclear option later when the opposition is in disarray?

Or is he going softly-softly on the question of a nuclear power station to create a favourable climate for sneaking in a uranium mine or two?

Whichever is the case, it is certainly clear that for the EEC the best Irish eggs lie in the uranium basket:

Many of the EEC's other sources of uranium are trouble spots far afield where mining is made difficult by international regulations or political pressures.

Britain, for example, imports 40% of her uranium needs from Namibia in contravention of a UN ban on mining there.

Uranium

Trade union opposition in Australia has held up the uranium mining programme by two years there.

The discovery of a significant deposit of uranium in a stable state within its own borders would be an untold advantage to the EEC.

Under Common Market regulations, other EEC nuclear powers could lay claim to a given proportion of uranium discovered in Ireland.

Even if we had our own nuclear power station, the uranium would have to be sent abroad to be enriched before it could be used.

The uranium miner who brought home a lump of uranium and tried to burn it in his grate, found out a few home truths about nuclear fission.

Ireland will be in the same position unless she gets involved in the EEC's nuclear-military cycle.

Atom Bomb

Uranium was originally mined for the noble purpose of developing the atom bomb.

The vast bulk of uranium still ends up as fodder for nuclear weapons.

It can be used either in the form of enriched uranium or as plutonium (part of the waste from a nuclear reactor).

The enrichment of Irish uranium or the reprocessing of Irish nuclear waste would be carried out in Britain or France, both nuclear weapons powers knee-deep in nuclear stock-piling and the spreading of nuclear arms technology around the world.

The chances of Irish uranium ending up in a big bomb are quite high.

The slender thread of Irish neutrality would be snapped. Uranium mining must therefore be opposed, not only for its own sake (an American physicist has shown that the death-rate from uranium mining and milling is four times that for the production of coal) but also because the only use for uranium is nuclear fission.

By taking fission off the agenda at the same time as the uranium question gets hot, Colley may have succeeded in placing uranium in the category of "just another mineral."

But that is something that the parent of the A-bomb most certainly ain't!

The race for Irish uranium has been going on for 4 years.

It is a tribute to the underhandness of the mining company Maugh, that it has been prospecting away merrily in Co. Carlow since 1976 without attracting the slightest publicity, either adverse or favourable.

Maugh, which is a subsidiary of a French company, Minatone (and France is the real Bad Guy of the international nuclear scene, being a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) has received prospecting grants from the EEC - 481,000 in 1976, £338,000 in 1977 and since then unknown amounts.

Prospecting

Maugh is probably none too pleased with Munster Base Metals the Company which went public on their uranium prospecting operations in Donegal.

Even though the best quality uranium is thought to be in Co. Carlow, according to the Irish Times, the publicity given to the Donegal venture has meant that the most organised opposition to uranium prospecting has grown up there.

Recently, however, an anti-uranium group has been started in Carlow, which has already picketed the Maugh offices in Carlow - most of their initial work consisted of trying to find the offices, which were, of course, unmarked.

Until recently, the uranium issue was seen by the anti-nuke movement as a purely local issue, the function of the movement in general being to provide "solidarity" for local initiatives.

The opportunity was lost to

The Moles of the Left

FROM TIME to time they emerge for meetings on the world crisis, Nicaragua, Lenin, imperialism—the moles of the socialist movement.

Pens poised, they wait for the speakers to deviate from the path of socialist truth. With involuntary groans and sighs, they note down the heresies.

When talk changes to current tasks of socialists in the working class movement, their eyes glaze over as they rehearse their denunciations of the analysis. Their questions are never questions, always corrections.

A parody? No way; rather, a moderate description of some of those who turned up to hear Duncan Hallas of the Socialist Workers Party (Britain), address a meeting organised by the Socialist Workers Movement in Dublin.

While a member of the SWM outlined that organisation's views of the opportunities for socialists in the unions, the anti-imperialist movement, the women's movement, two of them carried on an intense conversation. And the fruits of their discussion was a

long meandering criticism of the things which Duncan Hallas has not said, and later a "vigorous protest at the lack of scientific rigour" of his speech.

There are a couple of catch-phrases with which the mini-Popes bearing the infallible message of marxism and leninism justify themselves: no revolutionary practice without revolutionary theory; the poverty of theory on the Irish Left; the need for a correct understanding of the laws of capitalism.

No serious socialist could quibble with any of these slogans. But they are no more than slogans. And in the hands of some they become a rationalisation for a singular concern with alleged problems of theory quite cut off from those of strategy and tactics. Much more seriously, they cover an inability to deal with new developments which affect workers' consciousness or with the immediate problems facing workers' organisations.

Several people who attended that Dublin meeting insisted they wanted to know how Duncan Hallas explained the continuing expansion of capitalism from the end of the second world war up to the early 1970s.

Not in order to offer an alternative explanation, even less to suggest a different set of guidelines for political activity. They just wanted to be able to check his account with the biblical truth which they alone understand.

Historical

The references to the Pope, heresy and the bible are not accidental: these "theorists" have a notion of scientific socialism which is unchanging, which asserts the inevitability of historical laws and believes nothing has changed in the world order since it was analysed by the great authorities.

That kind of respect for sacred text has nothing to do with socialist method.

It was, in their view, sheer heresy for a member of the SWM to claim that Lenin had outlined two quite different perspectives for the Russian revolutionaries in the highly repressive circumstances of 1905 and in the upheavals of

1917.

But surely if Lenin had NOT outlined different perspectives to meet different circumstances, he would not have been the great revolutionary he undoubtedly was.

The most important thing to be gained from a reading of the "classics" is not a list of theses cut in stone for ever, but a method of understanding reality and acting to change it.

Suspicious

It should begin to make people a bit suspicious of dogmatists that the same group of socialists can say ten years ago with absolute conviction that national reunification and independence were incidentals in the socialist revolution and to say today with at least the same conviction that these are THE major issues facing the working class.

Of course, it is more than reasonable for socialists to change their minds, even about such major topics. But if they are going to do that, then they would be doing themselves and those who listen to them a service by not claiming that they are "correct" on all occasions.

Socialists—even Marx, Lenin and Trotsky—can make mistakes.

Partly out of the isolation which the apparent success of much more moderate, reformist politics have imposed on them, those who claim the mantle of these authorities most emphatically, have thought themselves on to a pedestal from which there is no admitting doubts, hesitations, new problems.

It takes no great perception to see that Irish socialism is poorly equipped with books which present a marxist-based analysis of capitalism in this country.

Contradictions

There are good reasons for that: the division in the working class, the complicated effects of partition, the flagrant contradictions between economic self-interest and political ideology all present more difficult problems of understanding than those facing socialists in most European countries. And there has never been a critical intellectual tradition of any weight.

But workers are not going to wait until the I's have been dotted and the T's crossed on the definitive analysis; the workers in the nationalist minority of the North are pitted in struggle against the state; the workers of the 26 Counties are fighting for a bigger slice of the cake; the most conscious women are seeking actively to widen their opportunities to shake off the shackles of their oppression.

The theoretical as well as practical activities of socialists have to be addressed to encouraging those struggles and binding them into a cohesive force which can open cracks in the system which the ruling class cannot patch up.

This is a time of rich challenges and opportunities for socialists in Ireland.

Clearly they cannot be faced without a clear sense of direction.

But you don't have to speak in riddles or gobbledegook to show you know where you're going.

The only place the moles are going is underground.

A LITTLE BIT OF SOCIALISM
by Brian Trench



CARNSORE 1980—DETAILS.

Carnsore organising meetings are taking place at regular intervals and much of the spade-work is already done.

The format for this year is that every group will mount its own workshop.

The focus is on the educational side; music will be restricted and not advertised.

The demo will last from August 11—18, although the main action will be on the weekend 16—18.

The emphasis on uranium mining and the participation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament which make the connections between the different elements of the nuclear fuel cycle and the organised participation of the Trade Union Anti-Nuclear Campaign will point to the new direction that the movement has taken in the last year.

It is to be hoped that the demo will at least revive those groups which have been demoralised by the Colley U-turn and that the serious tone to the demo will not backfire in a year when the issue of nuclear power seems to the public to be receding.

hold the annual "demonstration" (as this year's festival is called) in Fintona or some area where uranium prospecting is going on.

Since that decision was made, the uranium issue has become the top priority of the movement and much of the Carnsore demo will focus on it.

Meanwhile, in the lion's den, the Donegal Uranium Committee are organising a one-day seminar on uranium mining in Lettermacaward, Co..

Donegal on Saturday, June 28.

A social on Friday night will be followed by a Saturday morning session in Lettermacaward Hall which is restricted to Donegal groups and an afternoon session which is open to everyone.

This meeting may be a more significant event for the anti-nuke movement than the "new look" Carnsore.

Molly O Duffy.

Special Courts threat to all

FOR THE past few years Irish people have been confronted with posters and literature, which claimed that members of the Irish Republican Socialist Party who were convicted of the 'Great Train Robbery' at Sallins in 1976, had been framed. The recent release of Osgur Breathnach and Brian McNally indicated that this was true, but the fact remains that these men served nearly 18 months of a sentence for a crime they did not commit. How can this happen in a democratic country?

The problem lies in the existence of the Special Criminal Court. Part 5 of the Offences against the State Act 1939 gives the government a free hand to introduce these courts whenever they see fit. All they have to do is to say that the normal courts are inadequate and give some reason like the possibility of intimidation of jurors or witnesses. The fact of the matter is that there has never been any sound case supporting that this has happened. A picket outside a court would be intimidation as far as they are concerned.

Section 36 of the Act allows the government to declare offences to be scheduled offences. If someone appears before the District Court charged with a scheduled offence the justice, must, if the Attorney-General requests—he's only a puppet of the government anyway—send him for trial to the Special Criminal Court.

Eligible

Not content with this, the government appoints and can remove at will, the members of the juryless court. To be eligible for membership you either have to be over seven years in the legal profession or not below the rank

of Commandant in the Army!

Mary Robinson. The senator argues that the court operates very well when sitting as one chamber presided over by a High Court Judge and covered adequately by the press. The point is that the press, in the vast majority of cases, consistently backs the government on political issues such as this and is totally opposed to any anti-imperialist or socialist resistance. Being a member of the Labour party, she belongs to a group, like FF and FG, who were quite content to let such repressive legislation exist.

Trade unionists

The implications for workers are starkly obvious. Today republicans, tomorrow trade unionists. When the government face crisis and workers' opposition because they can't or won't deliver the goods they will use any form of state apparatus to attempt to smash it. The call must be—Abolish Special Courts Now!

ICTU special

All Chiefs - No Indians

ICTU special

Two tier madness

TWELVE YEARS ago, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions was little more than a talk-shop.

But it had some pull—because the ICTU Executive Committee was often involved in negotiating the irregular wage-rounds which preceded the National Wage Agreements.

Now it controls much of Irish Trade Unionism. How did this come about?

The two major changes that have taken place in the last 12 years are the National Wage Agreements and the two-tier picket system.

Up to 1970, wages in the 26-counties were largely determined by national wage rounds plus local or grade negotiated agreements.

The national agreements established little more than the amount of a general increase and its duration.

The more restrictive NWAs grew to cover wider aspects of pay and conditions.

The National Understanding is really just the old NWA plus Government promises on jobs and social services.

The fact that these promises are invariably broken doesn't stop the ICTU from claiming to have a major say in Government policy-making.

Aside from the "tripartite" talks on economic and social policy, connected to the National Understanding, the ICTU is getting sucked into other areas of state involvement.

In 1969, the ICTU was represented on 12 state-sponsored committees—today the number is 35, 8 of which are EEC-sponsored committees.

It sits down with the bosses at the Labour Court where it appoints one third of the "judges," and agrees to clauses in the NWAs which force all grievances to the Labour Court.

Over the years, Congress has complained of delays and Government interference in the Court, but shows no sign of pulling out.

The 1971 National Wage Agreement set up the "Employer-Labour Conference" where they sit with employers playing the role of judge when bosses complain about unions breaking the terms of National Wage Agreements.

Congress obliges the bosses when complaints are upheld and threaten to suspend unions unless they get into line.

Postal workers were threatened last year in the middle of their biggest struggle and AGEMOU, the Automobile union, was suspended and later expelled from Congress. It makes you wonder what side they are on!

Squeeze more, pay less

The Irish Productivity Centre, as its name suggests, aims to help squeeze more work out of workers for less pay and fewer jobs.

Since before 1970, the ICTU has been involved in IPC. Class collaboration is not a new thing.

The last major development since 1968 is the two-tier picket. This resulted from the successful Maintenance workers' dispute in 1969.

The craftsmen forced a 20% wage rise—large in those days of low inflation—and nearly wrecked the FUE in the process.

But this marvellous rank-and-file controlled victory was won by bringing tens of thousands of general workers out by wide-spread picketing.

Needless to say, the leaders of the General Unions, instead of using the victory to force similar

wanted "One Big Union" We have no need of divisions based on skill or grade.

But we don't need a strong Congress based on the unity of bureaucrats using its strength to collaborate with the bosses in holding down wages etc.

At the rate things are going, Congress—who have seemingly given the FUE promises on hammering unofficial strikes—will possibly give in to the bosses and government's demands to outlaw unofficial strikes.

Also under threat are sympath-

etic strikes and flying pickets.

At the same time the trend could continue of taking power from elected shop stewards and putting it in the hands of full-time officials.

At the end of this road is American-style business unionism—workers becoming the product that union bosses sell for big contracts.

Some say get out of the ICTU, this is no more an answer than getting out of your union. The unions in Ireland grew up from the shop-floor.

Full-time officials are fairly recent positions in the history of most unions. On paper, unions are democratic organisations.

It is up to union members and shop stewards not only to run an open union section in their factories and encourage maximum participation by the members but to get involved at branch and national level where policy decisions are taken.

As long as the union bureaucrats can say "well the members voted for it..." they can keep their positions.

Get involved, get them out and replace them with elected, answerable and representative activists.

TOM O'CONNOR.



Last year's tax campaign effectively sabotaged by the ICTU.

claims for their own members, turned against the craft unions.

The result was the passing of the two-tier picket policy—ending the strongest weapon in the hands of the working class, respect for striking picketers.

Why the rush into the arms of the employers and the state?

This process is not something new to Congress, they have been collaborating with the boss class ever since De Valera told them "Labour must wait."

But the acceleration of the process and the continuing rightward drift of Congress can be linked to the make up of Congress and Irish Union membership.

In 1960 a mere 6% of delegates to the ICTU Annual Conference were drawn from public service white collar unions. By 1969 the figure was 15% and 32% by 1979.

This reflects a rapid growth in these unions whose members are often right wing.

Secure employment (predominately teachers and civil servants) and soft (in comparison to manual work) jobs can give these workers illusions in "a classless society."

At the same time, representation of the two main Irish-based General Unions—ITGWU and WUI—at ICTU Annual Conferences has remained more or less static.

Politically, general workers are potentially more left-wing. However, these two unions are pretty undemocratic and more bureaucratic.

And the Maintenance dispute of 1969 has resulted in bitter relations between these unions, leaders and those of the craft unions.

These two blocks—ITGWU, WUI and the public service white-collar unions now dominate Congress Conferences and come to represent more in the ICTU Executive Committee, reflecting a rightward shift.

Does it matter? Yes, Congress has grown in size and strength to 650,000 affiliated members from half a million in 1969.

Control over member unions has also increased to the extent of being able to expel AGEMOU and threaten major unions like POWU and ATGWU with suspension.

It is not that the rules have been radically changed, just implemented more rigidly, to the extent that the Marine Port Union left Congress rather than submit to rule 47.

Socialists should not oppose a strong united Congress. Connolly

IF YOU had a headache and bought tablets that made your headache worse, it would be time to change your brand of aspirin.

It is time to change our brand of Congress official.

Again and again, in recent times, the ICTU has acted to hinder rather than help the trade union struggle.

Two examples: When the POWU were locked out in a bitter struggle with the state—physically as well as industrially—last year, Congress threatened to expell it for breaking the National Understanding.

At the present time, as the Aer Lingus craftsmen are showing the way by fighting for wage increases, Congress issues a strong statement deploring how "ten leading unions" are breaking the National Understanding.

Top Lid

Congress—which should be the central co-ordinating arena for solidarity to trade unions in struggle—is instead the top lid upon the whole movement: dominated by unelected individuals furthest removed from the shop floor and the personalities, such as Ruadhí Roberts, Fintan Kennedy and Harold O'Sullivan, most committed to the politics of "the national interest" and collaborating with the bosses.

The consolidation of national wage bargaining over the past decade has inevitably heightened the role and power of Congress.

The National Understanding is a development of central bargaining on wages and the social wage and on behalf of all the underprivileged.

This has been used as a powerful argument for central bargaining—"we need an agreement to cover issues no shop steward or individual union could deal with (social welfare, increased employment, etc.)."

However, in the National Understanding, the trade union leadership have stood the need for united action by the whole movement around such issues, on its head.

Action never enters into it, with the result that not only is

ICTU special

We can change it

wage bargaining strangled, as in the old National Wage Agreements, but the social "gains", for which wage rises are traded, have not been delivered through the polite clauses of the National Understanding.

Ironically, the tenure of the first National Understanding saw the Haughey cuts in public spending.

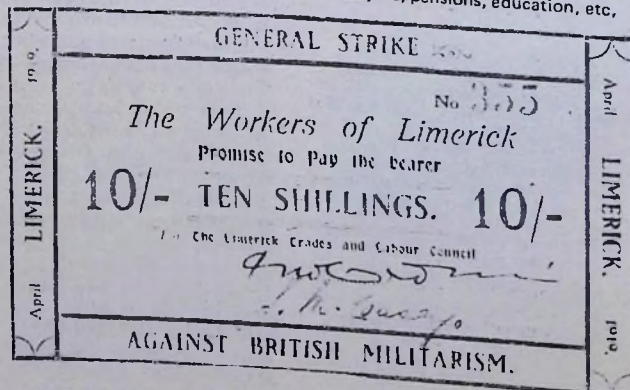
Instead, improvements in social welfare, jobs, etc. have to be fought for, and should be fought for as a complement to free collective bargaining on wages throughout the trade union movement.

A democratic, fighting Congress would act as the organiser and co-ordinator of action on central issues such as a national minimum wage and increased welfare benefits.

It would be open to initiatives and suggestions from the rank and file.

Taxes—there is an issue tailor-made for simultaneous action directed through Congress.

Instead, the one day general strikes were undertaken against the express wishes and sabotage of Congress and most of the leaders of the major unions.



Limerick Trades and Labour Council ten shilling note used by Limerick workers during the massive anti-militarism strike of 1919. Can you imagine the ICTU backing such action today?

mittee has granted an "all-out" picket.

Only then should you respect the picket, says Congress!

The ICTU bureaucrats haven't had it all their own way. Irish workers have shown in the past what they thought of scabbing, and the fact that scabbing is now official trade union policy has been fought on many occasions by workers involved in a dispute.

Congress tries hard, though, to hammer home the rule.

At every shop-steward's course organised by the ICTU, little diagrams are drawn on a board for shop stewards with headings which read:

- Your own union on strike—don't pass;
- Non-Congress Union on strike—pass;
- Another union on strike with-

over the table with bosses and government, they are dealing in matters more obviously political than wages.

Yet when it comes to doing rather than talking, such "political" items are taboo.

Suddenly "political" strikes, such as the tax strike, are not within the scope of the respectable trade unionism of these gentlemen.

They are a challenge to parliamentary democracy (which indeed they are).

But their respect for parliament does not tame their arrogance in horse-trading, not just the wages of their members, but the living standards of welfare recipients and unemployed people over whom they can claim no jurisdiction.

And that in Aqley House, several blocks away from Leinster House.

Strikes

There was a time when "political" strikes were not viewed with such horror.

During the War of Independence, a series of such strikes played no mean part in the struggle against imperialism.

Congress led the anti-conscription fight with a general strike in 1918. Conscription was kept out of Ireland...

In the following years, the Munitions Transport, the Motor Permits, and the Limerick strikes put pressure on the British forces, and in 1923, came the "anti-militarist" general strike, which played into the hands of the pro-Treatyites.

Of course, political action cannot be left to the trade unions alone.

In order to lead all the struggles of the class, including those outside of the immediate concern of trade unionism as such, onward towards the eventual capture of state power, a revolutionary workers party is needed.

But in the meantime, what can we do about a Congress controlled by a sellout leadership.

Within the unions, the rank and file need to be organised to change the whole undemocratic structure of the trade union movement.

An alternative focus for leadership and solidarity, such as a National Shop Stewards' Movement, needs to be built which can counter the arguments and manoeuvrings of the Congress top brass.

Des Derwin.

ITGWU—drifting around in Wexford

THE NEWSPAPER reports of the conference of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union give no impression of its main features: total confusion and pointlessness.

Here's what happened during one afternoon of the recent get-together in Wexford:

3.10 John Burke, branch secretary of Dublin No 4 Branch, delivers a passionate speech about the need for a common working class policy for all unions.

3.15 A Newry delegate urges opposition to any change in Congress rules which would reduce the influence of trade councils.

3.25 A Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny, delegate makes a plea for special consideration of the low paid in any new National Understanding.

3.30 Michael Berney, of Dublin No 17 Branch, comments on John Burke's speech and says the union's conference should not be used as a platform for Fianna Fail.

3.35 Frank Lewis, of Nenagh, details some of the frustrations of trying to get a Labour Court hearing, declares that a con job was done on the extension of eligibility for free hospital services and calls for unity of farmers and workers to make sure that all processing of food produced here is done in this country.

No Chance

There's no denying the validity of many of the points. But with as many as twenty resolutions and a whole section of the annual report on the floor at any one time, there is no chance for any real exchange or argument. At the end of the session, the union president, Fintan Kennedy, calls for votes on each of the resolutions. Each vote is preceded by a reminder of the National Executive's attitude—and their view is always respected.

When there is dissent among delegates, the confusion is total. On one such occasion on that afternoon less than 40 people—at a conference with over 300 delegates—took part in the vote. There was a very clear difference between a Dublin amendment and a Cork

"Each vote is preceded by a reminder

of the Executive's attitude — and their

view is always respected . . ."

resolution on the appointment of new conciliation officers in the Labour Court. But the resolution and amendment both went through with the same support.

The next morning was different, it must be said. For two and a half hours the officers and delegates concerned themselves with just one set of issues: women's equality. And the impressive and even surprising thing about the discussion was not only the understanding shown that women are sorely disadvantaged and discriminated against but that trade unions can and must play a very active part in redressing that imbalance. From a situation of a few years ago when the notion of positive discrimination in the unions to encourage greater participation by women would not have had a hearing it is now being widely canvassed.

The lack of equality was there for all to see: just twelve of the ITGWU delegates were women. That certainly put into perspective the claims being made—perhaps to soften up the delegates—that the ITGWU has given a lead for women's

rights. The delegation which the union sends to Congress conferences shows the point even more clearly: it frequently does not include even one woman.

From Middleton, Galway, Shannon and Letterkenny as well as from Dublin there were women delegates ready to explain how women were inhibited in playing a full part in the union, and how the double burden of worker and housewife operated against them.

The basis of the discussion was a document on equality for women, prepared by the ITGWU Research Division, and which is the most comprehensive account of women in the work force and in the unions which has yet been produced. The congratulations for the authors of the document were unanimous. There was nobody who dared to argue with it, even if, privately, they felt like it.

The same tide of opinion in favour of a more assertive stand for women's rights is being felt in other unions. Several of them have put forward resolutions for the July conference of Congress which refer to "affirmative action" or

"positive discrimination" to make sure that women are represented at all levels of the trade union movement.

There was much point and little confusion to that session of the ITGWU conference, even if the "result" was very vague and there are many reasons to doubt that the practical follow-up will be as enthusiastic as the debate. Those 2½ hours were an island of hard information and argument in a sea of waffle or speeches made just for the record. For most of the time the delegates do little to justify their presence at the conference, and the procedures ensure that.

Reporting

But, if this is obvious to many of the delegates and to the people reporting it for the media, why do the published accounts give so little feel of the way in which the conference drifts around? The reporters seem to want just a little to pad around the scripted speeches of the union's leaders.

And the leaders have their ways of encouraging that kind of coverage. On the second evening of the conference, the "Gentlemen of the press", as they are known and as they inevitably are (male, that is), were happy to accept an invitation to dine in the seafood restaurant of White's Hotel with Messrs. Kennedy, Carroll and Mullen.



Penneys Strike—destroyed by two tier picket

out an all-out sanction by Congress—pass;

Union on strike with the all-out sanction—don't pass.

The damage done to basic trade unionism by bureaucratic rules such as these is enormous.

Workers become frustrated, demoralised and sometimes even anti-union when confronted with union officials ordering other workers to pass pickets because of the Congress rule.

Congress will not sanction an all-out picket unless "the union applying for the support of other unions entered into negotiations".

Yet often strikers will not enter negotiations because the employer may insist on discussing something not connected with the claim, for example: redundancies.

If strikers are seeking support from Congress and their claim is outside the National Understanding, then there is not a hope.

Because only two kinds of picket are "official" according to Congress a worker who refuses to cross a picket of another union which is not "all-out" gets no strike pay.

Applications to the Congress Industrial Relations Committee takes weeks and weeks while the strikers become demoralised seeing other workers crossing the line with union backing.

This leads to splits and friction between workers who are members of different unions.

The Penneys Example

The most recent example of the damage done by the Congress Rule was a strike by 41 members of the ITGWU working for Penney's Stores in Dublin.

There have been many other examples, but the frustration and demoralisation suffered by these workers stands as a living monument to bureaucratic madness and the Bigwigs indifference.

At the beginning of April, the Primark group of companies which control the 20 Penny shops in the 26-Counties, decided to make 21 workers redundant in their warehouse at the North Wall in Dublin.

Dublin No. 15 Branch of the ITGWU placed official pickets on all the Dublin Stores which had 40 ITGWU people working in them.

The workers picketed round the clock. The Company tried all sorts of dirty tricks to break the strike.

Where management failed, Congress succeeded. After nearly two months out in defence of the jobs, it was the bureaucratic games played by Congress leaders and their picketing policy which broke the strike.

When pickets were placed by the ITGWU, the Irish Union of Distributive Workers and Clerks representing all the sales staff in Penney's Stores instructed its members to pass the pickets.

The reason given was that the ITGWU had not applied to Congress for the all out picket.

When the ITGWU did bring its case to Congress the decision on the all out picket was postponed.

By May 22, the strikers had been picketing for a month.

Still they hoped that Congress would sanction the all out and instruct the IUDWC to bring out its members. There was one snag, however.

The IUDWC is probably the most conservative of trade unions, its leaders hand in hand with management in all the major Dublin stores.

When the application was heard

again by the Industrial Relations Committee of Congress, the IUDWC had found a way out.

Because the workers in the Irish Transport only represented a minority in the job, the Committee would have to insist that six Irish Transport members working in Penneys in Portlaoise would have to be called out.

This was done—it seemed that Sean MacManus the No 15 Branch Secretary had forgot about them.

By now the strikers were becoming angry. Angry at the ITGWU bureaucrats, the scab IUDWC, and the role of Congress.

Snags and Scabs

Now however, another snag arose which the IUDWC official Hanrahan in consultation with the personnel officer in Penneys jumped at. The Westons, Garry and Golden who control Associated British Foods, which in turn controls Penneys, also had interests in a Ballyfermot company called Bee Line Products Ltd, which supplied 20% of Penneys goods.

The Congress committee decided that that ITGWU workers at this plant were also involved.

The Bee Line management insisted they would close for good if they were involved.

No. 15 Branch backed down. Remours went round that even if Bee Line were brought out, many of the 180 workers would not cooperate.

While all this was taking place, John Murphy, the Irish Transport Shop Steward at Penneys, got little support from his branch. No leaflets, no help on the picket line, no fund raising. Sean MacManus, the Branch Secretary, arrived at the picket line after three weeks.

Eventually, with no chance of bringing out the sales people in Penneys, and after weeks of round the clock picketing, the strikers decided that the proposed redundancies would have to be accepted.

They had fought on all sides, they had put up with dirty tricks from Penney's bosses, the Irish Transport, the Congress Industrial Committee and the officials of the IUDWC.

John Murphy, Shop Steward and one of the strikers that suffered redundancy told the "Worker" at the end . . .

"Many of the strikers began to feel it was over. But you can't blame them.

"We were promised the might of the Irish Transport—we didn't get it. All Congress is interested in is power and politics.

"The original trade union idea is gone."

The two-tier picketing policy of Congress must be fought at all costs. Workers, by supporting all strikes for trade union gains can do it.

The booklet on the two-tier picketing policy by Congress says: "Observance of trade union picketing policy is designed solely for the benefit of members.

In their own interests, members should support it and promote its observance."

Tell that to the Penney's strikers!

Dermot Byrne.



ITGWU leader John Carroll—huffs and puffs about wage rises— then leads ITGWU Congress delegates in vote to negotiate new National Understanding.

KEEP IN CONTACT!

The Socialist Workers Movement hold regular meetings, which are open to non-members.

If you would like details of our meetings or more information about the SWM please write for further details to:

SWM c/o 35 Woodbine Rd, Raheen, Dublin 5.

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Women workers must join Unions

THE ITGWU discussion paper "Equality for Women", which was presented to the Union's Annual Conference examines the present situation of women workers, giving very useful statistics on how many women work, where they work and what they earn.

On equal pay, it discusses the limitations of and suggests reforms to the Equal Pay Act.

Maternity/paternity leave; child care facilities; discriminatory practices are looked at.

As are shift/night work and working hours under the headings of equal opportunities, conditions and it offers interesting insights into the problems in these areas.

Part two of the document deals with women in trade unions, and it is this section which has been receiving most publicity.

Women make up a third of the membership of the trade union movement in Ireland, and some unions contain a large majority—three quarters in the CPSSA, 70% of the INTO and 62% of the IUDWC.

However, women are totally

under-represented at every level—as shop stewards; on section, branch and district committees; as delegates to union and ICTU congresses, on executive councils and as full-time officials.

It is to this problem that the controversial part of this document addresses itself.

It argues the need for the active and equal participation of women members in all activities of the trade union.

And to achieve this participation it calls for "positive action."

It suggests that reserved places be kept for women on the Union Executive Committee, pointing out that the ITGWU has done this before in the case of ensuring provincial representation.

The document is quick to recognise the danger of tokenism and argues that such a mechanism as reserved places does not guarantee more participation by women down the line.

It therefore also makes a number of suggestions about how the interest and involvement of women members might be achieved at branch level.

Examples are: setting up ad-hoc sub-committees to discuss equality issues in the branch;

changing the times and places of meetings to facilitate women with children and providing creches, etc.

Women participate less than men in union affairs and this is a major problem—but the problem doesn't end there.

The general level of participation is low—the structure of unions guarantees lack of all rank and file involvement.

With branch meetings perhaps only once a year and rusty-bureaucratic machinery women face an up-hill struggle to get involved.

Of course, the document is silent on this point.

Members become active when they feel they can achieve something.

But, however good is the policy of a Union, there is no way of responding to the feeling on the ground, or mobilising the members on a policy when it is all decided from on high by the Congress or Executive.

Take child care, for example. The ICTU (and ITGWU) policy, formulated by the WAC to Congress, is that the Government should provide community child care facilities "... as an essential pre-requisite to enabling women to exercise their right to work and to achieve equal opportunities," while at the same time there are a number of attempts in workplaces

STOP EXPLOITATION OF OUR VOCATION



to get creches set up.

It would be logical then for the unions involved to put their full weight behind those campaigns—but they don't, and the campaigns are meeting with a stone wall from management.

It is imperative that women become involved in their unions if they are to win their rights, and the suggestions in this booklet are good and useful.

But the lack of participation by women is only one symptom of the undemocratic, bureaucratic nature of the trade union organisations.

Nothing short of radically changing the structures to facilitate involvement by all rank and file members, will solve the problem.

CORK NURSES FIGHT

Maggie Blake

NURSING has always been considered the profession of Florence Nightingale—a vocation rather than a job.

For this reason, mainly, nurses have always been poorly unionised and therefore poorly paid.

Nurses in mental hospitals have traditionally been better organised because male nurses—whether we like it or not—did feel more strongly about the need for unions.

Nurses, therefore, in mental hospitals—especially since the strike of 1972—have enjoyed much better conditions than those in general hospitals.

The majority of nurses in general hospitals have been recruited to the professional body of the INO during their student days.

In 1978, the INO put up a great show of militancy in claiming a 50% increase in salaries.

They said at the time that they would back their claim with (unspecified) "industrial action."

They recruited a lot of new members as a result.

They, together with the other unions involved—PNA, ITGWU—refused an offer of 16% across the board from Haughey, when he was Minister of Health under Lynch.

Then, in true inconsistent manner, they showed that they were prepared to accept what was basically a similar offer twelve months later.

In anger, many nurses, especially outside Dublin, joined what appeared to be the more militant ITGWU and went on a limited strike on May, 1, 80.

This was the first time that nurses in both general and mental hospitals got together and this seemed to terrify the Health Authorities more than anything.

At St Finbarrs, in Cork where I work, we had six nurses in the union a week before the strike.

With the promise of some action to back up our claim, we had 64 out of a total of 150 on strike on May 1st.

This was the first time in the history of that hospital and most other hospitals in Ireland that general nurses had taken any kind of action.

We were totally new to it all and it did frighten some of our members a bit when Matron, with an obvious lack of experience herself of such events, refused to co-operate with our strike committee.

We were forced, without permission, to commandeer a room within the hospital gates from which vantage point we organised an unpaid emergency squad to staff the wards on a purely skeleton basis.

The matron replied by bringing in scabs, but for every one she brought in, we replied by reducing our skeleton staffing so that there was no advantage gained.

Spirits were great; morale was high until the crushing news after 17 days of strike to return to work because the ITGWU accepted the ruling of the Labour Court that we were in breach of the National Agreement.

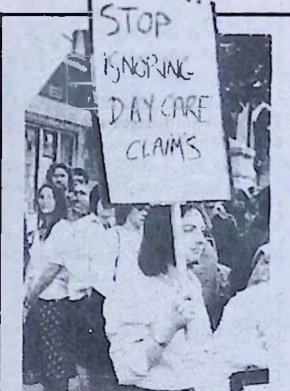
Our members, when balloted, were almost 100% for carrying on with unofficial action until it was pointed out that temporary nurses would automatically break their service and would have no redress in trying to get jobs back.

Also, student nurses would not be covered by An Bord Altranais as having continuous clinical experience and were wide open to discrimination.

With these threats and intimidation and the failure to include the 1200 general nurses votes in the ballot by the ITGWU, we had no choice but to return to work.

Our priorities, with the organisation that we built in the strike, are to improve working conditions which includes:-

- The ending of temporary status;
- The ending of split shifts;
- Payment for time spent in handing over reports;
- A 35 hour week;
- Double payment for all Saturday working.



CHILD CARE SEMINAR

ATTENDERS at the seminar on child care organised by the Feminist Federation at the beginning of June, were informed of an unofficial, informal embargo on the provision of creches for the staffs of state and semi-state bodies.

None of them wants to set the precedent.

However, there is a breakthrough as a group of parents in RTE have got the commitment from Management of a premises and financial support.

BUT—RTE don't plan to build until 1982 and the group aren't prepared to wait that long.

Likewise Dublin Corporation, who at the moment give some assistance to community playgroups as part of their Community Development Scheme, have indicated, again informally that they are totally unprepared to finance any project which does not directly involve the mothers.

The message is clear—They will only help on the basis of keeping women out of the work-force.

Mary Gordon

IRELAND — WOMEN WORKERS

288,300 women work = 28 per cent of workforce, compared to the E.E.C. average of 35 per cent.

(U.K. 39%; France 37%; Germany 38%; Denmark 42%.)

BREAKDOWN BY MARITAL STATUS.

Only 28 per cent of women workers (or 8 per cent of total workforce) are married, compared to E.E.C. average of over 60 per cent of women workers.

(U.K. 67%; Belgium 66%; France 60%; Italy 51% — 1973 figures.)

WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY.

(1979 Figures)

Average weekly earnings of men: £91.38.

Average weekly earnings of women £51.35 (56% of men's.)

Average hourly earnings of men £2.07.

Average hourly earnings of women £1.35 (65% of men's).

Men work an average of 44 hours per week.

Women work an average of 38 hours per week.

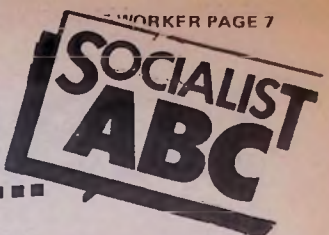
Over 1/3 of all women in manufacturing industries are in textiles, clothing and footwear — lowly paid jobs.

EQUAL PAY ACT (Implemented December 1975)

In December 1975 women's average hourly earnings were 60.7 per cent of men's.

By March 1979 women's average hourly earnings were 65.1 per cent of men's.

Achievement by Act of 4.4 per cent increase.



C is for.....

Women organise in teachers' union

THAT WOMEN are under-represented in the trade union movement generally is a well known fact. That they are equally under-represented in unions with majority female membership is not quite so well known.



The INTO is such a union, with women totalling 70% of membership. At executive level this year there is one woman in a committee of 18—amounting to 5% representation. This level of representation is evident throughout the union, with no women full-time officials, no women on the Finance Committee, one out of 13 on the Education Committee and an equally low rate at District and Branch Committee level.

structure of the meeting encouraged women to speak.

Among the grievances listed were those of the traditional oppression of women which resulted in women lacking confidence in trade union matters, lack of practical facilities to free women to become involved and an attack on the structures of the union which were seen to act against direct involvement.

The point to be made here is that the meeting facilitated women's involvement and exploded the myth that women aren't interested in being trade unionists.

A further meeting on the specific topic of "Women and Trade Union Structures" has been organised for June 11th with speakers from the ICTU womens advisory committee and the sub-committee itself.

Out of the meeting many basic issues were raised, including the call for monthly union meetings on school premises during working hours.

This was seen as the only democratic way of involving the membership at rank and file level.

On shop steward—the INTO has no proper shop steward system in operation.

Training courses for North City Stewards are due to start in September under ICTU auspices.

It was pointed out that all the training officers are men. The sub-committee will submit a demand for female representation.

That the only man on a staff could become shop steward by default was something to be watched—it was agreed that shop stewards should represent shop floor views to Branch Committee and not the reverse.

It was seen as essential that Branch Committee members should represent a certain number of schools and be recallable and answerable to the rank and file who elect them.

It was decided that Branch and Union structures would have to be seriously questioned and changed if the union was to make any pretense of democracy.

The initial breakthrough has now been made. It has been achieved by rank and file women who saw that an all male bureaucracy was never going to facilitate women in the union. Gains which have been made, such as provision of creche facilities for annual and special congresses would never have come about without rank and file pressure from those most affected—women.

It is now up to the rank and file in the rest of the union to push these demands and to initiate positive action within the union for the achievement of proper democratic representation for the majority of its members.

Mary Cummins

THE GENERAL meeting of June 8, called for the general workers of Unidare in the Dublin No 14 Branch ITGWU, to report on the negotiations of the basic pay claim, heard that the company has suspended all talks with the union on such "central" issues.

Unidare bosses flex their muscles - workers strike back

The company was claiming that industrial action was being taken in breach of the procedural agreement.

The members and the stewards knew that they could quote a whole series of recent flaunting of agreements by the company.

A recommendation was forwarded from the Section Committee, that a work to rule, a ban on overtime and one day stoppages be instituted until the company restored normal relations.

This was opposed by the full-time officials but eventually passed by the membership.

However, the overriding issue was an urgent local one: Frank Keogh had been under indefinite suspension for about ten days for "refusing" to transfer to work in an area from which another man had just been himself transferred due to "market recession" and from which several others faced transfer.



and invoking the grievance procedure if moved.

It was not acceptable to the Section, particularly when the same local management—Cyril Caffrey "acting under instructions" immediately told Frank the next day to do the disputed work.

At the general meeting, the full timers had only one message for Frank—do it under protest.

The next day, the section—Pumps and Heating—placed a picket on the gate, and the Section Committee supported them followed by almost all the membership.

On the following Wednesday, a similar settlement formula was put to another General Meeting and work was resumed.

At an immediate meeting with management it was agreed that Frank would do the disputed work "under protest", but an understanding was reached with the company that in the light of the aggravated circumstance, he should not be moved pending discussions of this, and other transfers.

Talks on wages and other "central" issues were also restored.

Shifted

However, first thing the next morning, Cyril Caffrey "acting under instructions" told Frank he would be shifted to the disputed work the following day.

This was reported to the Industrial Relations Manager, with whom the understanding had been established.

To no avail. Frank was shifted the next morning, anyway. Once bitten!

This time however, he did the work under protest as the whole case was due to go before a Rights Commissioner the following Monday.

Maybe IIE would recognise how the company was intent on humiliating Frank Keogh, and since they all had become involved, the whole section.

ITGWU Steward.

SEVENTY GREEN BOTTLES

Seventy maintenance workers—members of NEETU—have been on strike in Irish Glass Bottle for three months. The fitters worked to rule because their wages had fallen £7 below the "downtown rate" and management were not negotiating. Management reacted by sacking four of the workers for sticking to the work-to-rule and blacking a productivity deal.

The ITGWU members are passing the pickets and it looks as though scabbing is taking place as production is kept going in a process that requires continuous maintenance. Several meetings of the ICTU disputes committee failed to give sanction for an all-out picket.

However after several weeks the workers gave up hope in the union bureaucracy and got support from Dublin dockers directly. They then placed flying pickets on a delivery of sand which was brought in from Greenore Co. Louth. This attracted the attention of the gardai. But now the workers are beginning the long awaited fightback.

Tom O Connor

For millions of workers throughout the world, the word, "Capitalism" has a special meaning. It stands for a system that has to be overthrown and smashed. It's not that simple of course, but at least it is a starting point.

To do it we need lots of strong workers organisations, a decent revolutionary party, and a few guns if they don't climb down without a fight. Now that may seem a bit strong—but then it's a strong system and one that's been around for a while.

The reasons for the hatred of the system are many. Capitalism and poverty are twins. In the USA—that massive giant of the system—19% of the population earn less than £42 a week. And that in a system where billions are spent on nuclear weapons; where food such as wheat is stored up in huge quantities to raise the prices; where a massive proportion of production is geared to sheer waste in advertising and arms.

But the central contradiction of it all is that it is absolutely unnecessary. The development of production has meant that it is now possible to feed and clothe the millions who exist in abject poverty. It is the social system—that manner in which we are organised in society—that prevents it.

The way the system works in general is the same here as throughout the world. A top layer of the wealthy own and control the factories, shops, offices and the vast bulk of the goods that we buy.

These people find it necessary to hire out others to work for them to produce goods for the market and at the same time to create huge profits for the ruling owners of the country's wealth.

Society, as Marx said many years ago, is divided into two main classes—those who own the "means of production" and those who work for these owners . . . the working class.

The working class find it necessary, therefore, to combine together into unions to try and fight for enough money at least to be able to buy some of the goods they have produced and keep alive. To the Capitalist owners, of course, these unions always have "too much power."

But the system does not just hold on by force. It's ideas that count—ideas that guide and direct the activity (or lack of activity) of the many. The ace wonder worker for capitalism is the idea of "democracy."

It's a democracy that firstly exists *outside* the workplace—a democracy that guarantees a vote every five years in return for an acceptance of a total dictatorship for every minute of every hour of the working day.

It's a democracy that is based on "representatives"—who are totally free from control by the electors except for very brief periods.

It's a democracy where capitalist resources guarantee that there is only one major outlook of the world propagated in the so-called "free press." It's a bit like all the people on the slave plantation electing a committee to run the plantation. Not much use to the slaves who run the place.

Another of its pillars is "loyalty to your country". Our own Irish breed of rich ruling class types that hold power are the inheritors of the struggle over many years by Irish small merchants against the old feudal landlord system.

When the Irish Free State was set up, it was these small capitalists that took control of the morals of the new state. What were these morals? It was very near what James Connolly had predicted. The Irishness of everything was given out over the media and hammered home to school children. The language, the songs, the bigoted Catholic faith and all the crap that Liam O Muradhu churns out.

As Connolly predicted, the post office boxes were painted green and the harp was above the judges' heads instead of the British crown, but the capitalist class still had control, still ruled and fooled the Irish worker.

Today, however, it is beginning to change. The working class have become more aware of themselves as a class. Women are no longer willing to accept the myths about their role as household slaves, and in the six-counties, the nature of the sell-out by the pro-imperialists during the struggle for independence has come to be recognised by many workers.

Of course, if workers move in any way against the rich and wealthy, whether for wage demands, tax concessions or against chronic unemployment, the Federated Union of Employers, Confederation of Irish Industry and Fianna Fail will always ask us to think of the country; the harm that is done to the economy or even better "the country can't afford it!"

But our answer as workers must be *stuff your country and your flag*. For as Marx wrote as far back as 1848: "We have no country." The bosses have it and there spokespersons. All wrapped up. While the unemployed, and those "lucky" enough to be working for the bosses are called greedy if they want a bit of what that country really is—*wealth*.

The country is like a house—the workers have built it, yet it is owned from top to bottom by a tiny minority. *It's only when workers take control of that house from top to bottom that we will worry about its structure and foundations.*

DERMOT BYRNE.

LEBANON TROOPS OUT

A GREAT chorus of praise has gone up for "our boys in the Lebanon." Defending the peace and keeping the warring factions apart — that is what they are there for. But then again we heard that same story in Northern Ireland.

That experience alone should make us suspicious of the slavish praise from the media on the solemn utterances of politicians about the Irish army's role in the Lebanon.

THE IRISH army first arrived in the Lebanon in the wake of one of the most brutal Israeli invasions. Towards the end of March 1978, Israeli troops smashed their way into the Lebanon, murdering 1500 Lebanese civilians and forcing more than 100,000 people to flee from the South of Lebanon.



The Zionist Government of Israel has based its philosophy on extending the "Jewish homeland." The conditions for the establishment of that sectarian state have always been driving the native Arab population out through terror.

For years, the aim of that expansionism has been to extend Israel right up to the Litani river in Lebanon. As a first stage in that process, Begin has sought to create a buffer state in Southern Lebanon, run by the fascist General, Haddad.

On arrival in Lebanon, the U.N. role was to patrol the line between the Palestinians and the Israeli army and thus to legitimise the invasion. The U.N. held out the carrot of eventual Israeli withdrawal in return for asserting its right to prevent Palestinian guerrillas "infiltrating" into Southern Lebanon. Put simply, it helped to prevent Palestinians from fighting back!



Israel eventually did withdraw — but only after it left the area firmly in the hands of its puppet, Haddad. The U.N., including the Irish officers, continue to see their task as that of preventing Palestinian "infiltration."

The relations between the U.N. forces and Israel and Haddad look like high farce. The headquarters of the U.N. is in Naqurah — 15 miles from Israel — so that the civilian workers can get home to spend the night in Israel. The Israeli army regularly drives in and out of the area — in fact it built the U.N. headquarters.

It operates a radar station behind U.N. lines, its officers openly advise Haddad's forces in the area and then drink whiskey and soda with their U.N. counterparts.

Stripped of the rhetoric, the U.N.'s real role has been to solidify and legitimise the holding of Southern Lebanon by Haddad and Israel.



But differences do arise over details. Haddad has pursued a gradual policy of pushing forward his lines daily. Inevitably, that means displacing some U.N. forces. And in terms of army morale, it is just not good enough to be seen to be pushed around by a tin pot General.

Three Irish soldiers have died as a result of those skirmishes. Yet that should not blind us to the overall role of the army. In fact, one of the THREATS that Haughey issued to Begin was that the army would withdraw if Haddad was not controlled. And both knew, and took it as a threat.

The skirmishes are deadly details. The whole picture is one of the U.N. protecting Israel's new borders.

WOMEN ARRESTED

AMONG the group arrested on their way to the Belfast H Block conference on June 15th were two young women.

One of them was a 16 year old from Glasgow who had no history of political involvement and was merely accompanying a friend on the trip.

Her 24 hours in the Bridewell was a brutal and humiliating introduction to politics and state repression.

Not only was she left in a freezing cell on her own with no mattress or blankets, knowing no-one in Dublin to whom she

could make her one phone call and endlessly questioned about the IRSP (of which she knew nothing) but she was strip searched and forced by the woman searcher to walk naked up and down the cell several times.

This tactic of using the sexuality of a young woman to humiliate and frighten her is not new.

A meeting of the 32 County Feminist Federation on May 7 was told of a series of incidents in Castlereagh police station in Belfast of young women, who were politically uninvolved and from sheltered backgrounds being

deliberately frightened by the threat of sexual abuse.

It was reported that meeting that strip searches had also occurred in Store St police station.

The only purpose of such harassing and intimidating acts was to humiliate women as women. It was pointed out at the Feminist Federation meeting that older and more politically involved women are less likely to be intimidated by such tactics whereas against the young and naive it is probably as effective as it is despicable.

Molly O'Duffy

FOR THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM



Part of the National H Block march, Belfast, June 15, 1980.

H BLOCK INVOLVE UNIONS

THE real horrors of the H Blocks and Armagh are only now becoming more widely known through the successful tours by ex-prisoners around the country.

In smuggled letters the women prisoners of Armagh have told us of the attacks on them by male screws, and the deliberate hosing of water on the cells in order to denigrate prisoners and bedding.

In the H Blocks, the regular humiliating strip-searching goes on accompanied by beatings on prisoners who passively resist. Yet the determination of the prisoners is so amazing. Irish has been learnt so that they can shout messages from cell to cell and block to block. And despite all the lies about these "ordinary criminals" they still maintain their own command structure and discipline inside the jails.

The determination of the prisoners and the odds they are up against has led to the development of the broadly based H Block campaign. The second conference of that campaign was held in Belfast on Sunday June 15th and about 300 people attended.

The inauguration conference kicked off a major campaign in the 26 counties and in the trade union movement. The second conference was designed to piece together details on the new phase of the campaign. What that new phase is, is still pretty unclear after a conference which failed to live up to expectations.

Shambles

In the first place, the conference was an organisational shambles. There seemed to have been little serious efforts put into securing proper and full representation from the many local H Block groups established. As a result the attendance was actually down.

One reason for that was the failure to adequately prepare for the conference, to circulate a proper agenda and resolutions. In effect, the body of the hall was confronted with 32 resolutions—none of which they had seen before—and none of which had been composed. And the conference only managed to deal with the list of 'official' proposals from the National Committee.

What does it reflect? In our view a lack of seriousness

about the necessary democracy that is needed to maintain a broad based campaign.

The major issues of the conference seemed to have more to do with simply electing a new committee than discussing frankly the experiences of the campaign to date.

The contributions from the floor on the direction of the campaign—were not allowed to find their way into resolutions which could be put for acceptance or rejection.

Humanitarian

Speaker after speaker pointed out that the "humanitarian" nature of the campaign was directed at middle class liberals—who if they existed at all, would give only passive support.

That it could play straight into the hands of the Atkins administration, who was prepared to use the concern for the issue to bolster the negotiating credibility of the Church around minimal concessions.

More importantly, the humanitarian campaign rested on an idea that workers in the South are basically "republican-minded" but need to be woken up by appealing to their humanitarian instincts.

Those, who like the SWM, stressed the need for a more political approach argued to direct the campaign on the trade union movement.

And that involved arguing why workers—as workers—had a direct political interest in taking up the H Block issue.

Yet despite the frank debate on this fundamental issue, there was no decision on the issue, simply because a resolution from the Dublin H Block group was stuck right down at the end of the list.

In general, the most optimistic reports at the conference came from the work in the trade union movement.

Yet the conference threw out a resolution calling for a more effective and autonomous trade union campaign—because of suspicion about the motives.

But the experience has been that work in the unions HAS been successful but uncoordinated.

Different resolutions, different proposals have been pushed in the union branches.

An autonomous trade union campaign could have introduced that effective coordination, involving new faces in producing a flow of material geared particularly to trade unionists.

In the same conservative vein, the conference rejected a call for a independent trade union inquiry into H block conditions if the ICTU failed to establish an official inquiry.

Such an inquiry, based on a jury of representative trade unionists, could have become a major vehicle for increasing the support in the unions on the H Block issue.

Instead, the hollow rhetoric about being a "serious" trade unionist and waiting another year to depend on the bureaucratic dictates of the ICTU was accepted.

All in all, the conference produced little in the way of new action—which may mean that the "second phase of the campaign" will fall flat.

But a conference doesn't make a campaign.

There are new H Block groups dotted around the country.

The pity, though, is that the groups have not yet become real united bodies—as many republicans have adopted a stand-offish attitude.

Such petty sectarianism has no place in the H Block campaign. It is up to us all to build such proper united groups that have real roots in the communities they are working and in the trade union movement.

Kieran Allen.