

# THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

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# HANDS OFF OUR UNIONS

FIANNA FAIL are edging closer and closer to anti-strike legislation.

For years the bosses, the politicians and the media have called for curbs on "trade union power" on every convenient occasion.

They have relentlessly developed the myth of greedy wildcat strikers holding the country to ransom.

Contrast the abuse of the unofficial oil strikers last year with the deafening silence when the oil bosses refused to negotiate this year on the same claim.

Now with the economy moving deeper into crisis, the ruling class is preparing to capitalise on the myths they themselves have created.

## LEGISLATION

Anti-strike legislation is on the way.

The ground has been prepared with Minister of Labour Nolan flying his kite on the outlawing of unofficial strikes and compulsory secret ballots by ringing the ICTU bureaucrats up with the whizzo idea as they ploughed their way through yet another big dinner.

And then, lo and behold, the ill-fated Commission of Industrial Relations report is leaked to the Sunday Tribune and guess what these experts are proposing?

You got it — exactly the same proposals plus a whole avalanche of other measures that, taken together, would place a legal cage over the entire industrial relations system.

Consider this quote from a book called "The Rise of Irish Trade Unions" by Andrew Boyd.

"On 3rd January 1770, two weavers were found guilty of forming a trade union and were whipped through the streets of Dublin from Newgate prison to College Green. The whipping was done by the publichangman while the Sheriff of Dublin walked alongside to see that the punishment was fully carried out."

We have fought and clawed our way up a hell of a long way since those days. But we must always remember that, whatever rights we have won, like protection for strikes — enshrined in the 1906 Trades Dispute Act, can only be guaranteed by our collective strength — laws can be made and laws can be unmade.

It is these gains, these rights that Fianna Fail and the Commission on Industrial Relations are now preparing to snatch back from us.

The Commission proposes: Withdrawing protection from unofficial strikes—meaning that, for example, a single officer of the ITGWU holds complete power over the legal right to strike for 160,000 members;

Compulsory postal secret ballots before official strikes—making the anti-worker media into the strongest voice by far in union discussion;

Compulsory recourse to the biased Labour Court—further increasing the delaying tactics of management to the point that everyone will have forgotten what the bloody dispute was about!;

## LIMITS

Severely limiting the right to strike of individuals—virtually meaning no strikes allowed on disputes concerning sackings, holidays, equal pay cases etc;

The complete outlawing of the sympathetic strike—often the only effective weapon we have in defeating the power of the bosses.

So what's been the response of the trade union leadership to this onslaught? Well, let's be fair, most union leaders have verbally condemned the proposals as "interference" in



Picture Derek Spairs JF/L/Report

the internal matters of the trade unions.

Quite right too. But even the talk has been muted. We haven't had John Carroll shouting that he will "defend to the death" the rights of strikers, official or unofficial.

And we won't either, because parts of this onslaught—the curbs on unofficial action, especially — are not exactly against the interests of the bureaucrats themselves. Resistance from the top will be limited which means that resistance from below—from the rank and file trade unionists that any curbs will directly affect—need to be organised and resolute.

What we need, starting now, is an across-unions grouping of militants and activists in the trade union movement that will pressure the official leadership into outright opposition to all attacks on our rights.

The Socialist Workers Movement will be playing a full part in building such a grouping.

## OIL VICTORY

THE UNOFFICIAL petrol strike ended in September of last year on the basis of an interim payment of £4.15 per week to the men and the setting up of a joint union-management committee to examine the productivity claim of the tanker drivers—the basis of the dispute.

When the committee published its report it was obvious that another strike was on the cards.

Management came up with a figure of £7 per week for productivity given since 1967, the union side claimed £42!

Meanwhile the ITGWU determined to regain control of the negotiations, let it be known that official backing would be given to any action necessary.

The oil companies refused to negotiate and strike notice was duly served. By February 20, the industry was at a halt.

by PAUL O BRIEN

Both sides moved, management upped its offer to £11, the union side came down to £27. And there it stuck until, with a long, protracted dispute in the offing, the Labour Court intervened in dramatic fashion.

Its recommendation of £26.50 for productivity and increased allowances was clearly far more of a victory to the workers than to management.

On March 5th the workers accepted the deal, though only by a majority of 464 to 308 with Dublin against. The next day, management capitulated—despite saying only a week before that they wouldn't budge from £11 or have anything to do with the Labour Court.

The strike was not a simple dispute between the drivers and the oil companies, but rather had its roots in the clash between the FUE and the government over the National Understanding.

The FUE felt that industry was pushed by the government into accepting a pay deal which was too generous to the workers in order to boost Fianna Fail's election chances.

They saw the tanker drivers dispute as a chance to regain the upper hand. If they could defeat the tanker drivers—one of the strongest groups of workers in the country—then they would be in a good position to refuse to pay the second phase of the Understanding in June.

So from the beginning the FUE rather than the employers were in charge of the negotiations. The oil companies could easily afford to pay. It was calculated by the unions that in 13 years of productivity agreements the companies had saved £5 million and paid out to the drivers only £350,000 for productivity given.

# aside

THE VERY day that Bobby Sands began his hunger strike in Long Kesh, condemnation poured in from all quarters.

The Green, Orange and Labour friends of imperialism all begged him to end the strike and leave the plight of the prisoners in the tender hands of the British government.

Condemnation from reformists and moralisers was, of course, to be expected but some republicans and socialists were surprised when Bishop Cathal Daly and others like him in the Catholic Church, who had supported the hunger strikers last time round, condemned the second attempt to highlight the cause of the Republican prisoners to gain political status.

The official church line was hammered home—a hunger strike was against the teaching of the Catholic church. The “concern over the humanitarian aspects” of the first hunger strike was mentioned no more.

All we hear now is condemnation of the hunger strike tactic. The reason is simple—when thousands of people in the Nationalist areas of Northern Ireland mobilised and marched against the forces of the state and the British government, as was happening during the first hunger strike, then the Catholic church leaders, in order to keep in touch with “their flock,” show “concern.”

But when, as now, there is a fall in activity, then they take the opportunity to condemn and thus weaken support for essentially the same struggle they supported before.

The sheer hypocrisy of the church leaders is staggering. For them it is always a question of siding with the establishment and imperialist rule—but never too much for fear of losing “the flock.”

Throughout the long history of struggle against British rule in Ireland, the attitude of the church has been consistent.

It has sided with the ruling class at all times except when—in order to maintain its dominance over the minds of the people—it had to respond to the overwhelming desires of its own “flock” to rid the country of British rule. Or when its own direct interests were threatened by that rule.

In 1560, for example, when James I instituted the Penal Laws and church estates began to be confiscated, the Church supported the attempts of the Irish chiefs to end English rule.

Similarly, during the persecution of the Cromwell period, the Church became associated with opposition to England.

But this was soon to change. The Penal Laws were abolished and the Church made its peace with the ruling class. By the 19th century it stood in direct opposition to republicanism. Fenians were condemned as “communists and murderers.” “Hell was not hot enough, nor eternity long enough” for any who opposed English rule.

But when the new Irish ruling class of the Free State had risen to prominence, the Church had no hesitation in making its peace with them and imposing its will on the new government by demanding a say in the running of the country.

And so it has gone on and still goes on today. When the Catholics of Northern Ireland march in their thousands for political status, Cardinal O Fiach and the Bishops express “humanitarian concern.”

When the marching stops, they are the first to hammer the nails in the coffin of Bobby Sands. It is stupid to place any reliance on the Catholic Church in the anti-imperialist struggle.

We should ignore them. There is no strength to compare with the power of the working class when it feels a deep anger with imperialist rule.

by DERMOT BYRNE

# ‘women at war’

NELL'S BOOK has already become a historical curiosity, for two reasons: first, it was written in that short period after the ending of the first hunger strike when it seemed that the issue had been resolved.

The tone of some of the writing is positively jubilant. We now know that this euphoria was premature.

Second, the book has been withdrawn because the husband of one of the women featured in it has taken out libel proceedings.

Nell tells the story of the women in Armagh and of the women on the outside who have who have highlighted their case.

Rose McAllister illustrates the development of women through the struggle and the need for self-activity and confidence:-

“You won't always win but you won't always lose. It's important always to fight back and women have got the staying power for that... I thought politics was what you found in Sinn Fein. I wasn't aware that we women were making politics on the street. That's when my eyes actually opened to the political power of women organising among themselves, well and expertly.”

It is this awareness among women in the North that led to the pressures on the Republican Movement to accommodate to the needs of women and to accept their demands: women on the Relatives Action Committee; looked for creches at conferences; Women Against Imperialism

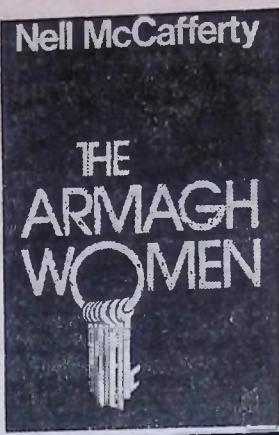
picketed Armagh on International Women's Day for three years running to highlight the protest of the Armagh women (often overshadowed by the protest of the men); Sinn Fein itself at its last Ard Fheis passed reasonably progressive motions on contraception, childcare and divorce.

Nell feels that this progress in raising women's demands justifies those who claim that you can participate in the anti-imperialist struggle while challenging the conservative and male-chauvinist attitudes of its leaders.

Feminising republicans is a reasonably easy matter, she concludes. Possibly true, but this process has its limits.

The republican movement, as long as it sees the armed struggle as the chief way forward, will accommodate women's—and left-wing—demands only up to the point where they do not impinge on the conduct of the war.

This imposes severe restrictions on the raising of women's issues



by MOLLY O DUFFY

as long as one's frame of reference is, like Nell's, feminism and war.

If the forms of struggle were a mass movement in street and workplace, the possibility of a real injection of the demands of women born in struggle would be stronger.

While it is important to raise women's issues in the anti-imperialist movement, it is necessary to point out that the struggle in its present form cannot fully realise the aspirations of women within the movement.

And so to the other question: that of republicanising feminists. This campaign was directed at feminists in the South, who because of their distance from the struggle in the North, do not have to confront directly the questions raised by partition.

The propaganda directed to these women went along two lines: first to say that partition had led to a situation where the National Question directly affected every aspect of the 26-County state and therefore was directly relevant to every political attle in this state.

This just did not correspond to the day to day experiences of southern feminists who could not see any direct link between their struggle for, say, proper rape legislation and the “troubles in the North.”

## FEMINIST

The second approach was to appeal to them on a feminist basis about terrible conditions women were having to undergo in Armagh—menstrual blood, vaginal infection, etc. were highlighted. Nell has always focussed on this “loss of bodily integrity” argument.

She has never given a political analysis of why the women are engaged in a particular political struggle which stems from the irreformable nature of the Orange state.

Because there are no prospects of reforms, and in the absence of a mass movement, some women see no alternative but to take up arms against that state. Her book makes no attempt to explain why Sadie Gilloway was found with an Armalite in her trousers. It is not enough to say that they are children of their time.

To play down the political explanation of the women's actions has been a mistake: it has led to few active recruits to the cause of the Armagh women; it is dishonest and leads women to feel they are being manipulated into positions they don't fully understand; it gives the impression that the women have no political justification for what they are doing and are, in fact, led by men.

## ABORTION Meeting

EVERY TIME someone referred to the right of women to control their fertility, SPUC members shuffled their feet in irritation and threw their eyes to heaven.

Over 200 strong, they were attending a meeting organised by the Women's Right to Choose Group entitled “Abortion - A Choice for Irish Women” in Dublin's Liberty Hall on March 10.

Democratic rights, trade union rights, women's rights were all scoffed at in turn. Mary Holland, platform speaker, was sneered at as she left early to go back to her

child's birthday party - they weren't to be fooled into believing that a woman who'd had an abortion loved her children.

SPUC is not a religious organisation they say as they scream “only God can give and take away life.” Their arguments are “based on science, not emotion” they claim as they brandish photographs bloody foetuses and lockets containing foetuses' feet.

They say that abortion “abuses women” yet never have I experienced such coldness as in their response to the woman who told the meeting of how she had been viol-

ently raped a few months before. Ordinary women and the lives they lead are not relevant to the anti-abortionists.

SPUC are well-organised and militant. They must be opposed by all those who believe in the Right to Choose. Support for the Women's Right to Choose Group and its aims is one way you can help. The aims of the group are:-

- \* to decriminalise abortion.
- \* for open referral from health centres and hospitals
- \* for information on all methods of fertility control to be freely available,
- \* for full access to abortion facilities for all women in Ireland,
- \* for the removal of all economic and social discrimination against pregnancy.

The group holds meetings at its premises every Wednesday at 8pm. The address is 13 Belvedere Place, Dublin 1.



## DONAGHMEDE SAVE OUR CRECHE

WOMEN IN Donaghmede in North Dublin, have been able to work, while their 2-4-year-old kids have been cared for and taught—all thanks to a cheap, efficient local pre-school which been running for five years.

Cheap—only £2.75 a child per week, efficient—run by a trained person, and local—in the heart of the housing estate.

This did spell BLISS to a lot of women there! It provided them with a limited freedom to work, secure in the knowledge that their kids were being well cared for.

These relatively blissful days are drawing to a close however, and the pre-school days are numbered due to objections by two neighbours that the school's presence is “devaluing houses and injurious to local amenities.”

The only amenity in the area (according to local women) is the unprotected railway line running behind their houses!

These objectors have been supported in spirit by the parish priest, the local councillor and TDs—among them Michael Woods, Minister for Health!

More active opposition to the school has come from the residents association committee who seem to represent no-one's views other than their own, since 550 local residents have signed a petition supporting the school.

Dublin County Council claims that an existing day care centre—

only open in the mornings—operating from a garage next to the community centre is enough to cater for the needs of the area.

But local authority policy on child care is narrowly confined to “children at risk.”

Despite this, it was announced at local Masses that the centre could cater for and was open to any pre-school child in the community.

Determined to call both the Parish Priest's and the County Council's bluff on this, the women brought twenty of their kids to enroll in the centre.

They were greeted by the facts that the centre was full, couldn't cater for that number of kids anyway—and didn't they know that there was a waiting list stretching into the next world?

In late February, a representative group of women and children, about forty in all, picketed the offices of An Bord Pleonala when the appeal against the closure was being heard.

The result of the hearing—as yet unknown—will determine the future, if any, of the school.

This is not an isolated case but serves to highlight the whole

The Armagh women are a feminist issue because their sexuality has been used against them and because they have thrown off the traditional passive role of women.

They are a political issue because they are demanding political status as fighters against the state. It is only by recognising and promoting this latter fact that we will win real support for the Armagh women.

The failure of the last hunger strike and the silence of the “humanitarians” following it, have led to a demand for political status being put as the basis of the current hunger strike. The ending of the dirty protest will take attention from the peripheral issues of toilet facilities and furniture and focus on the real issue—political status.

This will pose a new challenge to those who wish to “republicanise feminism.” The appeals to feminists on grounds of “bodily integrity” will no longer be possible. This makes Nell's book already out of date. Hopefully she will take up the challenge offered by the new situation.



Nell McCafferty

The limits of this book are enormous: added to those already mentioned are the total lack of analysis of the need for a mass movement, for economic struggle and a fight against the churches so that the defeat of imperialism will mean a real victory for the working class women of whom Nell speaks.

What the book does do very well is record the human aspect of the struggle—how the women deal with the enormous personal toll that their political commitment takes on them.

And from it all comes the feeling that however much society vilifies women who step out of their traditional role as passive and peace-loving, the women will win in the end—with their independence, solidarity, humanity and sanity intact.

question of child care in working class areas like Donaghmede. Child care is a right not a privilege and the Donaghmede women know this. They work for money, not for fun, because they need it.

The need is agreed to exist by the local council but in practise, they are hell-bent on ignoring their responsibilities while hindering others, like the Donaghmede pre-school who have attempted to do to do their job for them. And ultimately it is their job. A hell of a lot of creches, playschools and pre-schools are needed—state funded and employing trained people for decent wages.

Meanwhile the women of Donaghmede know that direct action by themselves is the only way to save the one pre-school they do have. They are fighting to gain the right to child care and beginning the struggle towards a comprehensive, state-funded child care system in their locality. They need and welcome all the support they can get. If you can help, get in touch.

by MARY CUMMINS

If you want information on the creche contact us at the address on page 3.

# Reagan stirs up another Vietnam



**TWENTY YEARS ago JF Kennedy sent the first US military advisors to Vietnam.**

They were sent to defend the principles of democracy and liberty—known to cynics as US interests—against the attacks of the “Communist Conspiracy.”

The resultant horrors and tragedies of that war are still evident in South East Asia—the thousands of killed, wounded and maimed; the poisoning of large areas of agricultural land by defoliants; the deformed children who were poisoned in their mother’s womb; the near destruction of Cambodia.

Now the call has gone out again, “The Commies are taking over El Salvadore. Democracy and liberty must be defended from the Red Hordes.”

The reality—somewhat different from the picture painted by Reagan—is that El Salvadore has been living under a brutal military dictatorship for the last fifty years; that 10% of the population own 90% of the country’s wealth; that 2% own 60% of the arable land. Democracy, how are you!

The history of the present junta goes back to 1932 when the dictatorship of General Martinez was consolidated by the killing of 30,000 workers and farm labourers who rose against him.

In 1976 the main opposition party was banned. In 1977 a general election was held, the results of which were blatantly fixed.

On the announcement of the election results a national

strike was called which was suppressed by a massacre on the orders of the new president General Carlos Romero.

His own regime was overthrown in October 1979 and replaced by a civilian/military junta with the support of the US. The bringing of civilians into the government was an attempt by the military to win the support of “moderates” for the junta.

But it was an attempt which, despite some minor land reforms, failed miserably. Within a day of the new junta taking power the army killed 80 strikers in the town of Soyapango, on the orders of Colonel Garcia, who is still Defence Minister.

The cycle of institutionalised violence continued. In 1980 alone, 13,000 people were killed, the most famous of whom was Archbishop Romero. He had started out as a fairly conservative churchman, but

because of the savagery of the military repression of all opposition, had begun to speak out in defence of civil liberties. For this he was labelled a “Marxist” by the junta and eventually murdered.

That is the extent of the “Communist Conspiracy” in El Salvadore. It is no doubt true that guns have come to the guerrillas from the Soviet Union and Cuba, but in such a situation you would accept help from anyone.

In Ireland support for the opposition has come from Fine Gael, the Labour Party, Trocaire and the Irish Missionary Union—none of which by any stretch of the imagination could be described as communist fronts—as well as the left.

Bishop Casey, who was at Archbishop Romero’s funeral, has called on the government to break off diplomatic relations with the US if they continue to supply arms and aid to the junta.

We urge all our readers to support every effort that is made during the months ahead to stop Reagan turning El Salvador into another Vietnam; In particular emergency resolutions should be sent to forthcoming union annual conferences calling for US hands off El Salvador.

# MINERS ZAP MAGGIE

WHEN the Thatcher government came to power in Britain in May 1979, the revivalist economic ideas of the monetarists were put into action.

“Free market” forces would be given full sway and subsidies to basic industries were to be abolished along with much of the social spending on health, education and so on.

By increasing unemployment these measures were intended to weaken trade unionism, forcing down real wages and boosting profits so that British capital might weather the recession and world crisis better.

This meant that loss making industries like ship-building, car production and coal and steel would be savagely pruned by removal of less profitable units. Nationalised industries would have to at least break even.

Rigorous “cash limits” would be set forcing economies by way of reduced manning or lower real wages. Closures and run-down were to be the order of the day.

However, even in terms of the capitalists’ interests, this policy is nonsense. In all countries of the world, major industries of this sort cannot function without massive state intervention.

Moreover, for Britain to have any future at all in the league of major capitalist producers, it must retain a world capacity in these basic industries, otherwise it collapses to the status of a country like Korea, living on the margins of the world market.

The crisis in the world system of capitalism makes industrial stagnation endemic. The possibility of a fresh boom founded on the micro-electronics revolution is extremely unlikely in these circumstances. Diverting investment from heavy industry to light electronics

which is what this strategy consists of, is in the end self-defeating.

Many sections of the British boss class see this and would prefer a more “liberal” Tory administration, but are prisoners of their own fear of the working class and their trade unions and therefore close ranks behind Thatcher.

The collapse of the “Iron Maiden” before organised labour must severely weaken the morale of the British government and the “dissidents” among the bosses must grow in influence.

More important, this workers victory is a great tonic to the whole working class movement in Britain whose confidence can only grow and encourage other sections to fight for their demands.

We too can fight, in our fight against the green Tories of Haughey and Co. And if industrial muscle can make the Brits U-turn on cash limits, could it not also make them U-turn on political status?



## SWM News

The SWM picket on the IRFU before the french match.

DURING February and March the Socialist Workers Movement held a number of activities to protest against the proposed tour by the Irish Rugby Football Union to South Africa. In addition to supporting the march of the Irish Anti Apartheid Movement, the SWM organised a number of pickets and public meetings.

A demonstration was held outside Allen and Townsend, employers of Fergus Slattery, Irish Team Captain on the eve

of the English match, demanding that Slattery is not given any leave to go to South Africa. Later that evening, a number of SWM members and supporters picketed Madigan’s Pub in North Earl Street—Madigan is tour manager—asking people not to drink in any of Madigan’s pubs around Dublin.

Well attended public meetings were held in Dublin and Waterford, where it was decided that the best way to stop the tour was, to pressurise the

players into refusing invitations and get trade union backing for all goods and services to the Rugby Union. We are asking all our readers to raise this in their unions and follow the FWUI No 12 branch lead, who have blacked all travel facilities to the IRFU at Dublin Airport.

The SWM and its supporters are involved in all the issues which concern workers. If you would like to find out more about us, fill in the coupon below.

### OIL VICTORY (continued from page 1.)

The hard line adopted by the FUE was only broken when the employers seeing the determination of the workers, decided that it was far cheaper to pay up and get supplies moving again. The employers were not prepared to lose their profits fighting on behalf of other sections of industry.

That decision is going to make it much harder for the FUE to resist wage demands in the future.

The real lesson of the strike is that, despite the National Understanding, groups of workers can win, if they are organised and determined.

The drivers organised their own negotiating committee and were in control of negotiations at all times. It is now up to the other organised sections of workers to follow their lead.

If the best organised and most militant sections of workers will lead the fight then it is possible to smash once and for all the shackles

of National Understanding.

There is one point still outstanding.

After the first unofficial strike the ITGWU set up an internal enquiry into the dispute. No word has been heard since it gathered evidence last December. The second official strike was unnecessary. The drivers case was as solid in September as it is today.

Why did the unions refuse to back the men from the start as they had to the second time round for fear of losing all credibility?

The committee of enquiry was composed of lay members and was perhaps the first of its kind set up in the ITGWU. It is important that its findings are made available to all Union members. If you are a ITGWU member put forward a resolution at your next branch or section meeting that its findings be published within the Union.



If you don't subscribe to their politics



you can subscribe to ours

by getting the Worker—the paper that fights for workers’ power.

THE WORKER is produced by the SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT. If you would like more information on our activities and policies; would like to become a member of the SWM or would like a subscription to “The Worker” — £2.50 for a year, clip and post to 19 St Bridgets Road, Upper, Dublin 9.

I want to join;  I want a subscription and enclose £2.50;  I would like more information about the SWM.

Name .....  
Address .....

# We can win!

DURING the Seventies, there have been basically two positions put forward on the Irish left about how to tackle the problem of growing unemployment. They were well illustrated at a recent seminar on the subject hosted by the Dublin Trades Council.

The first position, addresses itself essentially to the problem of how capitalism can be changed (reformed) in order to alleviate the problem.

The strategy boils down to bringing pressure—through the trade union and labour movement—on the capitalist government of the day to stimulate economic growth by expanding the public sector into productive areas. Great stress is put on 'economic planning' and much time is spent proving that if things were ordered more efficiently then sectors of 'our' industry, like say food processing, could become more productive and thus employ more people.

This position is held to, by and large, by SFWP, the CPI and Labour Party lefts (most of them now in the Socialist Labour Party). Of course they have their differences. SFWP has departed somewhat from the traditional emphasis in such a policy on protecting 'Irish' industry by a variety of import control methods. They now openly welcome the multi-nationals via the IDA, espousing the virtues of a 'mixed economy'—much to the annoyance of the CP. But this is a relatively minor argument. The overall emphasis is the same: capitalism can be made to work and provide more jobs if we can convince the capitalists and their governments that a better use of resources is possible by government direction. In other words, that state capitalism can do the job better than private capitalism.

And this exciting proposition is what the leadership of the Dublin Trades Council unveiled at its seminar as the start of a real campaign against unemployment.

The Trades Council, flushed with the relative success of

leading the tax campaign, some believe that not only is the above THE answer to the problem but that unemployed and employed can be mobilised to fight for it—once, of course, they have been slowly 'educated' to its virtues.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The whole strategy falls down on two basic points.

The first is, quite simply, that no amount of 'reforming' capitalism in Ireland can counteract the fundamental crisis of world capitalism which is the cause of unemployment (amongst many other evils). State control of the food processing industry, for example, could not solve the problem that there is just not enough effective demand (ie. money) to buy the beef etc produced—at home or abroad. 'So pump more money into the economy', say the reformists. But where is the money to come from? The government is already up to its eyes in foreign debt. 'Stop the foreign imports, save Irish jobs', shout the CPI. But, in capitalist terms, that's just propping up inefficient sectors and, besides, means workers would have to pay more for 'our' goods.

No, capitalism and its governments, just cannot afford to implement more than a few of the minor measures that the reformists propose. It's just no point in asking them to.

And this leads us to the second danger of the policy being proposed by this section of the left. Whilst we are banging our heads against a brick wall asking capitalism to reform itself out of existence, the capitalists—private and public alike—are quietly getting away with it. Closures go unopposed, the unemployed remain unorganised, wages are held down with the threat of the dole queue etc.

Capitalism is busy getting out of its own crisis at the expense of the workers untroubled by any direct opposition to the system itself. Whether they intend it or not, the people who espouse the reformist strategy tend to divert workers from the most immediate and most

necessary task—to fight back now against the attacks of capitalism.

And a fightback is possible. There are enormous problems of course. Workers brainwashed into accepting redundancies as 'inevitable', have shown little opposition to closures.

Redundancy money and pay-related have 'bought off' many a militant. The sheer physical obstacles to organising the unemployed are very hard to overcome.

But these problems are not insuperable. 'Apathy' does not rule everywhere. Some workers have opposed closures at least partially, for example C-Plast in Galway, Pierces in Wexford, Euroweld in Belfast. A small minority of workers and unemployed do not accept the "inevitability" of it all, and as the dole queues grow and pay-related runs out, that minority will grow.

What is needed is a strategy that can both offer a concrete way of resisting now while not fooling anyone that ultimately the only solution to the problem lies in fundamentally changing the system—socialism.

The key to this is confidence. Workers do not feel they can win at the moment yet it only takes one or two successful occupations to change that dramatically.

Effective resistance must begin where the capitalism attacks and where workers are best organised to resist—in the factories and offices. When layoffs are threatened, we must argue for measures like work sharing on full pay; when closure is threatened, occupation is the best means of defence.

More generally, the unions should be pressured into demanding measures to prevent redundancies: shorter working week without loss of pay, no job-selling productivity deals, double jobbing or systematic overtime.

The employed are best placed to resist but the unemployed have a vital propaganda and support role to play. An organised group of unemployed occupying Manpower offices, marching and generally kicking

up a stink can bring home the problem to government and unions far more effectively than polite lobbies or pious resolutions.

But to be really effective, the unemployed must be linked to the employed. Unemployment committees are needed in every union, an unemployed workers union affiliated to the ICTU should be looked at.

This kind of strategy is what is needed to begin resistance to unemployment now. Together with the socialist message that unemployment is caused by capitalism and will never be fully eradicated until that system goes, it offers a far better way forward than that of the reformists.

The Socialist Workers Movement will be arguing for such a perspective wherever and whenever it can over the coming months—in the factories, in the unions on the dole queues. We hope the Dublin Trades Council and other union bodies will take up the same ideas and not be sidetracked into a passive campaign of unrealistic reformist demands.

## THEIR SOLUTION



THERE HAVE been precious few sustained fights against closures in Ireland for some time. The same has been true in Britain but recently, after the success of the sit-in against redundancies at Gardners engineering plant in Manchester, there are signs of new resistance. One of the most important is the occupation of the Lee Jeans factory in Greenock near Glasgow by 240 women, most of them under 19. Doubly important, because there is an Irish connection. Paul Foot, in an article which originally appeared in the British Socialist Worker, gives us an insight into how different things can be—win or lose—when workers decide to resist the so-called 'inevitable'. Fabolous. Four factories were set up there, again at tax-payers' expense, and for a while the gentlemen who run the corporation were very proud of their very profitable exportation. But the market slumped. The recession meant that fewer people were buying jeans, although there is hardly a man or woman in Greenock who does not need a new pair. The bosses made a swift calculation. It was cheaper to close a whole factory than to share the available work among

# Lee Jeans OCC

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## Waterford

UNEMPLOYMENT IN the South East has now reached alarming proportions and Waterford, the main industrial centre, is bearing the brunt of the problem.

The excuse has always been that Waterford had too many old traditional industries which could not face competition and consequently went to the wall.

But many of the recent closures have not, in fact been in that category.

Munster Chipboard was a modern plant. So too was Wellworthy Engineering, and that closed a few months ago with a loss of 200 jobs.

In truth, over half of the 900 jobs gone in the last 8 months were from relatively new industries. The rest were

from the service sector—shops, hotels, offices etc—and the construction industry. And lets not forget that there are also many hundreds of other workers on short-time in factories like Waterford Engineering. Clearly Waterford workers are suffering badly from the savage effects of the bosses crisis being passed on to them.

But what can be done? Well, it's certain that we can't rely on our public representatives. All the deputations over the last few years have achieved precisely nothing

and no money over the statutory.

There was now really no option but to resist.

The plant was picketed and, unable to carry on business, management locked its doors. And that's the way it stayed until the end of February. E TMG were in the strong position. The market was bad and they could afford to sit it out. On the union side there was talk of stepping up by extending the picketing to other TMG factories but nothing happened and the meantime the office was negotiating on the morrow end of it. Suddenly the workers were called to a hurried Sunday night meeting and offered a deal of 3 weeks pay above the statutory, plus the promise of another week pay if there was no more trouble to the end of the year. They accepted and that's the

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The farming market had slumped, there was no doubt about that. The money on offer was above average—6 weeks pay on top of the statutory. With no firm policy or resistance to ALL redundancies, I think a lot of people felt that those that went would find other jobs and that the jobs of those remaining would be secure.

There was a rude awakening. Management, no doubt overjoyed at the ease of it all and with most of the shop stewards out of the way, moved in for the kill last December. They announced 40 (30 AGEMOU) redundancies immediately—compul-

## Masseys

THE DIFFICULTIES in resisting redundancies, even in a well-organised shop, are illustrated by recent events in Massey Ferguson, the agricultural machinery distributors, in Dublin. Ex-shop steward, Frank Bambrick explains how the workforce has been decimated there in little over a year.

When Maurice Buckley's TMG group took over Masseys two years ago the place was thriving. We handled all the maintenance, storage and distribution for Ireland. 115 were employed. All the workers—90—were AGEMOU members and we were well-organised on the floor. We

regularly won rises above the National Wage Agreements and we led the way in the industry by getting a 37½ hour week. Now it's all gone.

All that's left is a tiny distribution depot employing 8 non-union staff. Buckley has won and we've lost.

It's very hard to explain exactly why. One of the main reasons is the way they ran the place down gradually.

In February last year they asked for 30 voluntary redundancies and 23 took it up. Then in June they got rid of another 24 through more voluntary and some compulsory by closing down certain sections. These seemed to hap-

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"We don't want to take the jobs of people in Ireland, who are workers like us. We just wanted to share the work." The women voted to strike, and then, because it seemed logical (and warmer), to sit in the factory and occupy it. The jeans in the machines on the

factory floor were covered up. Another 100,000 pairs already packed and stacked, were commandeered. The management were locked in their offices and barricaded in with sewing machines. The organisation of the occupation moved with the swift ness and confidence of people who have never done anything like this before, and have no reason to trust anyone but themselves. There may have been pilfering of jeans in the past, but there is none now. The strict-

fairness and decency women have split them into three groups and shifts. There is food and the factory canteen full shift sitting in. There are fewer than 50 women in the factory at one time. As so often when take action rather than 'the inevitable', the Lee women find they have of thing going for them. Five thousand workers in Port Glasgow pledged by resolution to take the factory to the as soon as anyone ever to take it off them. The Gardners work one vital lesson for Lee Jeans women. Take the spirit of the out of the factory in working class movement the friends there you met and you never you had. They will help you the fight going. For or turn in on yourselves starts the bickering a doubt which brings sur-

# WE WANT JOBS

## Waterford

by JOHNNY CLOONO, ATGWU.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN the South East has now reached alarming proportions and Waterford, the main industrial centre, is bearing the brunt of the problem. The excuse has always been that Waterford had too many old traditional industries which could not face competition and consequently went to the wall. But many of the recent closures have not, in fact been in that category. Munster Chipboard was a modern plant. So too was Wellworthy Engineering, and that closed a few months ago with a loss of 200 jobs. In truth, over half of the 900 jobs gone in the last 8 months were from relatively new industries. The rest were

ing. Our 'Four Dummies in the Dail' (including a Minister of State and a Shadow Minister) have adopted the grand strategy of submitting written questions in the Dail about how many are out of work in Waterford. This priceless information is then released to the local press. What about the unions? In 1978, the Trades Council showed what could be achieved when they organised a massive work stoppage and demonstrated in support of the paper mills workers. But little has been heard and much less done

From time to time, of course, union leaders moan and groan about the need to do something. They sound off about the "flood of foreign imports," they advocate Buy Irish campaigns, etc. But all this talk seems a justification for doing nothing. A recommendation to launch a fighting campaign on unemployment by over 60 local shop stewards in Connolly Hall before Xmas has still not been taken up. But this is exactly what is needed. A campaign that spells out to employed workers exactly what unemployment means—how it is used as the big stick to depress wages and conditions and how it affects the unemployed themselves. A campaign that has clear fighting policies of resistance to all redundancies and job losses. A campaign that links the action of the unemployed themselves to the strength of organised workers in industry. Over the coming weeks and months members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Movement in the Waterford trade union movement will be arguing for just such a campaign with a clear orientation towards direct action—meetings, leaflets, marches, stoppages, etc. We are convinced a campaign of this type is possible and for thousands of unemployed workers in Waterford, vitally necessary.



Marching for the right

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It's good that TMG didn't get what they wanted quite so easily as they thought they would. There was at least some fightback and at least some money was got out of it in the heel of the hunt TMG have done it again. They ruthlessly chop the workers in any business they take over that doesn't show an instant profit. They've closed Pierces in Wexford, Hammond Lane Foundries in Dublin. Redundancies in Waterford Iron Foundry, lay-offs and a three day week in Irish Containers. They pick them off one by one and play off one against another. The only ultimate answer to them is a strong combine committee pledged to fight for every job and prepared to everyone out when necessary. But unfortunately, that's just a dream at the moment—and it's too late for Massey's.

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fairness and decency. The women have split themselves into three groups and three shifts.

There is food enough in the factory canteen for the shift sitting in. There are never fewer than 50 women in the factory at one time.

As so often when people take action rather than 'accept the inevitable', the Lee jeans women find they have a lot of things going for them.

Five thousand shipyard workers in Port Glasgow are pledged by resolution to restore the factory to the women as soon as anyone even tries to take it off them.

The Gardners workers had one vital lesson for the Lee Jeans women.

Take the spirit of the sit-in out of the factory into the working class movement. Find the friends there you never met and you never dreamt you had.

They will help you keep the fight going. For once you turn in on yourselves, then starts the bickering and the doubt which brings surrender.



Picture Derek Speirs IFL/Report

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est security has ensured that not a pair has left the factory.

There may have been drunkenness in the past, but there is none now. Not a drop of alcohol is allowed in the gates.

The small sums collected outside are shared according to the highest standards of

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Marching for the right to work.

## Cork

by JIM BLAKE.

THROUGHOUT the seventies it was generally reckoned that Cork was the boom town in Ireland.

Successful in attracting many large industries, it was thought the area could ride out any recession. Now the workers are not so sure.

And with good reason, as Jim Blake shows in this report on recent job losses in the region.

BANTRY SHOPS were closed on the afternoon of 24 February when 5000 townspeople took to the streets to protest at local unemployment.

Over the past year 130 jobs have disappeared in this small town and more will be lost when Gulf Oil withdraw from the ill-fated Whiddy Island, where 49 workers recently lost their lives.

At Irish Steel in Haulbowline, the semi-state company, made a loss of £6.4m in 1979-80 and is seeking a £25m cash boost from the company. Meanwhile, Chairman McCourt is unable to say when the 230 workers recently laid-off will be re-employed.

And in Cobh where there is an estimated 700 on the dole, 150 jobs are under threat at South Coast Fisheries, a fish processing plant. Many fishermen have tied up their boats permanently.

But jobs are also under threat in the big industries of Cork itself. The giant NET plant at Marino Point is currently seeking £50 mil-

lion from the government just to keep them going for this year.

Under constant threat of closure and continually being labelled a "white elephant" in the media, the 450 workers at the plant have hit back with a strong statement showing that any losses have nothing to do with them but are entirely due to huge bank borrowings on the original construction.

The prospect of the dole queue was recently used to great effect at Veroline Shipyard where ITGWU members had struck against increased flexibility. The strike was lost by a small majority after management had issued protective notice—and despite the fact that the company had several large orders on the books.

The list is endless. Raybestos Manhattan closed with the loss of 150 jobs. Dunlops have laid-off several workers and even Fords have started the softening-up process for lay-offs with talk of having to pay too high a price for imported parts from Britain.

The plant was built by American-owned Kellogg on a "sliding costs" basis which meant in effect that

they could write their own cheque and then blame strikers for pushing up the costs from £50m to over £200m. Interest charges alone on this extortion cost NET a cool £2m a month!

Last but not least, Digital, the American data-processing firm at Ballincellig, have announced closure. Remember—this high-technology business is supposed to be the great white hope for jobs for our young people in the next decade!

Despite this mounting toll, there is yet little or no organised fightback in Cork itself. The Bantry march—even if led by the local priest and supported by local traders—is at least something and Cork Trades Council could well take a leaf out of their book.

Marches will, of course, never be enough. Resistance to redundancies where they are threatened and industrial action is the only real way forward. And these fightbacks will happen—when workers, in Cork as elsewhere, begin to realise that, despite redundancy payments, there are just not going to be any jobs to go to when the money runs out.



## The facts

ANOTHER 1200 people joined the dole queue during February as the National unemployment total rose for the fifteenth month in succession, to a total of 126,256, an increase of more than a third on February 1980 figure of 92,354. Add on 100,000 or so out of work in the North, and the figure for all of Ireland is close to 1/4 million.

Fianna Fail's spokesperson on Labour immediately announced that "the continued fall-off in the monthly rate of increase reflects the impact of government measures to increase employment."

Fine Gael and Labour claimed that government policy had failed. To complete the platitudes, the Confederation of Irish Industry claimed that excessive wage rises were to blame for job losses. None of them have ever shown that they have any understanding of why jobs are lost in Ireland.

Ireland has a small open economy which exports about half of its Gross National Product, one of the highest in the developed world. The USA, by comparison, exports less than 30%. Therefore when faced with recession in the world market, output is hit immediately as there is less demand for Irish made

products.

The present world economic crisis is the worst since the 1930s with output and consumption falling in all the major developed countries. The situation is made worse by the fact that half of all Irish exports go to Britain. During 1980 output fell 10% in Britain, the highest fall in any year since before the war.

These factors are beyond the control of the Irish government and unemployment will continue to rise as the world economic crisis deepens.

Another factor which affects unemployment in Ireland is the nature of local industry which comprises of two sectors—the old and the new. The new—new technology, computers and electronics—has been extremely successful in creating new jobs in the last few years. Over half of the new jobs have been created in this sector. But they have not been enough to off-set the losses in the traditional industries—textiles, leather, agriculture, etc.

In this situation, it is not the policies of the government which determine unemployment levels.

The world slump shows no sign of an upturn—unemployment can only get worse during the coming months.

# THE LOYALIST BACKLASH



MANY NORTHERN Catholics had a good laugh at the spectacle of Dublin city councillors being kicked and punched by Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party henchmen.

For once the Dublin visitors got a tiny taste of the sectarian spectre that is looming large once again in the North.

But Paisley is no laughing matter. Nor does he represent some lunatic fringe. Last June in the EEC elections he got 30% of the vote—more than all other Unionist candidates put together.

Paisley has taken to the Carson trail in his political offensive against the Haughey-Thatcher summit.

threatened redundancies and to support workers demands — to a point.

He and Bill Craig have long been appearing on trade union platforms organised against closures, unemployment and low pay.

It is notable that in the present competition between Paisley's DUP and the Official Unionist Party which supports integration and Thatcher's economic policy, OUP rank and file are extremely uneasy because Paisley is loud and clear in his attacks on the disastrous results of that economic policy for Protestant farmers and workers.

The UDA continues its assassination campaign unhindered.

Several new militant Protestant organisations have formed. We, as socialists, must attack these developments as the threat they are to the Nationalist community.

But we must also question the continuing attachment of the Protestant working class to Loyalism, in spite of the vicious economic attacks they are undergoing.

The Loyalism of Protestant workers is too often simply accepted and ignored by socialists and republicans, though it has been Protestant workers who time and time again have been responsible for the defeat of nationalist and even liberal demands in Ireland.

During the past 12 years we have seen the breakdown of the Orange-Unionist all class alliance which so successfully maintained Protestant supremacy during the 50 years of Stormont rule.

The alliance kept united the gentry, industrialists, farmers and workers with their conflicting interests. The working class regularly supported the Unionist Party and Orange Order and were rewarded with marginal privileges — which kept them just a shade better off than Catholic workers.

Changes in the economic structure in the North, from traditional industry to the importation of modern capitalism and the development of new British trade links with the South, demanded reforms in the sectarian state.



The Unionist alliance fell apart under the impact of the civil rights movement as one leader after another was rejected by the Loyalist base for being prepared to give minor reforms to Catholics.

It is Ian Paisley who is now attempting to rebuild that Unionist from his base of small farmers and working class people who have not changed their sectarian attitudes and adherence to the British Crown. Paisley began his career as a back street cleric preaching rabid anti-Papism. He launched himself into the religious limelight with a series of anti-Catholic publicity stunts.

He moved into the political arena when he threatened to march up the Falls Road in 1964 to remove a tricolour from the Republican Clubs headquarters.

He didn't have to march — the RUC did it for him! Paisley advanced his political career by being consistent to Loyalism. He proved that the way to keep the leadership was "never be soft on Catholics."

But Paisley has also been careful to pay heed to the economic interests of his base. He has long argued the case for the Antrim small farming community. He is also the first to complain about

The Ulster Defence Association, the largest of the Protestant paramilitary groups, has more support in the Belfast working class than Paisley. But it was the UDA that got out the vote for Paisley's candidates, McQuade and Robinson, who won the North and East Belfast seats in the last Westminster election.

This year the UDA is seeking electoral support itself. A UDA candidate won the recent by-election to the Belfast city council and they are standing a full slate for the local elections in May.

The UDA has competed for leadership of the Loyalist forces by killing while Paisley just talks. For the past two years they have been carrying out a murder campaign against Catholics, first aimed at prominent Provisionals and more recently killing or attempting to kill well-known anti-imperialists, what the UDA call "cheerleaders,"

Turnley, Daly, Bunting, Little and the McAliskeys.



Now the UDA is linking up with a reformed Ulster Workers Council. This is the organisation that organised the 1974 work stoppage which ended the power-sharing executive.

The Council's leaders are from the shipyards and Shorts in East Belfast. Shop stewards from Courtaulds, ICI, and the Kilroot power station, all from the East Antrim area worst hit by the latest wave of closures are also on the Council.

The Council announced its aim of breaking with the ICTU because it hasn't done anything about Protestant unemployment—we'd say nor about anybody's unemployment, North or South.

But it has become clear that their main concern is with security and the Haughey-Thatcher summit.

The British government has usually supported or at least tolerated Loyalist sectarianism. The threat of Loyalist violence has always been enough to deny nationalist demands. This was one clear lesson from the recent TV series on Irish history.

When Carson marched, he got partition. When Paisley and Bunting attacked, civil rights reforms were denied. In 1974 the British Army refused to move against

Protestant workers.

The same argument is used today. "We couldn't withdraw because of the violence that would follow." "We can't give political status because of the threat of violence," say the Brits.

The fact that Loyalist violence is today, and always has been, a fact of life in the North is ignored.

Loyalist assassins are able to do their job as well because of the active support they receive, in the form of intelligence information at least, from the British Army and the RUC.

But Loyalist violence is ignored also by socialists and republicans who choose to say only "Brits Out" and avoid the difficult and ugly problem of Loyalist sectarianism which must be fought.

Socialists and republicans must also bear some of the responsibility for failing to attempt to put forward any alternative leadership for Protestant workers. It is not right to say that Protestant workers always have been and therefore always will be sectarian. Working



B Specials, Derry 1967.

consciousness can change, particularly in times of crisis.

Protestant workers in the past have moved from Right to Left in response to the changing impact of

capitalism upon their lives. It is most likely that in the present crisis Protestant workers—who see two problems, the threat to their state and the threat to their privilege—will stay on the Right because no-one has competed with Paisley and the UDA.

Reformists like the Stickies and the Communist Party have totally accepted the Orange state and refuse to fight sectarianism. The obscene spectacle of former IRA men O'Sullivan and Lynch of SFWP at a DUP funeral is a good example of how to reinforce Paisley's leadership. The "Workers" Party's recognition to recognise and support the "difficult job" of how they ingratiate themselves with Loyalists.

British and Southern socialists and trade unionists have failed to take advantage of the trade union and industrial links they have with Protestant workers to bring them into the fight against unemployment and for better pay and debate with them the advantages of their ties to the British state.

There have been too few examples like the Dublin firemen who came North to support the striking firemen in 1977.

The anti-imperialist movement has failed also in this respect. The Kilroot power workers, in an attempt to save their own jobs, asked for the restoration of the cross-border electricity link. They even went to see a Southern minister about it.

What was the response of the Provos? — a statement of their intent to blow it up again, thereby denying both Protestant and Catholic jobs.

The last hunger strike campaign appealed to the bishops and the Southern government calling on people to say the rosary. Not only did such methods fail to give a successful lead to the campaign, but they ensured that it could only look like another "Catholic plot" to any watching Protestants.

There are numerous examples of the gestures that might have been made while we continue to fight British rule and the sectarian regime in the North. It would be totally unrealistic to expect even a small section of Protestant workers to spontaneously reject their sectarian heritage during the present crisis.

Since no-one is arguing with them about how neither a British TUC or an Irish ICTU is going to lead a fightback against unemployment, about how Loyalism has kept them down, about the need to fight the British state, we can only expect that they will continue to support Paisley and the UDA and that Loyalist murders will continue unabated.

It's about time that socialists and republicans — North and South — began to realise just how important the task of breaking Protestant workers from Loyalism is to the struggle for a socialist Ireland.

## Students plug away

JOE DUFFY and ALEX WHITE were President and Deputy President of Trinity College Dublin Students Union last year.

Recently Joe Duffy won the position of Education Officer in the National Union of Students, Ireland at an Annual Conference which saw the defeat of SFWP leaders after many years of domination.

Alex White is running for the job of President in Trinity this month. They talked to KEVIN CALLINAN on a wide range of student issues both in Trinity and nationally.

**THE WORKER:** What struck you when you first came to Trinity?

JOE: The first thing I saw was how elitist Trinity was. Trinity has been slow to change. I was angry at who decides where the money is going. The power structure is the same as it was 400 years ago. It shows up all the injustices of the education system. What sort of platform are you standing for election in TCD on, Alex?

ALEX: I'm standing in recognition of the national character of student demands and also the demoralisation presently existing within the student movement.

I think it is a question of responding to the apathy. Popular support was not sustained this year in TCD. There is a lack of any honest account of what is going on behind the scenes by this year's union officers.

They rely too much on College Committees most of which are just useless bureaucracy. I believe committees are only useful when they are shown to actually be of benefit to students.



Alex White.

What is needed is a strong, independent fighting union that will take up catering and library demands in order to politicise students on general issues.

The everyday issues are essential before you can achieve anything else.

What sort of opposition have you met in your efforts to campaign on student issues in the past in Trinity?

JOE: We know that last year there was collaboration between the College authorities and the Special Branch, who had addresses that could only have been got through the College.

It seems obvious that we posed a threat to the social order in Trinity.

They spent £14,000 on bringing students to court over a period of three months for occupying College property. I myself made about a dozen court appearances.

The heartening thing was that we got support from trade unionists both inside and outside the College as well as community groups. There was even talk of the College being blacked by trade unionists.

What did the dispute with the USI leadership this year stem from?

ALEX: I think it was an awareness of the national reality. The leadership had no meaningful contact with students. The stranglehold over USI by Sinn Féin the Workers Party led to an inability to confront the government.

Do you not think, Joe, that despite your election you may be hampered by USI policy as regards getting things done?

JOE: No, in my particular area which is education we have a very good wide-ranging policy. It is a question of putting this into practice. We have various confrontation tactics and a ballot-box policy within our choice range.

This paper will be read mainly by who may well not be interested in student issues. What would you say to them?

JOE: When they are presented with the facts I think they will be interested. Education has never

been an election issue though one-third of the population is engaged in it.

PAYE tax payers finance educational institutions though most of them and their children never have the real choice to come to university.

It is up to them to assert their right through trade unions which could be much more militant and strident on the issue.

ALEX: Just to elaborate. I don't think the demand for more access to education is sufficient. You have to realise that it is fundamentally at odds with the interests of the ruling elite to have working class kids in third-level education. That's why a comprehensive grants scheme has never been introduced.

How do you see the involvement of both of you in the new Dublin community journal "Strumpet"?

ALEX: I think it was a realisation that issues extend beyond the realm of students. There is a vacuum in the representation of young people rooted in the redundant nature of party politics.

There is a crisis even among the left as regards the articulation of young people's demands.

JOE: I see Strumpet as being able to publicise issues not being covered in the media in order to establish a popular magazine among certain young people. We hope that the left will take up the issues.

Finally, what plans for the future? JOE and ALEX: We're just going to keep plugging away.

# INDUSTRIAL NEWS

## Safety at work

Brian McKenna  
Local Government and  
Public Service Union

ON MARCH 1 1981 the Industry Bill (1980) became law.

The new act is a general update of the old 1955 Factories Act and its most important provision is in the establishment of joint safety committees.

Basically the new Act institutionalises the concept of the Safety Committee and the position of Safety Representative, but it gives them no real powers.

Their role is purely consultative; they have no statutory powers; they can suggest safety improvements but can not insist that they be implemented.

The old saying that the law best serves the interests of those who have a hand in making it is particularly true of laws relating to health and safety in the work-place.

This latest Act—in common with most safety in industry regulations—has a number of very basic weaknesses:-

- the acts only cover about half the working population—categories not covered include workers in transport; education; hospitals; hotels and agriculture.
- the regulations are weakly drafted, relying mainly on "reasonableness" and persuasion.
- the enforcement agency, the Industrial Inspectorate of the Department of Labour is extremely ineffectual relying mainly on persuasion and prosecuting only for continual failure to comply.
- fines for breaking the regulations are purely nominal—out of 20,000 premises visited by the Industrial Inspectorate in 1979 only 72 prosecutions were brought for infringements of the Acts and the total amount they were fined was £1,545.

### WEAKNESSES

However, although the current safety laws have these inherent weaknesses, by establishing structures for safety committees and safety representatives—even ones with no real power—they provide a useful basis on which to organise and build and so their provision should be utilised to the full.

Without strong workplace organisation there will be no significant reduction in deaths and injury at work.

There are two major factors involved in organising for health and safety:-

- Obviously 100% trade unionism and the acceptance of the idea that health and safety is an integral part of trade union activity.
- Access to relevant information and advice.

Safety is part of industrial relations as a whole and as such it is part of the wider class struggle. The main object of management is to contain costs and maximise profits.

The workers need for health and safety is in direct conflict with this drive for top profits.

Significant improvements in working conditions can best be achieved by strong organisation at shopfloor level and by becoming better informed on occupational hazards.

There can be no lasting solution in a society geared to maximum profits.

The conflict between profits and healthy working conditions can only be resolved in a socialist society in which the working people have control over their own lives.

## CIE TO CUT

by KEVIN WINGFIELD,  
Bus conductor,  
ITGWU.

PUBLIC transport faces savage cuts and job losses following the government's announcement last month of a £5 million cut in the subsidy to CIE.

With losses running this year at £83 m. the cuts will actually amount to £18 m. and on 18 February, CIE Chairman Devlin told representatives of the Congress Unions of his plans for implementing the cuts.

In Dublin City Bus Services, CIE plan to withdraw 5 routes—47A, 61, 52, 53A and 72—and reduce 21 other routes. In addition, Saturday and Sunday services would be cut to the bone.

Although no cuts in the railway are proposed—there would be no significant savings—provincial bus services would suffer cuts and withdrawals and Cork and Limerick City Services would be scrapped.

CIE will claim "inability to pay" the second stage of the National Understanding and has withdrawn its commitment to no redundancies.

All this is before any implementation of the proposals contained in the recent McKinsley report.

Savings—after allowing for redundancy payments—are put at £15.5 m, Devlin claims.

CIE workers must organise on the basis of total opposition to service cuts and job losses. Rank and file organisation is a must in these circumstances.

To this end the arrival on the scene of the "CIE Worker" group can be of great assistance.

Meanwhile transport workers watch and wait.

## Inter-Union Clash PART TWO

IN THE last issue of the Worker, we highlighted the case of ITGWU members in Dublin, who sick of the lack of service and democracy, left the union and ended up in the ATGWU precipitating an inter-union clash that threatened to split the ICTU.

Predictably, the ICTU has stepped back from the brink and appointed a commission to "enquire into the matter."

Such a solution may well have bought the union tops valuable time to ponder the rights and wrongs of their "gentlemen's agreements," but has done nothing at all to resolve the heart of the matter—are workers free to decide who should represent them?

by JIM BLAKE

One group of workers who still don't know the answer is the 180 non-nursing staff in the Cork Regional Hospital.

In October 1979, 140—about half—the ITGWU members in the hospital joined with 40 non-union members to start a branch of the ATGWU, their patience with the ITGWU having run out.

In April 1980, however, after a complaint from the ITGWU, the ICTU ruled that they should go back and ATGWU must get out.

In the meantime, management refused to negotiate with ATGWU and there was widespread victimisation of shop stewards leading to industrial action in the summer and the use of ITGWU scabs from outside the hospital.

Eventually the ATGWU branch took the matter to the High Court which ruled in December that although they were entitled to belong to ATGWU, there was nothing

in the Constitution which compelled the management to grant negotiating rights.

And there, despite all the toings and froings in the ICTU, the Cork Regional ATGWU workers remain—in limbo and unable to function as real trade unionists.

Brian Abbot, Secretary of the ATGWU Branch spoke to the Worker about why they felt they had to leave the ITGWU and their problems ever since.

### GRIEVANCES

On their grievances with the ITGWU.

"Generally an inability to get representation or claims processed and the unrepresentative structure of the union. For example on the National Wage Agreement we were not even given a vote.

"Another example was that our official accepted a £2.50 fixed

payment for on-call duty for ambulancemen without our approval. Traditionally we'd got one sixth of basic—it means we now have £2.50 where we should have £15!

"Deals were always being done over our heads—as a rep I was confined strictly to local issues. At one meeting the manager said to me, 'why don't you resign as a shop steward and concentrate on your job.' The full-time official was present and said not a word. That's how much they defend union rights."

On leaving the union. There were a couple of times people wanted to leave over incidents, but I always argued against—even though I'd been banned myself from acting as a rep by the Branch Committee. But in October 1979 there was a spontaneous walk-out over non-payment of back money and the full-timer engineered a return to work by calling a meeting at a moment's notice consisting mainly of scabs.

### LAST STRAW

"I think this incident was the last straw in a long line. Personally I'd run out of arguments to stay in and fight. There was just no way we could operate inside the union any longer."

On joining the ATGWU. "We plumped for the ATGWU because it was a strong union with members in the South Eastern health Board.

"Originally it was just the ambulance drivers who joined, but when the other staff in the hospital found out they came over in droves within a few days.

"I want to make it clear that

we went looking for the ATGWU. In no way did they poach us as has been suggested."

On the problems encountered. "As soon as we moved, a general slander campaign started. I was said to be a paid recruiter and even responsible for the Ferenka closure though I've never been near the place in my life! Very heavy emphasis was put on the ATGWU being a British-based union.

"One woman rep who had been on night duty for 13 years was suddenly moved to days. During our strike over victimisation, full-timers came down from Connolly Hall and intimidated our pickets with stopping and staring tactics.

### SCABS.

"Then they brought in scabs from outside. And all this time, ITGWU were busily poaching INO nurses in the hospital during the build-up to the nurses strike!"

On the situation now.

"The decision of the High Court has left us in a kind of limbo but all our members are determined to stick it out. We won't be forced back into ITGWU which is what management wants."

"We've been fighting for getting on 18 months now and it's very hard, believe me.

"Anyone considering leaving ITGWU should think very hard about it—there is no turning back.

"And to those still in the union, I say build a strong workplace organisation and fight like hell to impose your will on the union."

## Civil Servants

by JOAN KELLY

"YOU AIN'T seen nothing yet, Maggie" threatened the striking civil servants as they tried out their industrial muscle in a fight for a 15% pay increase instead of the 7% offered by the British government.

Government business came to a halt throughout the North as 90% of the civil service came out on the one day stoppage on March 9.

Several courts in Belfast were closed; border security offices, tax offices, social customs posts, the airport and other government departments were all hit by the strike.

75% of the civilian searchers on Belfast security gates joined the strike in spite of a call from the

Police Authority for them to continue work because of the security situation.

2500 strikers turned out to a rally in Belfast where one union leader said that one third of the workers in the civil service—cleaners, messengers, lab attendants—were living below the poverty line.

Workers at the rally pledged to continue the industrial action. The first phase of this is the strike by customs officials in an attempt to disrupt commercial traffic between the Republic and the UK.

But these and other plans put forward by the union leaders, are selective disruptive tactics, rather than planning for an all out strike.

## EUROWELD

by SEAN CROSSKERRY.

"THE COMPANY with world wide connections" runs the slogan of Euroweld, the Belfast engineering company.

Maybe so, but for the workers there is one definite local connection—with the dole queue.

Over the last few months management, supported by the Department of Commerce officials, have been attempting to get the workers to accept redundancies through a campaign of lies and deceit.

If the firm closes it would put 240 workers directly on the dole and put 300 more subcontracting jobs at risk.

But the workers are fighting back. They have both picketed and occupied the fac-

tory. And as in Britain, the local SPG has attempted to break resistance and get them out of the factory with both verbal and physical abuse.

As we go to press, despite all the lies attacks and provocation, the workers have remained steadfast and so far have thwarted management's attempt at closure.

Fightbacks against redundancies are few and far between.

The Euroweld fight is a demonstration to all workers of the importance of direct action.

They should be supported by all trade unionists.



Northern Ireland customs officials on picket duty at Newry, Co Down. — (Photograph: Pat Langan)



# THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

## POLITICAL STATUS

### DERRY WORKERS SPEAK

AT THE end of February 80 trade union activists met in Derry to plan a campaign of industrial action in support of the new hunger strike of Bobby Sands for political status.

Although the forces represented at the Conference were small, and despite the fact that a few of those present could still not get it into their heads that the glorious revolution is not just around the corner, nevertheless a serious, realistic, but militant, strategy of building support for industrial action was adopted at the end of the day—the centre piece of which is a National Day of Industrial Action on April 15th (Day 45 of Bobby Sands Hunger strike).

The success of the Conference owed much to the intervention of trade unionists from Derry who produced, during the last hunger strike, near total stoppages of factories, shops and schools in the city on both November 12th and December 10th. There is no doubt that this time round as well the Derry workers will be in the forefront of the renewed struggle. To get an insight into how such action was organised and the prospects in the coming period, the Worker talked to Paddy and Joe of the Derry H Block Trade Union Committee, the group responsible for leading last year's action.

On how they managed to get the stoppages last year, Paddy was insistent, "Basically it was through long hard, patient organising at the grass roots level. We started early and built up contacts in most workplaces. Sometimes there would be the shop stewards, more often just individuals that we knew (or someone's brother knew, sort of thing).



We got our own leaflets around saying why industrial action was needed. When we started getting a response we got a meeting together to co-ordinate the action and fix a day—November 12th.

The actual numbers that came out on that day really surprised us though—a lot of it was quite spontaneous. But the network of contacts in the factories is the most important thing—and that is still there for this time around".

Joe pointed to another important aspect of the campaign, the dead end of relying on the official trade union movement, "At the beginning, we decided to approach both the official movement and ordinary workers directly.

The official end was just not worth the bother, here in Derry anyway. For example, the Trades Council duly passed a resolution in support but when the secretary, Jackie Nash of the ITGWU, was man-

dated to raise it at the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU, he claimed he couldn't because he'd lost the exact wording! Jackie used to be a good steward—not any more.

The political status thing sorts them out and the official movement is, in reality if not words, pro-Brit. We proved we can get action without official backing, next time we won't even bother".

Paddy believes that the basic reason for the action in Derry was that industrial action has provided a means whereby those anti-imperialists not involved in the military struggle can nevertheless get involved, "The anti-imperialist struggle here is a continuous process since 1968 onwards. The military campaign is one part of that but involves only a few. Industrial action is the other side. It gives the majority a direct way of expressing support. It's not be-

cause there's a particularly militant trade unionism here. There's been virtually no action on redundancies, wages, the cuts etc. It's basically the anti-imperialist struggle in a new and necessary form".

On the campaign around the second hunger strike, Joe was basically optimistic, "I can only speak for Derry, but we think we can get action again and sustain it better this time. Last time we probably peaked too soon and lost the initiative. This time we're working towards action on Day 45 and then planning to keep it going by selective Occupations and other tactics.

The pressure needs to be kept up until the very end. The spoof from some people in the Conference today about General Strikes and all that is just garbage, they don't know what they're talking about. But we think by careful preparation we can get good action and sustain it.

## WHAT WE SAY

IF YOU depend on the media for news of the real world, you might never have heard of the hunger strike in the H Blocks. Frances Hughes and Bobby Sands do not exist as far as the press and television barons are concerned.

The issue they are fighting for—political status—is supposed to be so outrageous that it doesn't deserve a mention.

The Press has a job to do. Just as the Brits have tried to break the prisoners by isolating them, so the media has tried to silence the campaign outside the jails even before it gets off the ground. But resistance has a habit of breaking through. The last hunger strike showed there are thousands who will support the prisoners. That is what terrifies Haughey and Thatcher.

With patient and effective organisation, that support can be brought back on to the streets.

There are problems, though. 8000 on the demonstration for the first day of the hunger strike—a smaller start than the 30,000 who were out last time. There are many reasons for that. First there is a basic confusion about what was won or lost during the last hunger strike. The attempt by the Provos to

pretend they had won a victory was politically dishonest.

The concessions on prison conditions did not amount to political status. The prisoners in H Block knew it, and the mass of people outside felt it. And that confusion has turned to some disillusionment. Unfortunately, it has led many to wait for a martyr to come out of the H Block before actually involving themselves in the campaign.

But that is a totally wrong way of looking at it. We don't want to see any fighter die. Mass movements don't need martyrs. And there is no guarantee that a martyr will build a mass movement. We must fight like hell for the lives of Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes. The stakes are high this time around. A victory would not only destroy the criminalisation strategy but would open the way to a mass British Withdrawal campaign.

A defeat would not only set the anti-imperialist movement back, it would be a shot in the arm for Paisley's attempt to rebuild a confident, militant Loyalism. That is why the political weaknesses of the campaign must be corrected immediately. In the first place we have to be absolutely clear about the issue.

It's political status, plain and simple.

The issue is not just about better living conditions in prison. It's about forcing the Brits to recognise there is a political struggle going on against its rule.

Secondly, we have to be clear who we are going to win support from. There is no sizeable liberal support to be won over by pretending we are looking for something less than political status.

Nor is there a segment of Fianna Fail ready to come over. Fianna Fail is a bosses party. It has stood for collaboration and repression for years. We need to attack them for their links with Thatcher rather than downplaying our politics in the hope that some councillor will some day appeal to Haughey to do something.

The only support that can win the issue of political status is the support that comes from mass action—spearheaded by industrial action.

That's why the campaign must be directed to the trade union movement.

Other organisations can express concern. But they haven't the power to force the Brits to listen.

