

Socialist Worker

Socialist Workers Movement for workers' power



WHY YOU SHOULD BE A SUBVERSIVE

SUBVERSIVES have a bad name in this country. They're thought of only as types who plant bombs. People who are involved in armed struggle. There are other ways of being subversive.

All revolutionary socialists are subversive. We all want to overthrow the rotten capitalist system we live in. We want workers control of a system based on needs, not profits.

We promote subversion by urging all socialists to get involved in struggles in their workplaces, by fighting their boss, by resisting the cuts in public spending, by support-

ing rights for women, by defending their jobs.

These small-scale struggles are of vital importance if the system is to be overthrown. Because they give working class people confidence in their ability to fight, to control their own lives and to transform society totally by building socialism.

You don't need bombs for these struggles. You do need an organised working class which has built up solidarity between groups of workers and has confidence in the possibility of workers' power.

That's why you'll find a centre page spread inside on just this subject.

So why should you be a subversive?

* The system is rotten. A few capitalists control all the wealth while the majority of working people - who produce the wealth - are walked all over.

* Everyday the geriatrics in Washington and Moscow bring us closer to nuclear destruction.

* In the North, the Catholics are automatically put to the end of the pile when it comes

to jobs, houses etc. Yet, if they fight back, they're subject to the brutal, armed repression of the British state.

* There are 215,000 on the dole. Yet the government has announced that it will *punish* any workers who fight for their jobs. The IDA will refuse to get a buyer for factories where workers are occupying to save their jobs.

The more you think about it, the more you realise it makes *sense* to be a subversive - to want a total change in society.

Naturally, the ruling class doesn't agree. Just now the

Special Branch are drawing up a list of 'all known subversives' in preparation for Ronald Reagan's visit in June. Given the thousands of deaths that RayGun has been responsible for in Central America and his casual approach to the possibility of nuclear war, a list of people likely to oppose his visit should be a list of honour!

Subversives take different approaches. We in the SWM believe that the only way capitalism can be overthrown is by the mass struggle of the working class. Like the Chartists of the last century,

we believe that this will be done 'peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must'.

We know that for the working class to take power, a revolutionary socialist party is needed - not a party which thinks it can hand down socialism but one which believes in the working class doing it itself *for itself*.

That's what the SWM are trying to build. Come in and be a subversive!

RELIGION - A HEALTH HAZARD

A COUPLE of weeks ago, the papers had two big stories about two young women. One was 15-year old Anne Lovett who died in a field while giving birth. She was close to being made a saint - an innocent young girl who had died trying to conceal the living result of her sexual activity.

The other was Eileen Flynn - the teacher from New Ross, sacked by the nuns because she openly had a child by a married man. Meanwhile, at the Forum, the Bishops and the INTO told us they wanted to see Church-run schools continue.

Both of these women were victims of the warped society which gives women in Ireland no control over their bodies, no right to free contraception, never mind abortion. A society which denies women the right to have sex at all, unless its within marriage - and even then you're not supposed to enjoy it! A society which says that if women want to work they better not have kids. A society which insists that women are either virgins or whores.

It has to be said that the



cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary has a lot to answer for when it comes to women and sex in Ireland. That's why young Anne had to be made a saint - she was a nice girl, clearly not a whore but since she was having a child... There is a precedent. The BVM who is supposed to have had the wonderful experience of having a baby without the nasty, dirty sex bit that usually precedes it. Its nonsense. We know its nonsense. But it gets to people.

And all this is going on at the same time that they're talking about changing the law on contraception. Probably not a big change. Just juggle around a bit, take condoms off prescriptions and make the present Family Planning Clinics legal. That will mean nothing to the majority of women, to working class women. And

HEALTH SERVICE

And it will mean precious little too to the women who, like Anne and Eileen live outside the four big towns that have FP clinics.

When it comes down to it, the only change that would make any real difference is to make contraception available free through the health centres, to all who want it. That way every part of the country, from Finglas to Knocknaheeny, Donegal to Wexford, will have some contraceptive service.

And age or marital status clearly *doesn't* enter into it. Young Ann would be considered too young by those who talk of age. And Eileen was fired precisely because she is a mother who is *not* married.

They're cutting the health service; wards are closing, jobs are disappearing. But we want contraception free on the health service. That means, inevitably, that the campaign around contraception will have to take up the fight against the cuts.

And it will have to take care that it doesn't become a support campaign for Barry Desmond who can make very liberal pronouncements about a woman's right to contraception while at the same time closing maternity and gynaecological wards and cutting jobs.

GORETTI HORGAN

WHAT'S ON

PUBLIC MEETING 'Why You Should Be a Socialist'

Speaker: Eamonn McCann Weds 29th Feb. 8.00
Bridge House Bar, Main Street Tullamore.

Demonstrate against the Criminal Justice Bill - Sat.
25th February - 2.30 - Parnell Square.

You may notice that we've changed the name of our paper from THE WORKER to SOCIALIST WORKER. The main reason for the change was to reflect the whole range of our politics and the fact that we believe the struggle for socialism to be both a political and an economic battle.

The confusion in some people's minds of the Worker with the Workers Party contributed to the decision. The politics of the WP dead to sell-outs of workers; they have turned their back on the struggle in the North; they want state capitalism, not socialism. We do not want to be confused with them.

The SWM hold regular discussion meetings. If you are interested, cut out the slip on this page, we'll send you details.



Another brick in the Wall

THE Coalition is planning a new lot of repressive measures. First on the agenda is the Criminal Justice Bill. It now looks set for an easy passage in the Dail after a well-orchestrated campaign by the Gardai for more powers.

The Bill will allow the police to hold suspects for up to 20 hours. It also removes the right to silence during interrogation. In future suspects may incriminate themselves not just by what they say - but also by what they fail to say. Courts can dismiss any defence evidence which was not offered during interrogation. The pressure is therefore on to talk as much as possible so that nothing can be deemed to have been left out.

There is no doubt that the Gardai will use these powers for further harassment. This is precisely how they used similar powers from the Offences Against the State Act. In 1981 only 14% of those arrested under this Act were

ever charged. In 1982, a full 89% of those arrested under the Offences Against the State Act were released without any charge whatsoever.

The Criminal Justice Bill should not be seen in isolation. The Coalition is also engaged in a propaganda offensive against 'subversives'.

* 'Subversives' are to be excluded from all delegations to government ministers and officials. This is to pave the way for a witch-hunt through out Irish society. Sinn Fein councillors from Longford and Donegal have already been excluded from meetings with the government. Plans are afoot to extend the measure to trade union and tenants groups with SF members.

* In January, the Evening Herald revealed that the Special Branch were updating the files on 'subversives' in preparation for Reagan's visit in June. Already, they have photographed those at a recent Women's Right to Choose meeting.

* On a more sinister level, the police and army intelligence are to share lists of 'known subversives'. Speculation has also mounted about the greater use of the army in anti-terrorist operations.

The Coalition is NOT about to establish a police state. Their objectives are primarily political. They have recognised a growing disenchantment with organised bourgeois politics in the South. The first signs of that receiving a political expression was the Sinn Fein vote in Dublin Central. They are determined to drive such views beyond the pale by huffing and puffing about the 'subversive threat'.

The way to beat them is by building the 'subversive' presence in workplaces and in the communities. The first major chance to show your anger at the Coalition comes on February 25th. The Anti-Criminal Justice Campaign is holding a demonstration in Dublin. Be there!

Students begin fightback



UNTIL recently, things looked bleak for students in Ireland. Colleges had disaffiliated from USI. Fianna and Fine Gael societies were strengthening in the colleges and increases in fees were making higher education even more the preserve of the wealthy.

Then the medical card issue came up. It was the last straw for many students frustrated by right wing offensives in the Colleges and by ever higher levels of unemployment. A fightback campaign began.

There has been a brave and praiseworthy attempt by those loyal to USI to involve the maximum number of students in the campaign. General assemblies, while small, have carefully explained the issues and where the campaign should go. Generally, the message has been clear: the government must be made to step down and restore medical cards to all students.

The occupations have been well-organised and receive good publicity. A number of students were imprisoned for contempt of

court while continuing to occupy the Eastern Health Board offices. The law used against them was the same one which put the Ranks workers in Mountjoy.

Despite cautious ideas about making 'special' cases for sick students, the argument has been won amongst a small minority that medical cards should be a right for all not a charity.

The campaign has been built amid unfavourable conditions. But in spite of its successes, there is only a minority of students prepared to fight. Clearly occupations *alone* cannot win. The longer the government holds out, the more they run the risk of becoming a substitute for full mobilisation of students.

What's more, as it gets closer to exam time, it will become more difficult to extend and generalise the occupations.

The broader political links have to be made with others fighting the cuts: Handing out USI leaflets on the tax march at the end of January was the kind of outward looking action that's needed.

However difficult it may seem, support from workers outside the Colleges has to be won. Resolutions through Union branches are fairly token, but they do build support. Links should be made with the ESB workers fighting cuts in their jobs - as well as all those involved in resisting the cuts.

Defend Militant

THE WAY Dick Spring is talking these days, anyone would think that 'Militant' believed in a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system by the self-activity of the working class. Nor so. They are fully committed to the ideals of the Labour Party - to 'bringing socialism in' through the Dail.

They believe that if they can make the Labour Party more left-wing, it will get the support of the working class. Then the Labour Party (LP), with this support, can legislate socialism.

This kind of socialism from above is what they've got in France at present. There, unemployment is higher than ever and

'the socialist government is cutting jobs and services as fast as Thatcher in Britain.

But Militant are more left-wing than the rest of the LP. Their ideas attract people and their numbers are growing. That's why Spring & Co. are so scared of them. The fact that they lead the fight against the Coalition in Labour may also have something to do with Spring wanting to expel them.

Militant may not be on the road to socialism, but they must be defended against any witchhunt.

SOCIALIST 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 to take out a subscription to SOCIALIST WORKER - £3.50 for a year - clip this form and post to SWM, 41 Herberton Park, Rialto, Dublin 8.

I want to join: I want a subscription and enclose £3.50:

I would like more information about the SWM

Name

Address

FRANCE - THE UNION'S SHAME

IMMIGRANT workers have been booted out of France by the so-called 'socialist' government, following the recent bitter strike at the Talbot-Poissy car plant outside Paris.

The workers, mainly Moroccans, had staged a sit-in against pay-offs. But they were violently attacked by racist members of the company's scab 'union'. The pictures of the fighting were shown extensively on RTE in late January.

The communist and socialist unions - who are also organised at Talbot-Poissy - stood by and let it happen. They did not want to cause trouble for Mitterand's government - which had sanctioned the redundancies - or for the communist and socialist ministers who serve in it.

The strikers had staged a sit-in at the B3 workshop after 1,905 redundancies were announced.

It was clear from the redundancy lists that the Moroccans were being picked on.

The sit-in was attacked by organised gangs from the company 'union', the CSL, shouting racist abuse and using clubs and crow-bars.

RIOT POLICE

The Moroccans were members of the socialist union federation, the CFDT. But their own union officials, instead of backing them up, called in the notorious French riot police 'to maintain law and order'. What the cops did, of course, was to smash the occupation.

The Communist union, the CBT, were just as useless. They called demonstrations to oppose both the violence and the sit-ins.



The fact that, in the face of all this, the Moroccan workers maintained their sit-in for a month is both a tribute to them and an example to all.

They had built up their shop floor organisation over the previous years in a number of disputes. In the process, like the Ranks workers here, they had come to realise that they had to rely on their own shop-floor strength - not on 'the law' or on the union bureaucracy.

CAPITULATED

The CFDT officials finally capitulated entirely to racism and negotiated money for the workers not just to leave the

factory but to leave France! Even the British Tory party at its last conference refused to go along with the idea of offering immigrants 'grants' if they'd agree to 'repatriation'. But the French 'socialists' were made of different stuff.

The reason it happened has to do with the nature of moderate 'socialism' once it gets into government. The pay-offs at Talbot-Poissy were part of the Mitterand and Government's plan to 're-vitalise' French industry. With their own leaders serving in the government, the socialist and communist union leaders could not take a stand with the workers against the redundancy plan.

Shades of the Labour

Party here. And of 'socialists' everywhere who imagine that you serve workers interests simply by

sitting in the bosses' parliament.

MARNIE HOLBOROW

Who's who in France

THE trade unions in France are divided into two major federations. The big one is the pro-communist CGT, the other is the pro-socialist CFDT. Trade union membership throughout the country is much lower than in Ireland, with only 25% of the workforce unionised.

There are other smaller unions. And company unions - called 'yellow' unions - are far more widespread than here. In Peugeot, the right wing company union, the CSL, dominated the Talbot-Poissy plant until last year.

But after a strike wave last year, the CGT became the largest union in the factory. In union elections, they won 42% of the votes, to 32% for the CSL and 8% for the CFDT. Of all the car factories, Peugeot has always had the reputation of having strong scab unions. In the pay of the bosses, they have spied on militants on the shop floor and are known as 'mouchards' or informers.

**SOCIALISM
MADE
EASY**

WHY YOU SHOULD BE A SOCIALIST

by PATSY MORAN

CAPITALISM doesn't work.

Workers know that because we experience it all the time. The problem is that most of us can't see what we can do about it.

From the cradle to the grave, the capitalist system screws you. Unemployment. Bad houses. Poor schools. No hope. Its workers who are hit all the time by these things.

When you look for a rise or for better conditions you're told half the time that you're too well off already. Then you go to the shops and the prices are up again.

Teenagers have no jobs or hope of jobs.

Women aren't allowed to control even their own bodies. Capitalism sees women as either cheap labour or kitchen sink minders.

Republicans are hounded while America is applauded for smashing into Grenada and you're not allowed to attack the British over the Falklands.

ARMS RACE

Ireland is just a small cog in the international capitalist system, a system which is in deep crisis. Meanwhile the nuclear arms race threatens to end it all...in the name of liberty, democracy and so forth.

When the system is in crisis the cut-backs hit the working class hardest. Then when you go for your benefits you're humiliated, long delays, endless hold-ups while your claim is being dealt with.

The working class produces the wealth so that the capitalists can have big houses, fast cars, yachts and buy up more factories to exploit more workers and make more millions out of our labour.

It doesn't have to be like this. We can do something about it.

But we can't do it as individuals. Together we have the power to change the system, from the bottom up. Change it to a system which is based on needs, not profits.

Socialism means workers organising themselves, to free themselves, not somebody else doing it for them.

There's no point saying, yes, maybe that makes sense. DO something about it... like joining the Socialist Workers Movement.

FIGHTING THE BOMB

THE women of Greenham Common have, for the last two years, kept alive the nuclear disarmament movement in Britain. All credit is due to them for their initiative, for the resolve of those who were arrested to go to jail rather than be bound over to the peace and for continuing their resistance despite Thatcher's threats that anyone getting in the way at Greenham would be shot.

But an admiration for their determination should not be allowed to become a reverence for their tactics and for the ideas behind the Camp at Greenham.

As with each passing day the possible outbreak of nuclear war becomes more of a reality, we need to look seriously, beyond the publicity surrounding Greenham, at the politics of the peace camp.

Because it has to be said that joining hands around the 9-mile fence surrounding the base, shouting for freedom, singing peace songs, 'turning

the base inside out with mirrors', decorating the fence with mementoes of loved ones and occasionally clipping through the fence will not stop the military machine. In fact, despite all the publicity which the women have gained, they have not prevented the deployment of one Cruise missile.

It is, then, time that the women of Greenham Common, and those who support them without question, looked carefully at the arms race and realised why there is such a massive build up of nuclear arms. The answer is of course, to protect capital interests, indeed the production of arms is itself in the interest of Capital!

So the only way to prevent a nuclear holocaust is to overthrow the prevailing international capitalist system - East and West. That means working class women and men fighting side by side in the workplace against the common enemy - the boss class.

Unfortunately, many women at Greenham have taken a separatist stance and rejected support from the men who travel to Berkshire wishing to join in the struggle. These women are under the illusion that man is a natural aggressor and that men of all classes have always gone to make war and so now its up to women to make peace. Alas, they have fallen for the ploy of the boss class. In order to rule and exploit the working class, capitalism must first weaken that class. This is done by dividing the working class by religion, race, colour and sex because they know that a united working class is extremely powerful as it is the class which produces all wealth.

So don't be fooled, sisters, the only road to a peaceful future is by working class women and men uniting together and fighting for the socialist alternative.

PAULINE WHITE





Workers

Otherwise we end up paying the cost of the crisis - which is what we're doing now.

The problem is that to fight the capitalist crisis we have to show that there is an alternative to capitalism itself. Its *not* inevitable that we have to tighten our belts and keep our noses to the grindstone in order to save the system from collapse. The alternative is to go for a different system altogether.

But that seems just like weirdo, way-out talk unless there is a fight for socialist ideas within the workplace, linked to the day-to-day issues.

ELECTIONS

There's not much of a one at the moment. There's a suicidal tradition of 'keeping politics off the shop floor', of fighting maybe against your individual boss but leaving 'politics' to the Labour Party, or the Workers Party - whom you just vote for when elections come round.

Up to a point this might work when times are good. But when times are bad politics is brought onto the shop floor anyway - by the bosses, with their talk of the need for 'moderation', 'restraint' and all that palaver. *That's* politics.

The other, related problem comes from the way wage bargaining has been arranged since the beginning of the 70s.

National pay deals were a way of restraining wages during the mini-boom of the 80s. They also had the effect of cutting most workers off from the wage fight altogether. Power disappeared from the factory floor and was transferred to the offices of the ICTU and the various union HQs. There are workers who have been in jobs for over a decade and have never been involved in a plant or section meeting about a wage deal. The whole procedure is now shrouded in grey officialdom.

And when disputes would happen over the way the pay deal was being brought in - or not brought in - even then rank and file workers had no input. It would go straight to the Labour Court where full-time officials and bosses representatives would argue over interpretations. In the 70s the annual number of Labour Court cases increased by 500%.

And alongside all this went the two-tier picket, which meant that even when a group of workers did take action, the decision whether to back them and refuse to cross the picket line was more and more frequently taken, not by a meeting on the shop floor or at the factory gate but by the ICTU, meeting in private.

This divided groups of workers against one another and at the same time increased still further the role of the office-bound bureaucrats.

There'll have to be a change of thinking on the Irish Left about all this.

The stupid nonsense about 'keeping politics off the shop floor' and keeping politics out of union business' should stop. For example, socialists should be contesting shop steward and other union positions on a clear political basis, not just as 'good union activists'.

There's another tradition too, that we could do without. Almost all the parties of the Left urge their supporters to try to capture union full-time positions. The idea is that if we get a more Left-wing leadership at the top there'll be a more militant approach on the ground floor.

All the experience shows that this is not true. If there's no fight in the rank and file there'll be no fight, full stop - even if the man or woman at the top is the reddest revolutionary since Trotsky.

Mattie Merrigan is probably the most left-wing of the present top union leadership in the 26 counties. Does that make the general membership of the ATGWU more ready to fight? Of course it doesn't.

FEARFUL

Arthur Scargill is allegedly a roaring red. But he can't win a strike ballot among the miners in Britain. Whereas his predecessor Joe Gormey, a right-wing scum-bag, led two *victorious* national miners' strikes in the 70s - and even brought a Tory government down!

Why? Because as you can read in the other article on this page, the miners were well organised at rank and file level and full of fight - whereas now, for similar reasons as there is little fight here - they are fearful and demoralised.

The hard truth is that there is no alternative to the patient work of re-building shop-floor organisation on an openly socialist basis.

That means militants taking up every little issue that arises. Even small victories can boost confidence for a fight on the big issues.

It means implacably opposing the two-tier picket and arguing for no passing of picket lines, no matter what the union official says.

It means holding regular meetings which involve all workers, to discuss every issue that comes up. No shop steward should allow him or herself to be sucked into the negotiating machinery and away from the people s/he represents.

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HOW

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IN THE WORKPL

- * Regular meetings
- * No individual or steward or union
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ON STRIKE

S STRIKES today are means that you can't line and wait for the got to go out and

- * NO to the two certain defeat. App union official or ers who are pass
- * Elect a strike co new fighters. You old section comm ittee.
- * Send delegations actions are not they mean solid create a network
- * Involve all the for social events surest way to le 'ordinary' strikers 'militants' run th
- * Hold regular me those who meet all negotiations

Workers today

IN THE battle between bosses and workers the bosses have recently won every round.

Many workers are now groggy from the hammering we've been taking.

We need to start to get in a few punches of our own. But how? It's hard to make a comeback when you've had the other guy's fist in your face for so long.

Real wages in the 26 counties have gone down by 10% since 1981. And that's before the tax hikes have been taken into account.

In 1982 the Government tore up the public sector pay deal. Since then they've cut wages even further. And this year, Dukes says there'll be no public sector pay rises at all.

At the same time only one public sector job in three is being filled.

And there's been hardly any opposition.

Even groups of workers who used to be strong are now being beaten. The Clondalkin workers who spearheaded the fight for nationalisation as a way of

saving jobs were forced to accept a private owner and only 35 jobs are guaranteed in the mill.

In CIE the bus drivers were forced to accept monitoring equipment, and 500 maintenance workers at Inchicore and Broadstone saw 10 strikers victimised after they went back with nothing to show for the strike.

CONDITIONS

Strikes now tend not to be aggressive. They are mostly about defending things - like jobs or conditions or workers who are threatened with victimisation. Trying to hold on to the little we've got, not looking for more.

And overall in 1983, the number of strikes of any kind dropped dramatically. Very few groups fought the last pay round. Instead there was a general acceptance of the pay pause, and the con-trick of the 'phased agreement', and the longer 15-month deal.

For a time, workers turned away from wages struggles altogether and struck for tax concessions

as an alternative. But even in Waterford, where there was tremendous militancy, it didn't work. Because a strike for tax reform is a *political* strike and would need to draw in *all* PAYE workers in a real show-down with the government.

But, mainly because the union bureaucrats didn't have the stomach for that, it never came close to happening. And Waterford, isolated, was beaten like everywhere else.

Why has all this come about?

The first reason is that the bosses have won the *political* battle, even on the shop floor. They say that there is a grave crisis, and it's wrong to rock the boat. Thousands and thousands of workers have accepted that.

But in fact being 'moderate', agreeing not to rock the boat, doesn't help much. Look at the Dunlop workers. They were among the most moderate workers in the land for fifty years, and where did it get them?

Of course there is a crisis. But it's a *capitalist* crisis. And the only real option for workers in that situation is to *fight*

Workers Power

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When the miners stopped the Tories

TEN YEARS AGO this month, industrial action by workers in Britain's Coal fields brought on a 'Who rules' General Election that led to the fall of the then Tory Govern-

ment. The scale of that victory against the British ruling class may, in some respects, be more fantasy than fact. But the lessons from it and the events which led up to it are

HOW TO WIN

THE bosses offensive has meant that solidarity between different groups of workers has broken down in many cases. The two tier picket has drawn a line between different grades of workers who scabbed on each other in the past. Shop floor union organisation has to be rebuilt. That won't come from relying on the union official. But it means:

IN THE WORKPLACE

- * Regular meetings involving all workers
- * No individual or secret negotiations by the shop steward or union official
- * Report back on all negotiations
- * Don't allow the shop steward to go on 100% negotiating time. It means s/he becomes divorced from the membership. Any union time should be shared out among all the stewards.
- * Joint shop steward committees are needed

ON STRIKE

STRIKES today are longer and harder to win. That means that you can't just sit it out on the picket line and wait for the boss to collapse. You have got to go out and win support. That means:

- * NO to the two tier picket which brings almost certain defeat. Appeal over the heads of the union official or the shop steward to those workers who are passing the picket
- * Elect a strike committee. Every strike throws up new fighters. You can't just continue with the old section committee or shop stewards committee.
- * Send delegations out to other workplaces. Collusions are not just about charity. Not only do they mean solidarity but they also help to create a network of militants for the future.
- * Involve all the strikers. Organise sub-committees for social events, publicity, collections etc. The surest way to lose a long strike is for the 'ordinary' strikers to sit at home while the 'militants' run the strike.
- * Hold regular meetings. Pay out collections to those who meet their picket duties. Report on all negotiations and shows of support.

important for anyone who believes in workers' power and the possibility of achieving it.

Prior to the early 70s, there had been no national mobilisation of mine workers since the sell-out of the 1926 lock-out. Nationalisation in 1947, had long since been exposed as an illusory victory for miners, as rationalisation under various National Plans for the coal industry had reduced the labour force from 700,000 to 287,000. By the late 60s pits were closing at the rate of one a week! Whole communities were wiped out by the closures.

Over the years, the NUM had largely accepted that it was a dying industry. Since 1964 they had cooperated with the National Coal Board in drastically altering work practices in order to ensure major capital expenditure programmes. It cost the NUM 20% of their members' jobs in three years, with little reward for their remaining members. From being top of the industrial unions table, miners wages dropped to 12th or 13th. This was due mainly to abandoning piece work negotiation at the pit head in favour of nationally agreed bonus rates across the industry irrespective of local conditions underground.

By 1969, the miners sense of grievance was strong, particularly against the bonus system. While the annual pay claim was being negotiated, 100,000 miners from Scotland to South Wales took part in unofficial action, as much to warn their union bureaucrats as the Coal Board.

INITIATIVE

Despite the defeat of that campaign the action had unified miners as never before. A strong unofficial movement - the Miners National Action Committee - had emerged. It was, without question, the links built between individual pits and regions during the unofficial action of '69 which laid the basis for a successful national stoppage in 1972.

Almost as soon as that strike began, rank and file miners took over union offices to organise squads of flying pickets to docks, power stations, coal depots, coke and railway yards. They took the initiative and where they appealed to organised workers for support, they got it.

Only the main fuel depot at Saltley remained



SALTLEY: Each day the pickets

open. Despite the efforts of the NUM executive to avoid confrontation, the number of picketers and police grew daily. But in the end it was not the efforts of miners alone that won the day. It was socialists and other trade unionists arguing for solidarity. 2,000 car workers stopped work; 40,000 engineers downed tools - 15,000 of them marched on Saltley.

VICTORY

This was despite the efforts of the Heath Government to isolate the miners through the imposition of a 3-day week for most workers, lay-offs and power-cuts. Their victory and confidence spilled over into the whole of the working class. Militancy brought results and the Tory government was humiliated.

But it wasn't just the Tories who felt threatened, felt that workers power was getting too close. Trade union leaders saw 'their' movement lurching out of their control. In 1973, as other workers waited for a lead from the miners, NUM leader Joe Gormley hurriedly patched up a deal within the Tories Incomes Policy. Without the miners there was little resistance from other workers.

By 1974 miners had seen the gains of '72 eroded. Anger was growing among the rank and file and the knew they had the power to smash the Heath Government. Gormley and Co. called an ineffectual overtime ban, hoping to defuse the situation.

The Heath government,

Power

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SALTLEY: Each day the pickets got bigger and the police heavier

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The Heath government,

in an historic miscalculation declared a state of emergency, reimposing the 3-day week and all that went with it. As Labour and trade union leaders warned against a further confrontation with the government, the rank and file insisted on a ballot for all-out strike. On February 4th 1974, the NUM announced the call for the second national miners strike in two years - by a 81% majority.

Within days Heath called an Election on 'who rules the country - parliament or the unions?'. Unfortunately, that was not the issue the election was fought on. The Labour Party and trade union leaders saw to that. The issue for them was the return of a Labour government and nothing was



going to get in the way of that. Mass pickets were ruled out. Funds were strictly controlled to avoid any of the spontaneous action, the solidarity building that had been a feature of the '72 strike. Only 2,000 miners were picketing as opposed to 8,000 ever day in 1972.

Halfway through the election campaign, Heath proposed an enquiry into the miners pay claim. But his government had already fallen by the time it reported in favour of the miners. The Tories had planned their strategy on the solid bedrock of wage control and anti-union legislation. It turned out to be a mine shaft that buried Heath but not the ruling class strategy upon

which his government was based.

The Labour government on the back of the miners struggle pushed through a settlement little better than the Tory offer.

That set the pattern for their period in office.

The lessons of solidarity and spontaneous unofficial action by rank and file trade unionists in defence of their interests were quickly forgotten in a bevy of back door manoeuvres and sell outs by the trade union bureaucracy in an effort to keep Labour in power. A period of working class defeats that clearly paved the way for Thatcherism followed. But the lessons of 1972-74 are there to be learnt. And not just by the British working class.

TO WIN

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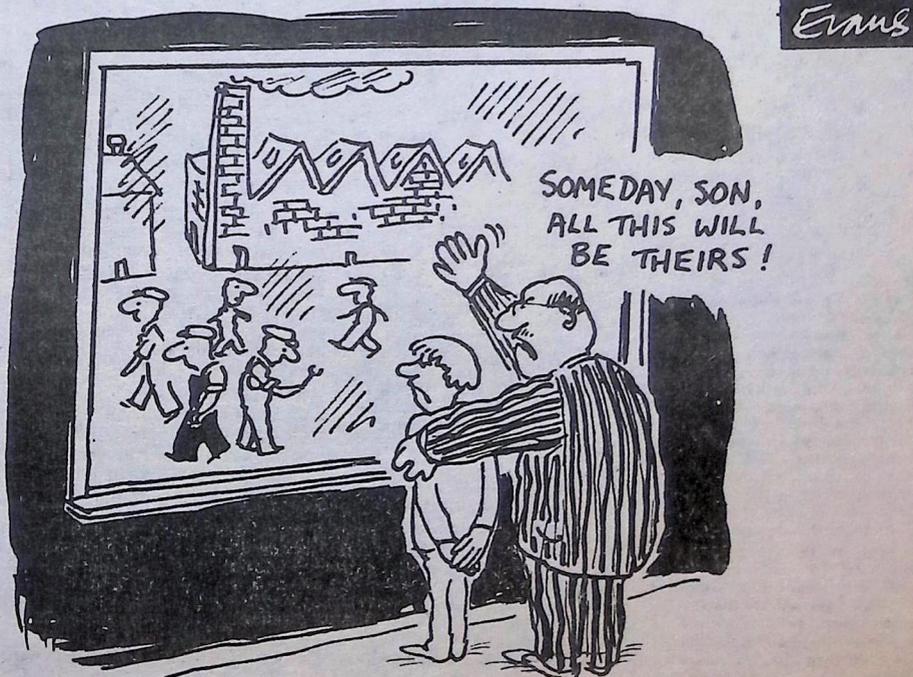
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WRITING OUT THE MASSES



RAY McClean has written a bad book. Its bad because it consistently misses the point of the events it describes.

Example: he describes how the barricades around 'Free Derry' were finally dismantled in September 1969, allowing the British Army into the area. He says the decision was taken at a meeting of 'stewards and organisers'; that this decision was opposed by a number of 'foreign students' who made rather comical efforts to win local people to their side; but the people, naturally, accepted the decision of the 'stewards and organisers'.

This is nonsense. The question of whether the barricades should come

down was the subject of fierce and wide-ranging debate in the Bogside and Creggan from a few days after the arrival of the Brits on the streets (on August 14th) until the day of dismantlement (September 21st). There were public, street meetings, some attended by hundreds of people, the production of thousands of leaflets and 'bulletins' (some produced jointly by members of the Derry Labour Party and the local Republican Club), the silk-screen printing of hundreds of posters - Barricades Stay Until Special Powers Go and so forth - and pub and street corner arguments, frequently involving many dozens of people and on more than one occasion

ending in a milling match. At the bottom of the arguments was a fundamental disagreement over the attitude the area should take to the British soldiers.

The issue was finally decided at a mass meeting, maybe 2,000 strong, at Free Derry Corner on September 21st. If there were any 'foreign students' around they had no input into the discussion. The meeting voted, by no means unanimously, to open up the area. The majority took the view that, whatever about the various arguments, there was little point holding out on our own: the Belfast barricades had come down a few days previously.

On the evidence of his book, Ray McClean is either unaware that any of this happened or doesn't think it important enough to include in his

account. Probably the latter. After all, most 'history' ignores the crowd, treats tumult on the streets as mere background noise.

I could mention half a dozen other incidents which Ray McClean handles the same way. The events surrounding the October 5th march in 1968, reaction to internment, the arrival of the Burntollet march in Derry, the build-up to Bloody Sunday itself...

There is a political purpose in this type of history, in the promotion of the idea that 'stewards and organisers', assembled and commanded by cool, well-educated - that is, middle-class - people dictated the pattern of events while the nameless masses merely reacted.



A British trooper on the streets of Derry during Bloody Sunday

If the masses can be made to accept that that's the way things happened in the past, the way they had to happen, they'll be less likely, so the unspoken theory goes, to seek a leading role for themselves in the here and now: its not the way things are done.

This isn't an Irish thing. Its the way history is told in all class societies, East and West. But its not good enough. Also, its inaccurate. In Derry between 1968 and 1972 - the period McClean describes at length - the masses didn't move at the command of 'stewards and organisers'. On the contrary, the masses moved: the 'stewards and organisers' reacted, mainly to try to restrict or reverse the movement.

McClean describes events just the way he saw them and nobody can quarrel with the honesty of that approach. But its the wrong way to see such things because it excludes what matters most: the vast majority of the people actually and actively involved.

Just as Protestant workers in the North are handed a version of history which tells that Carson saved them from brass money and Popery and Craigavon and Brookborough kept them safe thereafter; just as Free State workers are urged to accept that Parnell, out of sheer decency,

broke the back of landlordism; just as - lets take it wider - Russian workers are instructed that Lenin made a revolution and Uncle Joe won the war and Yanks grow up if they ever do, thinking that George Washington threw the Brits out; its the same the whole world over.

Working class struggles are always written out of 'history'. Because if we learnt about them, we might just follow their example.



EAMONN McCANN

The Road to Bloody Sunday, by Raymond McClean, Ward River Press, 1983.

WORKERS PARTY GET IT WRONG

THE FIRST number of the new Workers Party (WP) theoretical journal *Class Politics* is thin gruel. The Workers Party conversion to 'marxism' or rather to stalinism has been accompanied by a lot of breast-beating to the effect that the WP are the only people making marxism a creative force in Ireland today. If they were, you'd expect their journal to reflect this with articles saying new and exciting things.

The key note article by Henry Patterson is the 'State of Marxism in Ireland'. I would have expected this piece to survey the Irish left and define WP ideology in this context. And such an assessment would, of course, be unthinkable without a review of working class organisation.

Not so. We are treated to a rambling discussion on 'economism' which concludes:

'Economism today means, not the rejection of the primacy of the national question, but failing to perceive the essential inter-connection between the question of democracy and socialism...No less than the attainment of political democracy and national independence in an earlier age, the attainment of sexual equality, the destruction of clientism, and the elimination of nationalist influences in the Republic's politics must become integral aspects of the struggle for socialism...The attainment of their objectives is a condition of the class differentiation which must take place before the struggle for socialism becomes possible'.

It seems therefore that something must happen before the struggle for socialism is begun. There must be a series of democratic struggles successfully completed. Only then will society split into classes and the working class can then step to the front in the struggle for socialism. Is Mr. Patterson kidding?

Republicans claim that the National Question must be answered before class questions can be posed. Isn't there a strange similarity in the approach of both the WP and Sinn Fein? For both the stage of a national or democratic struggle must be completed before socialism is on the agenda.

But all the experience shows that whether the question is imperialism, rights for women, or any other question, the enemy is the boss class and their system. And the only solution to these questions depends on that system being overthrown and socialism built in its place.

What Patterson and Co. are giving excuses to is the WP policy that we need to build up state industries in Ireland in order to develop the working class.

This inevitably means a policy of compromise and collaboration with the state. Marx and later Lenin developed the idea that the state apparatus is not a neutral thing like a car which a capitalist or a worker can drive. The

state for Marx and Lenin is an instrument for class rule, for holding down the majority in the interests of the minority. This idea, so absolutely central to marxists finds no mention in *Class Politics* or anywhere else in WP literature because it drives a coach and four through the strategy of 'The Irish Industrial Revolution'. If state industry is built up now it would doubtless create jobs - and this would be a good thing. Just as if Guinesses expanded and provided more jobs. That would be a good thing. But if workers sacrifice their independence and fighting capacity on the understanding that employers will provide more jobs - that, from a marxist point of view, is very definitely a bad thing.

And an industry owned by a capitalist state is just as much part of the capitalist set up as any 'gombeen' enterprise - you only have to look at Russia where all industries are state owned to see that. 'Marxist' theoreticians who want to justify this class collaboration must resort to mystification of the Patterson sort.

Class Politics cannot be recommended. Not because the SWM doesn't agree with it - it is often useful to study the works of those one disagrees with - but because it argues no corner clearly but consists of the superficial, the evasive and the misleading.

KEVIN WINGFIELD

CONSUL

How to ruin a good story

The *Honorary Consul* is likely to be one of the hit films of 1984. After all it stars Hollywood sex symbol Richard Gere. But here, Lindsey German argues that the film just shows how Hollywood can ruin a good story.

The film is based on a book by Graham Greene. It tells the story of the honorary British consul in a northern Argentinian city, who is mistakenly kidnapped by urban guerillas thinking he is the US ambassador. Unfortunately for the kidnappers the consul is a joke figure, whose heavy drinking makes him an embarrassment to the authorities.

The other main character in the film, Dr. Plarr, reluctantly gives the kidnappers medical help. He does so because he believes he is helping his father, a political prisoner in neighbouring Paraguay. But in reality he is unable to feel stongly about anything - politics or personal relationships.



Part of the film is extremely good. The brutal police state is brought to life with scenes of hundreds of armed police smashing a mental hospital and arresting patients and nurses alike. The jails are little more than torture chambers.

The population live in miserable shanty towns. And the ruling class is portrayed as their true obnoxious selves. The British Ambassador remarks while justifying the failure of anyone to help find the kidnapped honorary consul: 'It would be different if he were a big businessman'.

But only about a third of the film is like that. Dr. Plarr is played by Richard Gere. This causes two problems. Firstly he can't act. Secondly his affair with the consul's young ex-prostitute wife is pushed to the fore. So much of the film is little more than a soft porn movie with plenty of shots of Richard Gere's body. This may please his fans, but it doesn't help the story.

Inside *The Honorary Consul* there is a good film struggling to get out. Unfortunately it never quite makes it. So at the end you are left with a number of good images and not a lot else.

Condrons Organise

WORKERS at Condron's Concrete, Tullamore have now spent twelve months on strike trying to force the company to recognise their union - the ITGWU - and to re-instate union members sacked at the beginning of the strike.

In December 1982, 34 of Condron's workforce of 41 had joined the ITGWU. Between then and February '83 John Condron, the owner refused to accept the right of the union to negotiate on behalf of the workers. So on February 7th the strike began. Condron's offered wage rises to anyone who left the union and continued working and he laid off the rest. In an amazing display of cowardice, all but five of Condron's workforce gave in to this mixture of bribes and threats.

In the past year this five have fought a heroic battle against Condron's union-wrecking tactics. They have been subjected to constant intimidation. The cars of strikers, following Condron's trucks to find out their destination, have been rammed from behind. A car was rammed by a Condron's lorry at Tarbert Co. Kerry. He had prevented the delivery of Condron's product to Tarbert Co-op. Condron refuses to provide tax certs, so strikers are unable to get rebates.

Condron tried to organise an anti-strike march through Tullamore but this was a total flop, with only his own scabs turning out. This last effort backfired badly on Condron as, just a fortnight later, workers from all over the Midlands and from as far away as Sligo, Limerick and Dublin joined their comrades from Tullamore in a march and rally in support of the strike.

CRONIES

However, although the strikers have organised well against strike-breaking efforts and although trade unionists all over the country have blacked Condron products, Condron Concrete is still in operation. John Condron's ruling class cronies are making every effort to ensure that his union smashing exercise succeeds. He still obtains supplies of oil and diesel from Hamill Oil. Several firms are still taking Condron's product. These include 'Greenmount Properties' and 'Gem Construction', Athlone Rd, Longford. 'Gem' is presently building an estate at Abbey quarter in Co Sligo.

BLACKING

The strikers have organised the blacking well. The Irish Transport have put a lot into the strike. But if the strikers are to have any hope of winning, blacking will have to be total. This means getting delegations of workers from other workplaces - not just union officials - to visit the workers in firms that are still handling Condron's goods.



'I'm sure Fords will reassess the situation. After all, its Great Grandfather Henry came from Cork.'



MAY FIGHT

FORD management are planning to throw another 800 workers onto the ever growing dole-heap. Yet their profits internationally are expected to exceed £180 million in 1984.

Closing Ford Cork, which at the moment turns out 80 Ford Sierras a day, is part of the international plan to shift production to continental Europe, where robots have been accepted. There Ford employ a large immigrant workforce with little trade union tradition. Its biggest plant at Genk in Belgium is controlled from West Germany. It has a workforce who are members of the ACV, the conservative Christian Democratic Union.

The closure has been accepted as a fait accompli by the Irish government. Foreign Minister 'Tea Boy' Barry has said on radio that, on the one hand, he didn't believe that Ford would leave Cork - 'After all Henry Ford did come from Cork' - and on the other

made a begging appeal for Ford to leave something like a component plant. Thus accepting by implication that car production was at an end.

The trade union leaders will not organise any kind of fightback but will rant on about unsatisfactory redundancy deals. The workforce itself up to now has no record of militance. They have refused to link up with Ford workers internationally through the EFWC (European Ford Workers Combine). It was the only plant in Europe not to do so.

They tend to be people with long service and a loyalty to Fords, having what is considered quite a 'prize' job, handed on from father to son. (There are no women on the production line unlike other plants).

Ford workers could, however, take a leaf from the Datsun assembly workers in Dublin who are continuing their sit-in of the factory. They have turned down a 'generous' redundancy to ensure the

THE ICTU women's conference time is here again. 1982 was the first year for the women's conference which had been fought for -

The conference was not held because of a strong belief in women's liberation among most members of the ICTU. Rather it was because of the many women who have been battling valiantly for the last 40 years for more representation of women in union structures and more participation of women in union activities.

They saw such a conference as an ideal way to draw women into the union - a conference of their own. One where they need not fear the sexist, aggressive tactics of many men; where they could discuss women's needs in unions and in the workforce without feeling threatened, or feeling that creches, maternity leave etc were not really subjects of major importance to the union as a whole.

The conference has no power. Its structure is the same as that of any union conference - resolutions are discussed and voted on. Resolutions are presented to the ICTU as recommendations for change in their policy on women in the workplace.

There are positive aspects to the conferences - activists

from around the country get a chance to meet and discuss ideas, make contact and forge links for spreading information.

But, of course, a women's conference without any power is only a sop, a token gesture towards women workers and their needs in unions. It is another way of hiving off women's issues, letting men in general, and union bureaucrats in particular off the hook and putting women well down the list of priorities.

An ICTU women's conference without power is like the arguments for positive discrimination. Give them reserved seats on the branch committee/ Trades Councils/ Union Executive. This will help encourage other women to get involved in the union. It will also increase awareness among the largely male-dominated branch committee etc. of women's needs and help all to see women as workers. Then their problems will be recognised as problems that prevent workers taking part in their union.

The spanner in the works of this argument is the union bureaucrat. The bureaucrats don't want to confront the real problem. Which is that workers generally, and women workers in particular, don't participate in their unions.

NATIONALISE VEROLME

THE general crisis facing shipbuilders everywhere in the world, threatens to sink the Verolme Cork Dockyard as well. That is bad enough, but workers there who have made large profits for the company in the past are angry that they are being forced to take the blame for all the ills that beset the industry.

There seems to be little gratitude from the company and the government, which has a 47% stake, for the tremen-

continued livelihood for themselves and their families.

Ford are cutting jobs internationally. In Britain, the Foundry at Dagenham which ironically employed many Cork people, is also due to close. Fords Amsterdam has already closed, laying off 1,200 workers. Fords Denmark are down to just stores staff and several hundred, mainly immigrant, workers have been laid off in Ford Cologne. In Ford Spain they are introducing the 'El Japones' plan to bring in Japanese production methods. In Portugal, where they also employ about 800 workers they have introduced new work disciplines where workers are sacked for being off sick or for any kind of absenteeism. And they have nurses to visit your house for spot checks!

Ford have a 25% stake in the Japanese Mazda company and workers from Mazda have seen the need to attend meetings of the EFWC. It's still not too late for workers in Fords to ensure that there will continue to be a car manufacturing plant in Ireland.

JIM BLAKE

dous production and cooperation they have come with in the past.

Instead workers there find themselves kicked in the teeth by the refusal to grant any wage increase since the last wage agreement expired in January 1983. They are now £30-40 worse off than their fellow workers at neighbouring Irish Steel.

The media, including the Cork Examiner, spare no opportunity to join in this campaign of 'bash the Dockyard workers'.

A typical example of this was on November 26th last when a front-page headline on the Examiner ran 'Workers Sink Repair Contract'.

Now the truth is that workers in the yard recognising that the 'Russian ship incident' was a ploy on management's part to shift blame, played them at their own game and dropped the overtime ban and a ban on sharing work with the repair ship crew. Management were flabbergasted but at this point came up with another trick.

They announced that the pay offer of 8% (which of course was not and is not being accepted anyway) would be payable only from December '83 instead of from Jan. '83.

At this stage, the fitters seeing no sincerity whatsoever on the part of management, withdrew all concessions. They had had their numbers reduced from thirty to six in the space of a year. They were

predictably frustrated.

Next day the Russian ship sailed for Newcastle on Tyne announcing that they could not wait any longer.

Negotiations about the fate of the workers continued between Mr. Van Der Poel the £65,000 a year manager and Mr. Romanov from the Russian embassy. Perhaps the state capitalists have plans for us yet!

Wages are so bad in VCD that one skilled worker with two children and a mortgage showed me a payslip for a full week with a net amount of £95.00 out of which he has to pay travelling. Like most workers he lives in the city and has to get the train down every day. The average industrial wage in the state is now £160.00 a week and the latest survey shows that the average family has to spend £60.00 on groceries.

There is certain to be more redundancies in 1984 and workers feel that the stalling of pay increases is an attempt to demoralise them and soften them up for the inevitable.

The government are slowly killing the workers jobs by cancelling all orders - there are no allowances made for shipbuilding in the current book of estimates.

A year ago there were 1,000 workers at Verolme. Minister Bruton was able to buy off the militancy of the workforce then with a generous redundancy deal which was not published. There are 650 workers left.

Only new militancy by the workforce can save jobs in the shipbuilding industry in this country in this country for future generations. Nationalise under workers control is the slogan workers must adopt.

letting the boys off the hook?



Women workers occupy their factory to save their jobs - an example of positive ACTION.

Often this is because of the union structure which is not geared in any way to their needs. Meetings are held after work when many women have to be home cooking etc. There are no creche facilities and so on.

This, of course, reflects the structure of society as a whole - where the minority with power control the majority and ensure that things stay that way. Rank and file members of the union are a threat to the union bureaucracy.

In the case of women, positive discrimination and the women's conference are just ways of keeping the pot of discontent from boiling over.

A quote from the ITGWU pamphlet 'Equality for Women' shows the kind of tokenism we get:

'It will take time, thought and action to break this circle whereby women are excluded - and exclude themselves - from certain levels of trade union activity.'

Note the order - time, thought and action last. The only answer is positive action and not positive discrimination. And that action must overthrow not just the union structure but also the class system that will never allow women to play an equal role in society.

MARY RYDER

Socialist Worker

THE FORUM

DEAD END

'CONSTITUTIONAL NATIONALISM'

THERE'S one main reason for the New Ireland Forum. One reason why there's so much fuss about the Forum. Why all the politicians, and even the Church, are so committed to it. Why the news media has been full of it this last while.

That reason is the SDLP. Or to put it another way, 'constitutional nationalism'. 'Constitutional nationalism' means being a nice nationalist. Saying *Please* to the Brits and not being outlawed by the Bishops. It means condemning all violence carried out by republicans but ignoring it

if it comes from the Army, RUC or UDR. It means being a Catholic in the North but on the side of the ruling class. It means the SDLP.

But the SDLP has been having problems. Because those nasty 'non-constitutional' Provos are now getting 40% of the nationalist vote in the North and its still rising. With Prior's Assembly clearly a non-starter, they needed something to give them a reason for carrying on. That's where the Forum came in.

On Saturday 28th Jan. John Hume, leader of the

SDLP told the SDLP Conference that the New Ireland Forum would lead to 'peace, progress and stability' in Northern Ireland. Peace, progress and stability is what all the bourgeois and reformist parties - SDLP, Fianna Fail, and Coalition want in the North. The main problem is that there are lots of us subversive types knocking around who also want peace, progress and stability. But unlike Hume, we also want an end to sectarianism, exploitation and Orange Rule. And that tiny minority of capitalists who grow rich at the expense of workers - North and South. Then and only then will there ever be lasting peace, progress and stability.

The Forum is going to devise a plan for a united Ireland. It will be a nice plan, with lots of suggestions on the road to unity. Things did look good at the SDLP conference. Then the Duke of Edinburgh put his two big feet in it.

Anyway, the Duke certainly messed things up for the SDLP. Here were their Forum partners, Fitz-Gerald and Haughey on radio and television denouncing the Brits and Thatcher replying that it was 'an internal affair of the United Kingdom'. Even Richie Ryan began to sound a bit like Gerry Adams!

Peace, progress and stability is what everyone wants but no one can get at present. To socialists, the reason is clear.

The Northern state cannot be reformed to



Roman Forum or Workers' Forum?

stabilize it for capitalist politicians. They may try, but each of the major capitalist parties are stuck in their own mud. John Hume and Charlie Haughey know the British want to defeat the IRA and subdue the anti-unionist population. Hume and Haughey want the IRA defeated but not at the cost of losing them their electoral base. Haughey wants to play the green card in the South. So he doesn't want to see the anti-unionist population kicked in the teeth. Hume, with all his talk of peace, progress and stability can't be seen as a complete lackey of British imperialism.

The unionists must hold power and privilege over the Catholic population if they are to keep the Protestant working class firmly on the side of the Orange bosses and their interests. It was to stabilise capitalism that the border was drawn up. It worked for a while but the Orange state is built on artificial territory. It couldn't last.

Neither republican politics or the New Ireland Forum can change that. The only solution to the problem lies in the one alternative neither Hume nor Adams can consider. The working class, North and South, Catholic and Protestant, taking power into their own hands.

For that a different type of organisation is needed. A revolutionary socialist party which sees the self-activity of the working class as central to change. Now is the time to lay the foundation for such a party. Some day there will be peace, progress and stability in Ireland. But only when the likes of Hume and the SDLP are swept aside.

DERMOT BYRNE

Sinn Fein - or Class Politics?

THE Provos aren't going to find it easy to put their new left-wing politics into practice.

One reason is the all-out campaign being waged against them. The latest example is the refusal of the 'Elder Lemon' Barry Desmond and his mate Liam Kavanagh to receive deputations with Sinn Fein councillors on them.

Desmond took time off from cutting the health service and Kavanagh from cutting local government jobs, to let it be known that they don't give a hoot that the SF councillors were on these (rather silly) delegations because the voters had put them there.

There's also the fact that no matter what the Provos do the media will continue to portray them as sinister operators out only to manipulate the masses for evil purposes. If a Provo saved a child from drowning in the Liffey the Irish Independent would report that the IRA was now interfering with the shipping lanes.

That's one side of it. The other side is the difficulty the Provos will have as a result of their own politics.

The last issue of the Republican magazine, 'Iris' contained an article by Paddy Bolger 'Which Way Forward in the Free State' which highlighted the problem. Admittedly it was introduced as a 'controversial' article, which presumably meant that Paddy Bolger wasn't speaking for the whole Republican leadership. Even so, the broad shape of the piece was in line with the general Republican approach to class issues in the South.

Bolger begins by referring to the Sinn Fein 1980 policy document which called for an 'Economic Resistance Movement' in the South. This was the first formal step in what the media dubbed the 'left-wing' or 'Northern' take-over of Sinn Fein.

The 'Economic Resistance movement' was to 'centre on the trade

unions and co-operatives and mobilising the people for national aims around issues such as unemployment, women's rights, youth, withdrawal from the EEC etc'. Bolger describes this approach as 'undoubtedly correct'.

From a socialist point of view its anything but.

By giving 'co-operatives' equal billing with the unions the document, perhaps unconsciously, emphasises the extent to which the Republican Movement has still not taken class politics seriously.

And the reason for that can be found in the rest of the quotation.

Bolger gives his reason for campaigning on issues such as unemployment, women's rights, youth, and so forth. It is not that these are the issues which affect the working class and which are therefore part and parcel of the struggle for workers' power. On the contrary he sees such campaigning as a means of 'mobilising the people for national aims'.

And he cautioned the movement against erring too far in a direction that is only superficially revolutionary unless the national question is at all times kept to the fore.

This is an interesting argument and it indicates that real political debate is going on within the Republican Movement, not only between left and right, but within the left as well.

Socialists should take note of this debate. But at the same time we must be aware of its limits. The Republican Movement is *not* in the process of transforming itself into a Marxist party. It is working out how the non-Marxist ideology of Republicanism can best be adapted to present political conditions in which capitalism is in deep crisis at the same time as the crisis over the national question gathers towards a climax.

EAMONN McCANN



Sinn Fein Councillor Michael Nevin is escorted from Leinster House

