

# Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism 35p

## Build the fightback! Conference on the PESP

Speakers include activists from  
the An Post unions  
Saturday 25th May  
11.00 am to 5.30 pm  
Institute of Adult Education  
Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1

Organised by Trade Unionists and Unemployed Against  
the Programme

# Defend the right to strike



EVERY national newspaper says that last month's ESB strike was an outrage which should never be repeated.

We disagree totally.

The strike was a brilliant example to workers, North and South.

Faced with an arrogant management refusing to pay for productivity which had already been given, the ESB workers fought back.

The solidarity of other ESB workers—despite a vicious hate campaign in the media—was tremendous.

The Haughey government and the boss class were terrified. In response, they are hinting breaking up the ESB—and, more important, outlawing strikes in "essential services".

This is a threat to the rights of all workers. It must be defeated.

But we can't depend on the ICTU or the Labour or Workers Party leaders to lead any resistance. Their role has been disgusting.

### FIGHTBACK

They have told us for years that strikes were a thing of the past, that the function of trade unions now was to help keep the economy "competitive" by stitching workers into "programmes" and "plans".

But the ESB strike showed that given the chance and even a half-hearted lead, workers will fight back.

Other ESB workers, as well as workers in the banks, in B & I, An Post, in the health service, in transport and other areas, are already on the brink of action over jobs, pay and conditions. It's not unwillingness to take action, but uncertainty about their leadership, which holds them back.

In the North, too, workers are being hard hit by job losses and cuts in services. Again, union bosses seek "consensus" rather than struggle as a way out.

The society we live in is as class-divided as ever. It's in every worker's interest to oppose a consensus around the status quo. We only get what we are willing to fight for, and we must support one another when we do fight.



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Labour to the  
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# Cynicism greets 'Brooke talks'

THE "Brooke talks" represent the most serious effort yet by the "constitutional parties" to come up with a deal to restore political stability in the North.

But on the ground in the North, particularly in working class areas, there is great cynicism about the whole process and near certainty that it will fail.

The Unionists and the constitutional nationalists have gone into the talks for contradictory reasons.

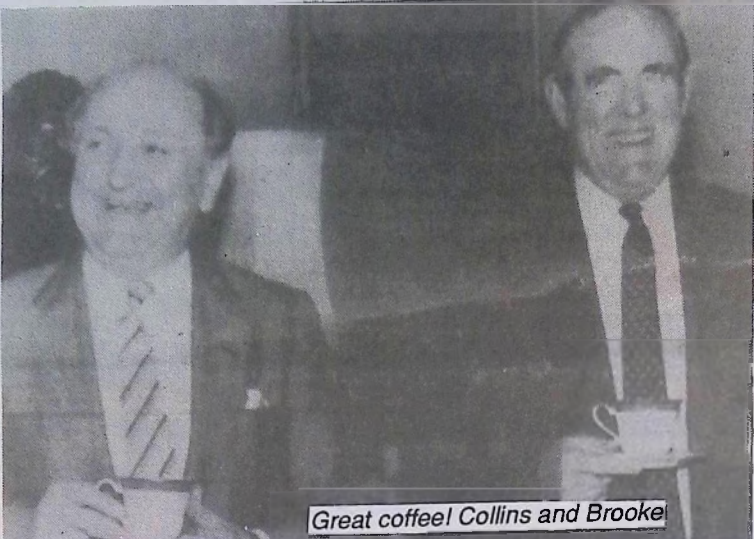
The Unionists want an end to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and less involvement by Dublin in the North's affairs.

The SDLP, on the other hand, cherishes the Agreement. Dublin's involvement gives it access to influence. Hume etc have no incentive to agree to anything less.

There will be enormous pressure from both London and Dublin on the two sides to reach a compromise. British and Irish Tories have little reason to be at loggerheads. They are partners now, in the EC and the wider capitalist world, and see disagreement over the North as an anachronism.

The Dublin government would certainly drop Articles 2 and 3 if it could be. The British Tories will push the Unionists hard to agree on power-sharing.

But any such deal would leave the structures of the Northern state intact. The RUC and UDR would still be in place. And the chances of the SDLP selling that in Catholic working class areas is slight.



Great coffee! Collins and Brooke

What is more, figures last month from the Fair Employment Commission showed that, at best, there has been only marginal change in the level of job discrimination against Catholics.

Even if the talks "succeed"—in the sense of reaching an agreement—the fundamental problem will remain.

Sinn Fein was excluded from the talks because it refuses to "renounce violence". This is rich, coming from politicians like Peter Brooke, a member of a cabinet which has just visited vast slaughter on the people of the Gulf, and Gerry Collins, who congratulated George Bush on his "great victory" in that war.

Republican support may be localised, but it runs deep in the most disadvantaged areas,

which have borne the brunt of repression over the past two decades. Gerry Adams is probably right when he says that any peace brought about by the talks would prove temporary.

## SOLUTION

Left out of all this, of course, is the working class movement. Indeed, the very idea of Dick Spring, for example, or the trade union leadership, North or South, British or Irish, coming forward with a different analysis and a different solution from the array of conservatives which will assemble under Mr Brooke's plan would seem faintly ridiculous—so far has the "official" Left abandoned any pretence at an

independent class position. Once again, labour is going to wait on the sidelines, nothing to offer but vague expressions of good will, when what's needed is a strategy which opposes the Northern state and the British presence but which understands that nationalism offers no way forward.

That is, a strategy which links the day-to-day struggles of working people North and South into a campaign against the sectarian state.

As it is, many workers who feel no involvement in the talks and are cynical about the outcome still see no viable alternative. "It's either the Brooke talks or Beirut."

Only a socialist movement which faces up to the futility of trying to reform the Northern state can offer workers a way forward.

## RUC MOVE AGAINST WOMEN'S DEMO

FOR the second time in a month the RUC has prevented a women's march from reaching Belfast city centre.

The first march, held to mark International Women's Day, set off along the Falls Road but was stopped by an RUC cordon. The RUC claimed that the march was likely to provoke a breach of the peace because it carried a banner in Irish. The words on the banner meant "International Women's Day".

This was the feeble excuse used to keep the protesters inside Catholic West Belfast and stop them marking International Women's Day in their own city centre.

The organisers of the march vowed that they wouldn't be intimidated off the streets.

On 20th April a protest was organised to "Break The Ban". 150 people again set off along the Falls Road to the city centre and this march again met with an RUC road block. The protesters were told that they couldn't proceed to the City Hall as a lunchtime service was being held there to commemorate St George's Day!

The marchers confronted the police line and attempted to push through before deciding to stage their rally on the Falls Road.

Una Gillespie, spokesperson for Women Against Oppression which organised the march, said they would be back again.

"We are determined to march to the city centre and the next time we will break through the line to do it."

SEAN McVEIGH

## WORKERS EXPLOITED IN FAS SCAM

IT has emerged in Waterford that 49 Irish workers were blatantly exploited by a German printing company, Oldenburg of Munich.

These workers were recruited by FAS. They were told that their rate of pay would be 75DM per month; accommodation would be free and fares would be paid for. The work consisted of stacking books.

When the group arrived in Germany they found that things were different. They were told that the rate of pay was actually 14DM per hour and that certain deductions were to be made. These were tax, accommodation, air fares and 450DM per month as pension contributions!

The accommodation consisted of freight containers with bunks placed inside them! As the group were there from November to March, it can be imagined how warm their accommodation would have been!

When the group went to air their grievances with management, they were met with a refusal to talk except on the management's own

terms. Among those terms was an insistence that all negotiations be carried out in German! As none of the group could speak German, they were unable to negotiate.

## RUTHLESS

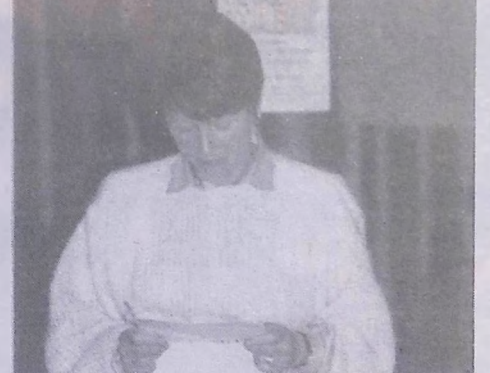
In the Republic of Ireland, the big multinationals are given tax concessions by the state to come here and exploit our labour. When they have accumulated enough capital they abandon their operation and take the profit of our labour with them.

Now, it seems, the state is exporting our labour to foreign capitalists to be exploited! As 1992 is almost upon us, and the Single Market becomes more competitive, the capitalists will become more ruthless in their search for profit.

Incidents like this will become more commonplace as the decade goes on. That is why we need an organisation based on the idea of fighting.

JOHN KIELY

## RIVER VALLEY FIGHT ON



River Valley striker Bernie Farrell addresses Socialist Worker Rally last month

THE eleven part-time women workers at River Valley Products in Glasnevin, Dublin are into their fourth month of strike.

Since the coverage of the strike on television last month, when the women won their case in the Labour Court, many people have assumed that the strike was over and won.

Ralph Howard, hard-line boss at River Valley, has ensured otherwise. He has ignored the court's recommendation. He has put the four scab workers onto full-time rates. And now he has taken out a second injunction against the strikers on the trumped-up charge of "unpeaceful" picketing and for attempting to block River Valley products in the shops.

He has wrung affidavits from the women working inside to support his case.

Bernie Farrell, the shop steward of the strikers, is unsure of the outcome of the injunction when it comes up on Tuesday 29th April. "If they win the injunction, what rights do we have left? There's nothing left to defend us."

Yet the strikers are still determined to battle it out, for themselves and for other part-time women caught in the same trap. Collections for the women have been generous and stretching across a good few workplaces.

## BOOST

At the end of April, the women strikers visited the Waterford Glass factory. The visit, arranged by SWM members, was a tremendous boost for the strikers. Not only did the Waterford Glass workers raise a tremendous £555 towards the strike, but chief shop steward Jimmy Kelly took them around the picket lines of local Waterford hospitals where they received a warm welcome.

It is support action like this that will ensure that whatever the outcome of the court's deliberations, the River Valley strikers will continue their fight. As well as this, it is important that the strike creates a focus of support, like setting date for a mass picket.

The new Industrial Relations Act contains clauses that attempt to outlaw such action. Yet it is only by a militant focus such as this that Ralph Howard will know what has hit him, and that the basic rights of the River Valley strikers will be won.

Collections to Bernie Farrell, Shop Steward, River Valley Products, Glasnevin Industrial Estate, Dublin.

## Derry Trades Council wrong

DERRY Trades Council has submitted a motion to July's ICTU conference which socialists all over the country should organise to defeat. The motion calls on the ICTU to organise a day of action against the IRA killings of workers in RUC and British Army bases.

Many working class people will have an instinctive sympathy with the resolution. The workers being targeted will include many trade unionists. The ATGWU branch which proposed the motion was the branch which Patsy Gillespie—killed in the Coshquin "human bomb"—and other threatened workers were members of.

We are against the tactic of targeting these workers. It strengthens the hand of the right-wing which would like to ignore politics, especially politics to do with the North. It makes it more difficult to argue that it's the trade union movement itself which should be arguing with workers not to facilitate the British state's machine by freeing soldiers from building, catering and cleaning work.

Nonetheless, the DTC motion is fundamentally wrong. The Provos are not the cause of the violence in the North. The root of violence lies in the continuing discrimination against, and repression of, the Catholic minority. This situation is maintained by state violence to which the IRA armed struggle is a response. It is British imperialism which is ultimately responsible for the deaths of workers who service the security forces. And that's the problem with the DTC resolution.

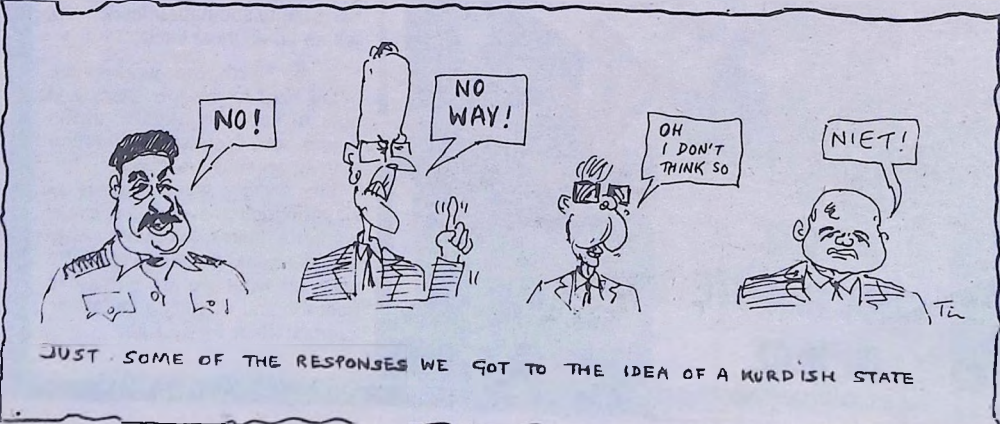
The ICTU has never organised a day of action against the violence of the Northern state, not even after thirteen civilians were shot dead on Bloody Sunday. Indeed, the ICTU was the only trade union in Europe not to condemn Bloody Sunday.

Every year at ICTU conference, trade unionists who have died during the year are remembered in the president's opening speech. In 1988 the list included a number of workers shot by both loyalist and republican paramilitaries. But Aiden McAneaspic, an active member of the then FWU, who had been shot dead by a British soldier as he walked to a football match, was remembered only by speakers from the floor. This was a disgrace. It was also extremely revealing about the politics of the ICTU leadership.

We can be sure that Derry Trades Council's resolution will be overwhelmingly passed unless socialists organise now to have it defeated, or at least fundamentally amended. The ICTU leadership will jump at the opportunity to attack the IRA in a way they have never attacked the British army or RUC. The day of action will be worked for, and well organised, in total contrast to the way days of action in defence of the health service, or in solidarity with striking groups of workers, never are.

It will be a day of hypocrisy where the ICTU will join hands with John Hume, Cathal Daly, Ian Paisley and John Major in denouncing the IRA while ignoring their own responsibility for the fact that many working class people in the North can see no option to supporting the IRA.

GORETTI HORGAN



# ESB strikers show that trade unionism lives

THE ESB strike was met by a barrage of press hate. But for thousands of public sector workers it offered a glimmer of hope that trade unionism has come alive.

The ESB workers were told they were callous and greedy. But it is the Fianna Fail/PD government which has cut back on hospital services to the extent that public patients are dying while waiting for bypass operations.

John Bruton told the strikers that they were causing "untold suffering". But he was the man who wanted to send Irish troops to join the carnage in the Gulf war!

Many left-wingers had come to believe that the working class was dead, that "old-style" trade unionism could never be revived.

The ESB strike has torn a hole in these arguments.

Despite the fact that defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory by the union leaders, the achievement of a £10 rise will now set a target for other public sector workers to aim at.

In the immediate future, other ESB workers will press their



claims forward. Workers in An Post, who have been denied a six percent rise, will have been given a boost of confidence.

In this situation, one would expect every socialist to stand four square with the ESB workers. But not so.

## TREACHERY

Labour and Workers Party TDs joined with the right-wing parties to issue an "all-party appeal" to the strikers to get back to work. This was outright treachery.

But then, reformist parties always run away from workers' struggles. For them, everything has to be pushed through the cosy chambers of Dail Eireann. Because their only concern is to win votes, they are terrified to buck public opinion. They end up disgustingly pandering to the press lies of Tony O'Reilly.

Even so, the Labour and Workers Parties' joint statement with Ireland's green Tories hit a new low. Ever since the fall of

Eastern Europe, previously enthusiastic backers of regimes like East Germany have been shell-shocked. Now they are in a pell-mell retreat towards the centre ground. And to get there, they trample on every decent working class tradition.

A genuine socialist party would have used Dail Eireann as a platform to call for solidarity with the ESB strikers. It would have called for strengthening the picket lines; for bringing forward other claims of public sector workers.

But that's the furthest thing away from the minds of Labour and the Workers Party at the moment.

In the next period, we shall enter a new phase of struggle, particularly in the public sector. Many of these struggles will be defensive; they may be hesitant. Workers' confidence is not yet so high that they can challenge the bureaucratic control of union action.

But there are signs that the downturn in working class struggle in the last decade is ending.

In this situation, the politics of all left-wing parties will be severely tested. Now more than ever we need to be building a genuine socialist party.

## ESB issues still unresolved

THE ESB strike ended with the electricians winning £10 a week, but agreeing to future discussions on productivity.

This deal, after five days, contrasts sharply with the strike's first day.

The spontaneous support on the first day was so all-embracing that by Monday midnight the entire national grid was an hour from total shutdown. These supposedly "criminally irresponsible" strikers then sent people across picket lines to restore supply to a safe, sustainable level.

The anger resulted from the loss of 3,500 jobs in the last decade—25 percent of the work force—while the

amount of electricity generated massively increased. Promotion prospects shrank to near zero while individuals were pressurised to leave for superficially attractive lump sums.

### INITIATIVE

Each day, more and more workers refused to cross the picket lines, yet none of the unions took the initiative and called the rest of their members out. The ESBOA voted by a two to one majority for a strike, yet their leaders stalled any action. By Friday it appears that

the majority of the work force were effectively on strike, but at this crucial moment the ETU issued a statement telling members of other unions not to "escalate the industrial action" in order not to "jeopardise" the negotiations.

The deal finally agreed leaves all the issues unresolved. The anger, even if it disappears under the surface, will reappear again.

If the ESB workers as a whole had been allowed to fight and win, their short-term unpopularity would have been replaced by the recognition that they had cut a path other groups of workers could have widened. In their wake could have

followed the workers of B & I and An Post, both currently under threat of privatisation.

Clerical workers, members of the ESBOA, are now awaiting the results of their ballot on strike action to pursue a pay rise.

The strike has shown the basis for real rank and file organisation exists. But it has also shown how union leaders can throw away a golden opportunity to win a lot more than a £10 note with strings attached.

The government, media and employers realised very quickly the importance of the ESB strike. Our side must learn the lesson as well.

MARK LYNCH

## HYSTERIA OVER CONDOMS

TO any sensible person there was something totally ridiculous about the fuss over the decision of the Fianna Fail-led government last month to lower the legal age for buying condoms from eighteen to seventeen and to make them slightly more easily available.

The move could hardly be called revolutionary—or even realistic. But it drew savage and hysterical attacks from the various sections of the hardline Right.

The Family Solidarity Group is one such outfit, embodying all the old-established prejudices and determined to prevent any encroachment on "family values".

It was symptomatic of this group that its press officer, Des MacDonal, told an *Irish Times* journalist recently that "We are now putting the accent on the quality of our members. We are trying to get in as many professional people as possible".

It is clear that the group is gearing itself up for a number of battles in the near future.

Seeing the "traditional" Irish family as sacred, they have divorce at the top of their opposition agenda. Homosexuality looms large for them too, particularly after David Norris's victory at the European Court of Human

Rights.

The idea that gay people might be casually accepted in society terrifies them.

Student unions have been hit by the moral clamp-down motivated by these people, with the condom dispensing machine at UCD literally torn from the wall by the gardai and court action taken to prevent information on abortion being made available. Trinity, UCD and USI student leaders are still under pressure to find £30,000 costs from the court action taken against them by SPUC—a close ally of Family Solidarity.

The right-wing moralisers don't seem to see the irony of depriving young people of access to contraceptives, thus making it more likely that they will have to consider abortion.

Many people will agree with these points but believe that the argument against Family Solidarity, SPUC etc will be won more or less by default. That Ireland will just "naturally" become a more "Euro-friendly" place and increasingly liberal.

But this is to ignore the strength of the right-wing "morality" groups—and the way the Catholic hierarchy is still able to grasp the politicians into their clutches. As well, outbreaks of "traditional values" can help politicians, particularly Fianna Failers, to cover up failings in other areas.

It was interesting that the turbulence within FF over the condoms issue came in the aftermath of the Lenihan affair and after they had been jolted by the swing to the Left shown in the Robinson victory.

The combination of FF opportunism, the power of the Catholic hierarchy and the strength and determination of Family Solidarity etc mean that reform in these areas cannot be taken for granted.

There's still a need for those who believe in sexual liberation, in the right of people to sleep with one another or not, marry or not, end a marriage or not, have children or not, all according to their own personal choice, to continue the fight for freedom against those who want to impose their own narrow and oppressive morality on us.

NIAMH KAVANAGH

## Du Pont's P.R. con

DU PONT, the US multinational which wants to build a toxic waste incinerator in Derry, has hired a PR firm to put its poisonous case over to the people.

But they'll need more than PR to explain why the US Environmental Protection Agency has just fined the company \$1.85 million for causing illegal discharges of waste at its Chamber Works in Deepwater, New Jersey.

This is one of the largest hazardous waste penalties ever imposed in the US.

Du Pont, incidentally, also own the Jet Oil operation in the South. Obviously, workers aren't safe anywhere.



## SIPTU LEADER JOINS BOARD OF GREENCORE

# Attley turns his back on the workers



SIPTU, and more particularly its Joint General President, Bill Attley, has been in the forefront of a new breed of trade unionism.

It is about "consensus" between workers and employers, about seeking "a wider political agenda" for trade unions, about being sensitive to the need for "efficiency" in the state sector.

Attley summed up his approach in an interview in the *Sunday Business Post* last February. On the privatisation of the commercial semi-state firms, according to Attley, the unions had a clear choice. They could say it was wrong and stick their heads in the sand. Or they could recognise the inevitable and try to influence the privatisation process.

What Attley meant by this became abundantly clear at the beginning of April. "Influencing the shape of the privatisation process" took the form of Attley accepting a place on the board of Greencore, the privatised company taking over the Sugar Company. At the very moment when workers in the company were attempting to defend their jobs and conditions, Attley turned his back on them and joined the board.

Taking a place on the board has become the Attley hallmark, in more ways than one. The deal between Fianna Fail and the unions in the Programme for Social and Economic Progress (PESP) represents the summit of this strategy. Slipping into the corridors of power, hand in hand with the government, is the major plank of new SIPTU policy.

It is bad enough that workers are stuck with this deal for three years; that wages will be pegged to 9.75 percent over those three years; that the Programme accepts the concept of "management flexibility" and "cost effectiveness".

But it is not just about deals on pay and conditions. It is also about giving Fianna Fail a free reign in legislation. Not only have we not heard a whimper out of SIPTU leaders about the 1990 Industrial Relations Act, but Labour Minister Bertie Ahern actually consulted with the ICTU on the

drafting of it.

This is the Act that curtails the freedom to strike and makes effective and swift strike action illegal. It restricts workers' rights to get support from other workers on their pickets and reduces trade union immunity from the law—a right that goes back to the 1906 Trade Union Act.

It is ironic that people like Attley, who claim they want to see Southern workers breaking from voting Fianna Fail, are precisely the people who are tying the labour movement ever closer to Fianna Fail.

But this new breed of trade unionists is not going unopposed. The wave of fights in the ESB, An Post,

in B & I, have shown graphically the degree to which privatisation is deeply resented. Years of frustration at the imposition of cuts and increased productivity is finally bubbling to the surface.

## DISMISSED

The Programme has been faced with solid opposition from within SIPTU itself. Ed Browne, the other Joint General President with Attley, has demagogically dismissed this opposition as "seeking to rope in the fundamentalists for a jihad"—which gives some idea of the attitudes of these leaders to their own mem-

bers' views.

He chooses to ignore the fact that the vote against the PESP was high in SIPTU. Some branches passed it with only narrow majorities, a handful of votes in some cases. And this was in spite of the propaganda campaign in glossy magazines from Liberty Hall and Parnell Square.

Recognition of the determined opposition in the union has prompted SIPTU's leaders to tighten up on the structures in the union, so that now even the limited democracy under the old two unions seems almost idyllic.

Sixteen months after foundation of the

amalgamated SIPTU, the union will be having a

Special Delegate Conference at the end of May.

There are to be no motions to this conference! The delegates are to spend three days discussing policy documents from the union leadership. The first national policy-making conference will take place in 1994—four years after the union's formation. The first election of the NEC will also take place in that year.

## EXERCISE

The conference in May therefore is not going to be a conference in any

meaningful sense. Rather, it will be a costly and extravagant rubber-stamping exercise for policies from the top. In its short life, the union has already become characterised by the absence of members' views from below.

The Regional Executive elections at the beginning of May, at which the eight regions of the union are supposedly to find a new voice in the union, are turning out to be token affairs. Active campaigning on policies is being discouraged and trade-off voting between branches actively promoted. In Region 2, for example, the Regional Committee has been set in place through nominations alone and no

ballot of the membership will take place.

Amid all this streamlining of policies and structures, the leadership are seen as further and further removed. John Carroll's golden handshake last year caused much resentment. Now rumour has it that Bill Attley is seeking early retirement (though possibly he is awaiting the acquisition of a new union car before he does).

Christy Kirwan, Joint General Secretary of SIPTU, is due to retire this July. In a recent interview about his life in trade unions, he was asked whether he had ever thought of leaving trade unionism. He replied: "Never. I have no regrets. I have found an occupation where I have achieved a status in life that would probably have been closed to me in any other occupation."

This answer sums up the brazen careerism of the leaders. With salaries of £58,000 plus a year, little wonder that they think like their managerial counterparts. Besides being an insult to the members who are on a fraction of their salaries, having that kind of life style places them materially miles apart from the people they are meant to stand up for.

It is hardly surprising therefore that these same leaders are so silent on support for the part-time women members in River Valley in Dublin, now entering their fourth month on strike. It is not just a question of Attley and co. having a policy of rejecting strike action in favour of negotiation. They have themselves completely forgotten the material reasons why workers go on strike in the first place.

Understanding the right-wing drift in the union also means understanding that these days defending basic trade union rights—the right to strike, the idea of solidarity with other workers on strike, refusing management deals on productivity—is to be left-wing. That is why the biggest shake-up we can give the Attley brigade is to point the way back to the principles on which trade unions were founded, and which Attley is so keen to throw off.

That means defying the dictates of the Programme and showing—by actively supporting the public sector workers taking action, through collections and solidarity work—that "new realism" is a cul de sac.

## For a fighting union

THE new regional structures were the showpiece of amalgamation over a year ago. They were to be a counterweight to the large monolithic union.

Eight new regions were created, based on geographical and sectoral membership. Each region had a regional Executive Committee and biennial delegate conferences.

The first regional Committee elections were scheduled for a period of three weeks ending on 10th May. As the elections unfold, however, seamier sides of the union have emerged.

In region 2—Dublin Private Sector—no balloting has taken place. The number of nominees, by strange coincidence, corresponded neatly to the number of regional Executive places. In many cases, at Branch AGMs, union officials argued for the restricting of nominations, so that effectively the wider membership was deprived of a vote.

In region 1—Dublin State Sector—the Committee looks set to become a second mouthpiece of the National Executive. In three cases, the people nominated for the regionals are already on the NEC. While nowhere it was prescribed that NEC members could double over on both committees, it was understood, at amalgamation, that the regions should be a new locally-based voice in the union. Jim Bannon



Marnie Holborow: 'Oppose the PESP'

(Non-Commercial Semi-States Branch), Jack Kelly (Health Services Branch) and Noel Pocock (Health Professionals Branch)—all three NEC members—have made that plan bite the dust.

Furthermore, in spite of the claim that the regionals were to be cross-branch, reflecting a wider section of the membership, they are turning out to be sectional affairs.

In one case, in region 1, an official argued that members in his branch not only should vote for their own nominees, but actually attempted to prevent literature for other candidates being given out. He threatened one member with disciplinary procedures if he persisted in giving out another candidate's literature. So much for open democracy!

SWM member Marnie Holborow has gone forward in region 1, standing on a

fightback many members want to see.

If elected to the regional Committee, Marnie Holborow has pledged active support for immediate official sanction for strikes by workers in defence of their jobs, against sub-contracting, in defence of union rights or existing work practices.

The new regional Committees, while being fairly toothless in the area of policy making, do have the power to sanction industrial action. This power should be used as a means of building up confidence on the shop floor and in offices and return the union to the wishes of its members.

While elections in themselves cannot be the cure-all in the union, especially when militant candidates are few and far between, they can begin to create a different climate in the union. Members of SIPTU should demand of the candidates that they make known their views on the Programme, on the Industrial Relations Act, on how they will use their voice on the regional Committee, so that the elections become more relevant to the members on the ground.

For those SIPTU members in region 1 who are interested in getting involved in Marnie Holborow's campaign, or who want to distribute her literature in their job, she can be contacted at (01) 304750.

platform of opposition to the PESP; repeal of the Industrial Relations Act; the election of all full-time officials; and the abolition of super wages for these officials.

Of all the 28 candidates standing she is the only one to be standing on specific policies, most of the other candidates being content to give biographical details—like membership of committees, even the fact that they play the flute or football—as a basis for people to decide whether to vote for them.

She has also argued for a return to traditional trade union principles of solidarity. At a time when SIPTU could be reaching across the grades and sections and arguing for greater support for workers on strike, the leadership of the union seems hell bent on making any strikes illegal and quelling the

# Does 'male violence' cause war?

A POPULAR placard on many anti-Gulf War marches read "Take The Toys From The Boys". Like all slogans, it's shorthand.

What's behind the slogan is the idea that wars are male inventions, the product of a "natural" male drive towards violence. Men are aggressive by nature, runs the argument; the result of men's aggressive nature is a struggle for power which can end in war.

The other side of this argument is that if control of the weapons of mass destruction were to be taken from "the boys" and given to the girls, things would automatically be very different. The assumption is that women have "natural" qualities of caring, gentleness and passivity.

Socialists reject the "Take The Toys From The Boys" slogan because by focusing the blame on men, the real causes of war—the nature of class society and especially of capitalist society—go unchallenged.

Socialists are also concerned at the way the argument fits in to right-wing arguments which have been used to justify women's oppression for decades—that women belong in the home because women are "nurturing" by nature.

A number of women rulers have challenged the idea that there's a "natural" way for women to behave. Golda Meir started her political life as a member of a Zionist terror gang before going on to become Prime Minister of the terrorist state of Israel.

## THATCHER

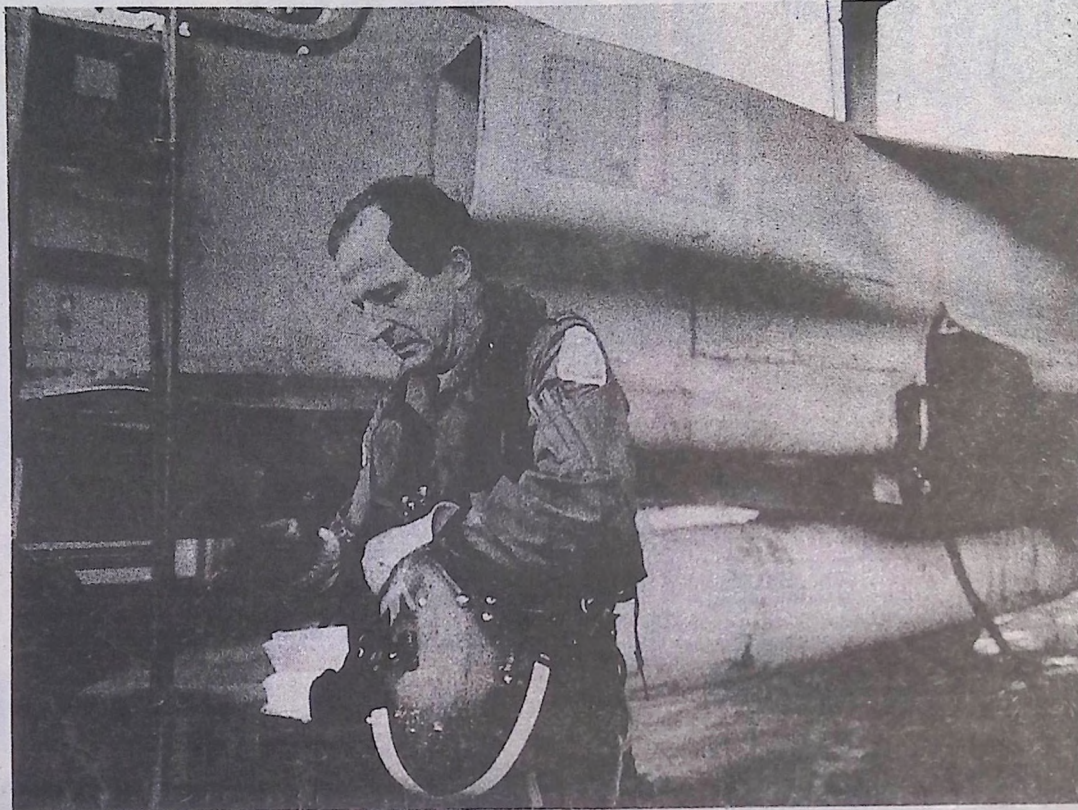
Closer to home, Margaret Thatcher watched coldly as ten IRA men died on hunger strike and was proud to have killed hundreds when she sank the Belgrano.

Nevertheless, it's easy to see why many women (and men) accept the sexual explanation of war. After all, most—if not all—generals, admirals etc are men, and so are most politicians.

But although few women's faces were seen at the Pentagon briefings during the Gulf War, and although it is almost exclusively men who fight in wars, it is wrong to explain war by reference to male aggression.

Not only is it wrong, it can also lead people who want to stop wars to very right-wing conclusions.

One of the best examples of where "taking the toys from the boys" can lead is Robin Morgan's recent book *The Demon Lover: On The Sexuality Of Terrorism*. Morgan, who was involved in the anti-Vietnam War movement and a member of the '70s women's movement in the USA, finds an explanation for both terrorism and the biological make-up of



Take the toys from the boys?

men.

This view leads her to minimise any divisions in society except for what she sees as the central divide between men and women.

Divisions like class or national oppression disappear. So, she ends up equating the violence of the oppressed with that of the oppressor, the violence of the state with those who are fighting the state.

For example, she describes the situation in Palestine as simply a struggle for male power between the men who run the Israeli state and Palestinian men.

The almost instinctive rejection of *that* analysis which most socialists would feel helps shed light on why the sexual explanation of war doesn't work. It is clear that war between states is carried through almost entirely by men; but the same isn't the case in, for example, wars of national liberation.

State violence, or war between states, reflects the interests of the ruling class in a particular state. Part of the interest of the ruling class in capitalist society is to uphold the sexist ideology that says women are the carers and don't, or shouldn't, fight back. So the state has an interest in keeping war as male as possible. That's one of the main reasons women soldiers aren't allowed to fight.

But where the oppressed start to use violence in their struggle against oppression, women are often—indeed usually—involved. From the Vietcong guerillas to the ANC, the IRA to the Sandinistas, women have been involved in military activity alongside men. Of course, there aren't anything like as many women involved as there

are men.

Everything that education, the media, church and family tell women discourages us from fighting back in any way, and the politics of national liberation movements do little to challenge those ideas.

Nonetheless, the involvement of women in the violent struggles of the oppressed makes it clear that it is to the nature of the state that we need to look for an explanation of war.

The state emerged at roughly the

same time in human history as wars, and this coincided with the development of a surplus of goods over and above what people needed to survive. This led in turn to the emergence of private property and the division of society into classes—the class which produced the surplus (the majority, oppressed class) and the class which controlled the surplus (the minority).

Since then, the state has always represented the interests of the minority ruling class, and states

have competed with one another for resources which would help expand the surplus.

Whether it's land, human labour or oil, it is this competition for resources which has always caused wars. Wars have become all the more frequent, and destructive, under capitalism because the capitalist system subordinates the whole of society to the struggle to accumulate more capital. That struggle is, by its very nature, competitive.

So, since its beginning, capitalism has been marked by the development of more and more terrifying instruments of war. Capitalism has overrun the world by economic and political competition and, when necessary, by military conquest. War is central to the capitalist system. It is a barbarity at the heart of the system. War is not the result of male aggression. It is the result of capitalist competition.

## SYSTEM

It is therefore only possible to end all war if we end the system which creates war in the first place. And by ending that system, we also do away with the system which stereotypes women and makes us second-class citizens.

The insistence of socialists that it is class, and not sex or nations, which is the central divide in society means that we do not believe that working class men have anything to gain from the waging of war between the capitalist rulers—or from the oppression of women. It is only when the workers of the world, men and women, unite to fight their common oppression that all oppression, and all wars, will be ended.

■ GORETTI HORGAN

## Letter from Crumlin Road Prison

Dear Socialist Worker,  
Most people are aware of the unstable situation here in Crumlin Road prison, in relation to the forced integration of prisoners. However there is another feature of the prison which is just as serious, if not more so—the appalling conditions that prisoners are forced to live in.

Prisoners on remand in A and C wings are locked up 23 hours a day. The vast majority of this time is spent in the cells where prisoners have to eat fifty percent of their meals. The cells are approximately 13 foot by six, and house two prisoners.

The cells are invariably in very poor condition, cold (there are no heating facilities), damp and draughty—due to the broken windows that all cells have. These conditions are made

worse by infestations of cockroaches, and to a lesser extent mice.

Because the practice of slopping out is still enforced, prisoners often find themselves with full chamber-pots which haven't been emptied for up to 24 hours. All this makes the cells not safe to sleep in, let alone eat in.

The use of a toilet is only allowed during a limited, specified time. The toilets too are infested with mice and cockroaches and are often broken or blocked. The saturation of the toilet floors with urine is not uncommon. Washing

facilities also are in bad condition.

The showers are more often than not flooded, making this rare luxury impossible to use. The sinks are often broken and therefore also impossible to use. The floors of the washing facilities are smothered in a disgusting coating of human hair, soapy water, shampoo sachets and soap.

The kitchens, consistent with the rest of the prison, have their fair share of mice and cockroaches. Indeed it is not uncommon for people to find cockroaches in their dinner. The dinner

are made in another part of the prison, and are served the following day after being reheated first.

Exercise consists of one hour being spent in the yard. Despite weather conditions prisoners must stay in the yard during the allocated period. No exams can be taken. The education available here is a token gesture used by the Northern Ireland Office to give the impression that they are doing something.

A prisoner on remand can spend up to two years in these inhumane conditions. These conditions will not improve until someone motivates the NIO into action, and it is worth noting that as long as the facts are covered up about conditions, no form of outside protest can take place.

□ A REMAND PRISONER,  
Crumlin Road, Belfast

# Spring drags Labour to the Right

KEVIN WINGFIELD reports last month's Labour Party Annual Conference



AS WIDELY predicted, the Labour Party Conference in Killarney last month saw a decisive shift to the Right. This was evident from the removal of the starry plough to be replaced by the more trendy red rose as the party's emblem.

More seriously, Dick Spring and Ruairi Quinn railroaded through a new constitution which clearly signalled their intention to abandon the terrain of the Left. And there was no hint from the platform of supporting those who want to fight the system.

A series of resolutions criticised the government for failures in the Programme for Economic and Social Progress. But a resolution attacking the principle of the PESP and the trade unions collaborating with Fianna Fail was censored from the agenda and not debated.

Denis Ryan, Constituency Secretary from Tipperary North, made one of the only two speeches against the PESP. His was one of the few voices from the Left resisting the move to the Right.

He told *Socialist Worker*: "Spring is dragging Labour to the Right. This conference has been a carve up".

The most hotly contested issue, and the one with the closest vote, concerned the status of Shannon airport as the compulsory stop-over point for transatlantic flights.

Limerick TD and transport spokesman Jim Kemmy fell out with fellow TD Ruairi Quinn on the question. And the argument was conducted in a frankly sectional, Dublin-versus-West-of-Ireland spirit.

Barry Desmond drew some barracking from hecklers when, in the debate on Europe, he stoutly defended private capitalists from criticism. The Labour Party, he said, should support their search for investment abroad. Suspicion of the private sector, he continued, was no longer acceptable and Labour was right "to put some sacred cows into intervention".

## Where was the Left?

THE most striking feature of Labour's Conference was not simply the shift to the Right. It was the almost complete lack of any opposition from the Left.

At the very beginning of the Conference, Spring and his allies set out to distance the party from

any notion of leftism. At the leadership's prompting a decisive majority of delegates endorsed the expulsion of Militant.

As if to underline their isolation, a Militant fringe meeting attracted less than twenty delegates—most of whom were clearly committed Militant supporters.

But the same isolation was evident even among the less sectarian Left.

Several delegates complained that copies of Spring's new right-wing Constitution were only available a few days before the Conference. And it was this lack of prior consultation which prompted a move to refer back the Constitution for further discussion. Left-wing TDs Emmet Stagg and Michael D Higgins supported this move, arguing more time was needed for consultation.

Sean Redmond, general secretary of the IMETU continued the theme, complaining that his Labour-affiliated union had still not received a copy and had had no chance to submit any amendments. Sam Nolan argued that referring back the document would be a sign of maturity, not disunity.

The point was that, with the exception of a handful of speakers, it was the *manner* of

Spring's optimism has smothered criticism

the Constitution's adoption, not the substance of the document that drew criticism.

When the motion to refer back was heavily defeated, the Constitution was passed overwhelmingly.

## Which way forward for socialists?

WITH a claimed membership of 7,000 (up 40 per cent on 1977 when the Coalition collapsed) and 600 "active" branches, a mood of optimism smothered objections to Spring's right turn at Labour's conference.

The election of Mary Robinson last year confirmed the modest but significant gains the Left vote has made over the last year or so.

These are indications of two important changes that are

currently taking place.

First, the scale of the crisis of capitalism in Ireland has forced many workers to rethink their attachment to Fianna Fail. With Southern Ireland now predominantly an urban country, the fact that serious numbers of workers are looking for a class-based, political solution to unemployment, low pay, lack of women's rights and the rest is a predictable and welcome development.

THE Fianna Fail/Progressive Democrat coalition have embarked on a campaign to privatise sections of the public sector. And the ICTU leaders are refusing to organise opposition.

The first major company to be privatised was Irish Sugar, which was first established as a state concern in 1926. Its name has now been changed to Greencore.

Shares for Greencore were oversubscribed for the simple reason that many businesses saw a way to make a quick buck. The share price was set at £2.30 a share but almost all analysts believed that it would eventually trade at between £2.50 and £2.60—as it did on the first day of trading last month.

Before the privatisation,

## Sugar sell-off just the first

Irish Sugar had been run down to guarantee profits for the new sharks. Chris Comerford, the managing director of Irish Sugar, stated that "privatisation did not become a real issue until we were closing Thurles". Comerford in fact slashed the work force from 3,000 to 1,100 today.

Comerford stands to make major personal gains from the switch-over. At present he earns £53,000. But this income is now set to more than double.

The new private share owners are also licking their lips. Profits before tax in 1990 were already £17 million. They now hope to

push through even more attacks on workers to raise these profits further.

The B & I ferry company is also being privatised, at a give-away price. Its debt of £28 million has been written off by the state and it is expected to be sold to Irish Continental Group for less than six and a half million.

### SLASHED

Like Irish Sugar, the work force at B & I was slashed before any mention of a switch-over. A development plan in 1987 cut 575 jobs and actually reduced wages by five percent.

Irish Continental simply does not have the capital to undertake the £115 million investment programme needed to refurbish the ships.

In the autumn, Irish Life—one of the richest state companies—is to be sold off. After that companies such as the Industrial Credit Corporation, Aer Rianta and Aer Lingus will be sold for knock-down prices.

More redundancies are now an absolute certainty with the take-over by Irish Continental Group.

The present moves in An Post must now be clearly seen as part of a pattern where the company is first

slimmed down before it is sold off.

The reason why the FF/PPD government have embarked on the privatisation programme is quite simple. With the onset of 1992, companies need to be independent of their own national states, able to take in share owners from across Europe, and ready to compete on the gigantic market of the EEC.

### COMPETE

It is part of the general restructuring of international capitalism. As the Irish state sees it, they have to build up a number of key

companies that can compete.

But the disaster that awaits them is seen in the Goodman affair. Goodman was chosen as one of the ten major Irish companies that could survive in the post-1992 Europe and was given massive state help.

Significantly, when Comerford was asked who his heroes were, he replied, "I do admire Larry Goodman. I think he has done a great job on the meat."

The ICTU, who are now completely sucked into Fianna Fail's plans for "National Development", go along with this overall



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# Can socialism be won through parliament?

THE Labour and Workers Parties seek to change society from the top, through building up their electoral support to a point where they could lead a government.

Recent developments in both parties have seen them swing to the right to a point where they no longer claim to be in the business of constructing socialism.

Nonetheless, some socialists have committed themselves to working for the election of a Left government. Such a government, they believe, might then be moved by popular pressure to institute socialism. Is this a runner?

Marxists start out from the proposition that socialism is the taking of power—social, economic and political power—by the mass of the population, the working class.

Under capitalism the mass of the population are excluded from social, economic and political power. And this fact is true for "the democracies" as well as dictatorships.

This idea, obvious as it is to anyone who thinks about it, is itself profoundly revolutionary.

Who decides that half a million people are without jobs on this island? Who ever voted for such a thing?

Yet nonetheless the level of unemployment is the result of decisions. When Dublin Bus moved over to One Person Operation, hundreds of jobs were lost. When the River Valley management sacked its part-time workers to be replaced by FAS trainees, was that not a decision taken to deprive workers of their jobs?

In other words, a tiny class of people control what investments are made, who is hired or fired, what wages will be paid, all in the cause of profits. And their control is unlettered by any popular mandate—it is their own business.

## ECONOMIC

Or to put it another way: the mass of people are excluded from economic power. What about social power? Everybody knows that babies from working class parents are twice as likely to die in the first six months of life as those from the middle class. Do you remember voting for that? But the evidence is unassailable. Countless reports from medical experts clearly establish that poor housing, poor diet, inadequate heating, overcrowding—all the consequence of people trying to raise children in poverty—leads to greater levels of illness and morbidity.



Castro and Allende

But, the argument goes, we live in a democracy where (nearly) everyone has the vote. You can elect your government, which has the power to change all these things.

The Western allies in the Gulf War were (mostly) democracies. The key players were the US, Britain and France. All of whom have elections from time to time. But did the electorate of any of these countries vote that the retreating Iraqi army and civilians should be blown off the road to Baghdad? One hundred thousand (200,000?, who knows?, who's saying?) had the life vaporised out of them in a military operation whose purpose was misrepresented and whose conduct was determined in the utmost secrecy. And which nobody voted for.

## SLAUGHTER

On the simple but rather basic question of the slaughter of multitudes the mass of people had no worthwhile information, let alone a political voice.

The experience of socialist parties around the world demonstrates that parliaments are not designed to allow any transformation of society that would threaten the interests of the rich and powerful.

In the 1960s the British Labour Party was returned to office after 13 years of Tory rule. They promised to modernise and reform.

But within a short time the capitalists took fright and started moving their investments out of Britain. Immediately there was a "run on the pound" as sterling lost value on the currency markets and the government was faced with the stark choice of breaking with the financiers, and the world capitalist order, or knuckling under to the dictates of the capitalist market.

Harold Wilson did not hesitate. He devalued the

pound, instituted cuts in public investment and social spending and announced wages controls. In this way Labour regained the confidence of the capitalist class at the expense of disillusioning and demoralising workers.

In 1973 in Chile the Popular Unity government under Salvador Allende came under pressure from the capitalists. Workers, expecting the fulfillment of promises of change, took action on their own. The generals, capitalists, and CIA spooks took fright. A right wing strike of truckers was organised and Allende sought to compromise by appointing army generals to his cabinet.

But it was all to no avail. The army moved and Pinochet led a coup which resulted in the slaughter, imprisonment and exile of tens of thousands of socialists and trade unionists.

What the Chile experience tragically confirmed was the marxist theory of the state. The state—the army, police, judiciary, civil service mandarins, etc—is an instrument for subjugating the mass of people to the rule of the capitalists. Parliament is a small, and by no means indispensable, part of the state.

## THREATEN

And if parliamentary activities threaten the interests of the class the state exists to defend, then so much the worse for parliament.

Marxists believe therefore that only the revolutionary transformation of society by the working class itself holds out any prospect of building genuine socialism.

This does not mean we are neutral in parliamentary elections. While the forces of revolutionary socialism remain too small to pose a credible alternative, we support, without illusions, the Left parties at elections.

We welcome the erosion of Fianna Fail's working class base and the growth of electoral support for the Left parties. Our attitude is that they cannot change society, but we recognise that many workers are not yet convinced of this. Alright, let's put them to the test.

That is why we say at election time Vote Left. But we go on to say: "Have no illusions in parliamentary parties, build a revolutionary alternative".

■ STEVE GREEN

back  
Con-  
sed

But the experience over much of the last decade of defeats on the trade union front means that the confidence of workers to fight for themselves over these questions is uneven in developing. The disputes in the ESB and An Post certainly point to a greater willingness to fight the boss. All socialists have been encouraged by this resistance.

At the same time, both the Labour and Workers parties are attempting to distance themselves from any accusation of being left-wing.

Dick Spring's party leader's address featured an actor playing a cloth-capped working class Dublin caricature as the "Old Labour" that must be consigned to past.

In short, the revival of reformism is taking a very right-wing form. Many former Lefts have been seduced by Springs promise of 22-25 seats at the next election. Many harbour the illusion that clever media presentation and suppression of genuine debate—all of which characterised Labour's

conference—are the means to move things forward.

This is in sharp distinction to the way Marxists think. For us, the capacity of working class people to fight is of the first importance. The necessity of sharp political debate and honesty in argument does not arise from some moral imperative. It is necessary because if ordinary people are to take real power they must understand the nature of the undertaking.

At the SWM Conference—also held last month—NO motions were suppressed from the agenda, NO delegate was barred from speaking, NO fancy media presentations were utilised. Instead

sharp and honest debate about the problems facing the movement and different assessments of these were on the order of the day.

There is a crying need in this country for a party that stands openly for working class power, that supports the ESB strikers and the An Post workers in their resistance to management attacks (rather than calling on them to abandon their struggle as Labour and Workers Party did).

We call on socialists in the Labour and Workers Parties, and others, sick to death of the reformists' retreats, to join with us in building a revolutionary workers' party.

## LABOUR'S NEW CONSTITUTION

THE Killarney Conference adopted a new party constitution by a majority of four to one.

Spring's constitution consolidated the hold of the right-wing in the Parliamentary Labour Party and abandons the previous shibboleths of Labourism.

■ MIXED ECONOMY: An new clause explicitly pledges the party to developing a mixed economy—"efficient, dynamic and capable of creating wealth". There is NO mention of nationalisation.

■ THE NORTH: The only reference to the North is in a ritual denunciation of Republican political violence: "We reject absolutely the use of force and violence in the otherwise legitimate cause of a united Ireland". NO mention can be found of the violence of the British army, UDR and RUC, and NO denunciation of discrimination in the North.

■ WOMEN'S RIGHTS: Rather than launch a campaign against low pay which hits working class women so badly, the Labour Party supports the PESP. Instead of standing up the right-wing and Church pressure, resolutions on the right to abortion information were suppressed from the agenda. The constitution instead brings in the cosmetic change of a 20 per cent quota of women on the General Council. It lays down that women may be co-opted to this body for the purpose of making up this magic number.

■ RULE FROM THE TOP: Outside of Conference jamborees, "The Parliamentary Party shall be responsible for the formulation and promulgation of Party policies." The leadership-dominated Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Party will "prepare Election Programme ... define the attitude of the Party towards principal issues in elections ... prepare Party Programme".

■ WITCH-HUNTS: The long-established right of appeal to Conference for branches closed down and individuals expelled is now removed. In effect the party's General Council is now prosecuting council, judge and jury.

These changes are representative of a move to allow Spring and Co maximum room to manoeuvre without hindrance from left-wing opposition and to prevent the party campaigning on any controversial fight.

strategy. They have completely dropped their opposition to privatisation and now argue only on the terms by which it occurs.

Billy Attlee, the SIPTU leader, has actually gone on the board of Greencore as a gesture of his support for the privatisation scheme.

Anger amongst public sector workers is intense. Eamon Brennan, a shop steward at the Irish Sugar plant in Carlow, claimed that the ICTU "did a complete U-turn without asking us".

Over the next period this anger must be harnessed into outright opposition to the privatisation plans of the FF/PD government. This will mean confrontation with the ICTU leaders who actually want to see the privatisation programme go ahead.

■ KIERAN ALLEN

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## INTERNATIONAL

## KURDISH TRAGEDY:

# Why we still say 'Western forces out!'

THE PLIGHT of the Kurdish refugees has horrified the whole world. More than two million people have swarmed over mountains in fear and desperation.

When help came it was far too little, far too late. Relief agencies estimate that a thousand people a day were dying on the Turkish border, maybe more than that along the frontier with Iran.

Meanwhile, further south, up to a million Shia Muslims had fled into the wilderness in terror.

There was a stark contrast between the West's reaction to these people and the response to the invasion of Kuwait.

The Kurds and Shias fled with only the clothes on their backs. The Kuwaitis took maids, BMWs and fax machines to conduct their financial transactions.

The US, Britain and their allies immediately set about assembling the most powerful military machine the world has ever seen to put the Kuwaiti feudal regime back in place.

Kuwait is now "liberated"—ruled by martial law, with Palestinians and immigrant workers, especially women, paying a horrific price, torture, rape and execution happening every day.

## REGION

The question can be asked: Who in the entire region is better off as a result of the war to "liberate" Kuwait? Feudal rulers in Kuwait itself, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, of course. But who else?

Right from the beginning of the "Gulf crisis", the SWM took the lead in Ireland in arguing against the Western intervention and demanding "Troops Out". We argued that it was Western imperialism, operating in the interests of the oil multinationals, which was ultimately responsible for the problems which beset the region.

This argument is stronger now than ever, if we look at the experience of the Kurds and the Shias.

These people—together, the majority of the population of Iraq—

**★ "It will become an issue. We can't disarm the Iraqis and then have other factions driving around with arms. We control security in this area."—A British Army colonel on the Kurdish guerrillas.**

have suffered under a military dictatorship, have watched their sons and daughters die in a (Western-backed) war against Iran, were starved and refused medicines under UN sanctions, then bombed by the Allied air onslaught, then slaughtered when incited by the West to rise up against Saddam Hussein, then ignored when they became refugees until that became politically too embarrassing for Western leaders...

The main reason the Kurds in particular were trapped, dying in droves, on the northern mountains was that Turkey, a NATO

member, wouldn't let them in. And it's for the same reason that not a single Western country—this includes southern Ireland—supports them having a state of their own.

The idea of a Kurdish state would destabilise Turkey, where more than ten million Kurds live under persecution.

The oppressed peoples of the Middle East like the Kurds and the Palestinians cannot have self-determination under the present political order. This political order was established by the West and is maintained today by the West, operating through all manner of vicious tyrants (including Saddam when



Kurdish victim of imperialism

it suited Western purposes).

Thus the problems of the Kurds, for example, cannot be solved other than by the overthrow of the existing order—which the West has shown it will go to any lengths to sustain.

In the (very) short term

it may seem on the surface that the Western military presence is in the interests of some of the Kurdish people around the so-called "safe havens". But the Western presence is at the heart of the problem, not an element in a solution.

Socialists must oppose Western interests in the Gulf and continue to argue for Western withdrawal, while supporting the rights of the Kurds and other nationalities to a homeland of their own.

A LITTLE over a year ago a wave of euphoria greeted the release of Nelson Mandela.

Now this has given way to confusion and a sense of despair among many on the Left.

There was a reflection of this last month in Dublin when apartheid prime minister F.W. De Klerk was a guest of the Haughey government. The best-attended protest demonstration drew around 200.

A couple of years back there'd have been thousands out.

To many, the negotiation process seems slow, and the outcome uncertain. Supporters of the reactionary chief Buthelezi's Inkatha movement launch vicious attacks on ANC supporters daily—in collusion with the security forces.

## NEGOTIATIONS

Last month Mandela threatened to call off negotiations unless a series of demands—including the sacking of two ministers—was met by 9th May.

But almost simultaneously, Mandela is saying that negotiations are the only way forward.

The ANC is committed to a classic "national liber-

## SOUTH AFRICA

## Black workers have the key

ation" strategy, seeking democracy first, and only then posing questions of class politics. It is committed to achieving this by negotiation, with international pressure backing it up in its dealings with the regime. It is reluctant to do anything which might threaten the negotiations.

At the same time it's under pressure from below to stop the massacres and to deliver real change.

These conflicting pressures explain the ANC's series of embarrassing about-turns.

Reliance on international pressure to force the government's hand isn't working. Mandela had promised to "turn South Africa upside down" if sanctions were lifted. He toured Europe urging that sanctions be maintained.

But the EC has just voted unanimously to lift sanctions on key commodities. The de Klerk regime has clearly regained the initiative.

The tragedy is that a strategy is available which

could unite the mass of the people for a push towards the complete dismantling of apartheid—but it doesn't figure in ANC plans.

This would involve relying on the mass of the people themselves, not on negotiations and support from outside governments.

It would mean arming the mass of the people in the townships to defend themselves and, crucially, putting activity in the workplaces at the centre of the struggle.

## MIGRANT

The only way to win over the migrant workers who look to Inkatha is to organise them in a common struggle against the capitalist companies which treat them like dirt and house them in "hostels" like prison blocks.

The mineworkers' union, the NUM, has been able to organise thousands of Zulu workers who might otherwise have followed Inkatha on the basis of a fightback against the

Chamber of Mines and bosses like Gavin Reilly of the Anglo-American Corporation.

Meanwhile, despite all the rhetoric, it is clear that apartheid is not dead. Two men were recently fined £125 and £50 respectively for scalding a black man to death by pushing him into a steam cleansing machine.

In education, government spending on blacks has barely changed. In the past they spent seven times more on a white than on a black student.

In order to change to mixed education facilities, 72 percent of the (white) parents in any school will have to agree.

Many activists in the community organisations of the Transvaal are being harassed with little protest from the ANC. Workers on strike are still attacked by police and can be detained indefinitely under the Internal Security Act.

Blacks at present are too poor to take up the 13 percent of land they're allowed under apartheid. All land



Mandela

socialists must be on a willing seller/willing buyer basis.

It will be impossible for the majority of blacks to move to white areas—the average rent for a one-bedroom flat in white Johannesburg is 72 percent of the average black wage.

Abandoning the Group Areas Act, as promised, won't help the one million people whose homes were bulldozed because they lived in the wrong place, nor the old or helpless dumped in the Bantustans.

There is widespread anger over all this in the townships and workplaces, and the possibility of an explosive confrontation with the state—whether the ANC leadership wants it or not.

But unless that anger, and the political potential within it, is harnessed, the outlook is for continued carnage and oppression and a settlement on the government's terms.

■ CATHERINE CURRAN

## THE MORNING AFTER IN GERMANY

A REPORT from Berlin last month described a worker pointing to what used to be the headquarters of the Stasi—the East German secret police—now being used as a dole office.

"Before, we were all registered in there," she said. "Now we're nearly all registered in there."

It sums up what's happened since reunification. Workers have exchanged Stalinist oppression for unemployment and uncertainty about the future.

When the Wall came down the workers of the East celebrated. They expected rising living standards and democracy from the "free market".

Instead, 800,000 jobs were lost last year, and double that will go this year. Unemployment is headed for rates not seen since the thirties.

Food, rent and transport costs have soared. Women's rights, particularly the right to abortion, are under attack. And racism is rampant, as bitterness and disillusion is expressed in a search for scapegoats.

On top of all that, many of the old Stalinist officials are still in key positions in state and industry.

There has been resistance, starting with students and spreading to large sections of the working class. More than a million workers have participated in protests of some sort this year. Lightning strikes have hit every industrial centre.

The resistance has forced premier Kohl to hand out billions of marks to soften the impact of the "free market" and to finance the creation of a modern infrastructure in the East, to make it more attractive for private investment.

Even some capitalists have begun to wonder whether reunification was worth the price—especially as unrest spreads to the West.

It is clear that neither state capitalism nor free market capitalism has operated in the interests of workers. In the upheavals which lie ahead, German workers will have nothing to gain from illusions in either system.

There, as here, it is only by organising and fighting back on a class basis that we can protect and advance our interests as workers.

■ JANET MURPHY



Kohl



# Millions fight Gorbachev in strike wave

GORBACHEV'S position was looking more precarious than ever last month, as Soviet workers staged their biggest display of strength yet.

The pressure has grown from all sides as his attempts to make Soviet state capitalism more competitive with the West have turned an economic crisis into a slump.

Output has fallen 10 percent, while the government has raised prices by more than 80 percent and queues and shortages are worse than ever.

More and more of the national minorities who make up half the population are demanding independence. Laws which Gorbachev pushes through are ignored in much of the country.

## SPREADING

The seven week strike by more than a third of the USSR's miners has been spreading.

A one hour strike across the USSR on April 26, the anniversary of Chernobyl, drew 50 million workers!

Almost all these strikes call for Gorbachev's resignation as well as for wage increases.

While workers have turned on Gorbachev from one direction, the real rulers of the USSR—the enterprise bosses, top army and KGB officers, and regional chiefs of the ruling party—have turned on him from the other.

Their complaint is that he has not been vicious enough in cracking down. Until recently they

backed Gorbachev, since he could be relied on to do what they told him eventually—as with his attacks on Baltic independence and his sending of troops to patrol the major cities.

Now many of the most powerful bureaucrats are calling for him to be replaced by someone prepared to take drastic

action.

Some are even saying they could be prepared to abandon the old ruling party if doing so enabled them to impose a strong government on the whole country.

Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Federal Republic, has said he supports the workers. But he went on holiday as the

crisis moved towards breaking point.

His supporters have been trying to end the strikes by negotiating to take pits under Russian federal government control.

## STRENGTH

The workers have the strength to ensure that when Gorbachev is replaced it is by someone to the Left, not to the Right, of him. The danger is that their strength will be frittered away by looking to the demagogue Yeltsin and the liberal democrats.

The essential point for socialists in the West to keep in mind is that the USSR is a class-divided society every bit as much as our own. We should look to the massive workers' action there not only as the key to building a better society in what are now the republics of the USSR, but also as an example to be followed.



Striking miners in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk.

## LETTER:

### Fight Tories' Seven-plus

Dear Socialist Worker, Lord Belstead, the Tory Minister of Education in the North, wants the testing of seven-year-old children to be introduced next year.

The tests have already provoked huge opposition in Britain. The main teachers' union, the NUT, has voted for a boycott. The union is being supported by parents

who don't want their children subjected to testing when they're hardly out of nappies.

Teachers in the North have been slow to take action. But parents can help them by starting now to organise parents' groups against testing.

Speak to other parents and ask the school to hold a

parents' meeting on the testing. If the school won't call a meeting, the parents can do it themselves in the local community centre.

Seven-year-old children are not being tested on what they learn in school. It's their background that's being tested. Working class kids just won't do as well as kids whose parents could afford to send them to Montessori schools, buy expensive educational toys, etc. Children will be labelled as "failures" before they're old enough to cross the road by themselves.

We should start organising now to stop this happening.

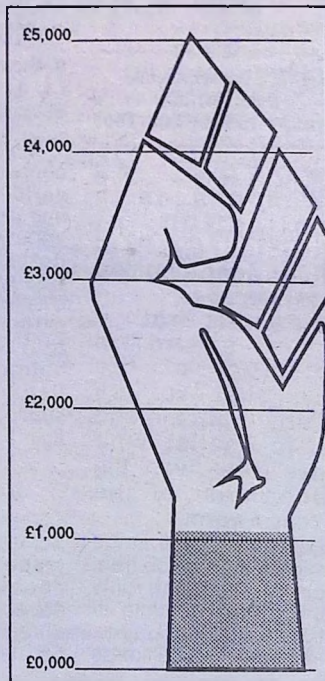
ANITA VILLA, Derry

### Socialist Worker £5,000 Appeal

By late April the special Socialist Worker Appeal had received £1,023.79.

To enable Socialist Worker to replace worn out equipment and meet the challenge of the battles ahead, please rush your donations to:

SW Appeal, PO Box 1648, James's Street, Dublin 8



Socialist Worker welcomes letters, preferably short, from readers. Send to PO Box 1648, James's St, Dublin 8

## What's on: SWM meetings and activities

The Socialist Workers Movement is a growing organisation with branches around the country which meet regularly.

Those who are interested in the politics of the SWM are invited to attend these meetings.

The meetings begin with a political discussion with plenty of time for questions.

### BELFAST BRANCH

Meets every Monday at 7.30pm in Castle Mews Bar

### BRAY BRANCH

Meets every Tuesday at 8.00pm, in Hibernian Inn, Marine Terrace

### CORK BRANCH

Meets every Tuesday at 8 pm in the Anchor Inn, George's Quay

### DERRY BRANCH

Meets every Tuesday at 8 pm in Badger's, Orchard Street

### DUBLIN BRANCH

Meets every Wednesday at 8 pm in the Bachelor Inn, O'Connell Bridge

For more details of regular meetings in NAVAN, DUNDALK, DUNGARVAN, GALWAY, KILKENNY, LIMERICK, PORTLAOISE AND WATERFORD contact: SWM, P.O. Box 1648, Dublin 8 or SWM, P.O. Box 418, Tomb Street, Belfast BT9 5PU.

## What we stand for



The Socialist Workers Movement is a marxist organisation fighting for a workers' republic in Ireland and for socialism internationally.

### FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

We begin from the proposition that what determines the nature of any society is the system by which its wealth is produced. In the system we live under, capitalism, production is geared to profit, not to human need. Among its inevitable features are poverty, war, racism and sexism. Capitalism cannot be destroyed and these evils thus eradicated by piecemeal reform. It can only be destroyed by revolutionary action by the class which creates all the wealth, the working class.

The machinery of the capitalist state—parliament, courts, army, police etc—is designed to protect the interests of the ruling capitalist class, not to regulate society in a neutral fashion. At most, parliament can be used sometimes, to make propaganda against capitalism. It cannot be used to smash capitalism. Only a workers' revolution can do that and establish a truly democratic society in which workers hold power directly through delegates elected from workplaces and areas and are recallable and replaceable at any time by those who elect them.

### NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

This kind of socialism does not exist anywhere today. Workers do not have control in Russia, China, Cuba etc. Instead, power is held by a state-capitalist class. A workers' revolution is needed in these countries too. We are against NATO and the Warsaw Pact and all weapons of mass destruction. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

### FOR AN END TO PARTITION

The Northern State was created by British imperialism in its own interests. Sectarianism and bigotry were built into it and will continue to exist for as long as the state exists. The marginal privileges given to Protestant workers are just that: marginal. It is in the immediate interest of Protestant as well as Catholic workers to fight against their exploitation. It is in the interest of all Northern workers to unite against the state and aim at socialism in Ireland.

We support all forces struggling against imperialism and the Northern state, regardless of differences we may have with them.

The interests of the Southern ruling class are no longer in fundamental conflict with those of imperialism. Southern capitalism is a junior player in the world capitalist system. The Southern state too, props up partition, despite occasional nationalist rhetoric.

The "national question" can be solved only by mass working class struggle against both states. Republicanism, by limiting the immediate struggle to the achievement of "national unity", and by appealing for all-class alliances in pursuit of this goal, can never lead the working class towards the defeat of imperialism.

### FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We fight for free contraception, abortion on demand and the right to divorce. We oppose all discrimination against gays and lesbians. We stand for secular control of hospitals and schools. We fight for the complete separation of church and state.

### FOR A FIGHT IN THE UNIONS

Trade unions exist to protect workers' interests under capitalism. The role of trade union leaders is to negotiate with bosses over workers' position within capitalism. To destroy capitalism, we need a rank and file movement in the unions separate from the leaderships and fighting for workers' interests regardless of the needs of capitalism.

### FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To destroy capitalism and achieve socialism the most class conscious sections of the working class must be organised in a revolutionary party. The SWM aims to build such a party through spreading its ideas and through its activity in the working class movement.

## Join us!

If you would like to join the SWM or want more details, complete and send to:

SWM PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

Please send me more details of SWM

I want to join the SWM

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....



# The road to Tiananmen Square

"CHINESE society is descending deeper and deeper into crisis."

That's the conclusion of Charlie Hore's just-published book, *The Road To Tiananmen Square*—indispensable for anyone who wants to understand how a so-called "socialist regime" ended up slaughtering students and workers in order to hold onto power.

Hore begins by providing a detailed and readable account of the nationalist revolution which brought Mao to power in 1949. The role of the Goumondang (Nationalist Party) and the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) is charted, with a litany of massacres, workers' revolts, peasant rebellion and vicious repression.

The key point to emerge is the fact that the CCP built its power base not on workers' struggles but on the peasant masses, drawing on nationalist rather than socialist ideology. The CCP was led mainly by middle class intellectuals acting in their own interest as a future ruling class.

The pace of the book increases as Mao's death from Parkinson's disease in 1976 is considered in relation to the murderous "Cultural Revolution" of 1968 over which he

presided. All the time, despite the "socialist" rhetoric and the appeal "Maoism" had, particularly to young middle class radicals in the West, inequality within rural and urban work forces was growing, there was racketeering, botched, phoney "reform programmes", squabbling within the ruling class etc etc.

The mass of the population was consigned to misery while the ruling class was corrupt and faction-ridden. The events of 1989 were a product of this social turmoil.

## DEFEAT

Central to the defeat of the 1989 revolution was the students' contradictory approach to the workers. They did look for workers' support—but they saw the workers merely as adding to the numbers on the street, not as the one group with the power to overthrow the ruling state capitalist class.

The nationalist element within the student movement argued, successfully, against strike action because it would "damage the economy". It was the fact that the "movement for

democracy" ruled out the use of workers' power which gave the regime the chance to suppress it with savagery.

The account of the days leading up to the slaughter of June 3rd is riveting, largely based on vivid eye witness accounts.

Hore shows that a real possibility existed of the students linking up with the workers. The Beijing Autonomous Workers' Union was pivotal in bringing workers together against their exploitation. But nowhere was there a revolutionary party which might have linked the class question to the demands for democracy and carried the struggle against the regime through to a conclusion on the basis of workers'

power.

Deng Xiaoping and his sordid system survived. The Western loans are flowing again, sanctions having been dropped. China's agreement not to use its UN veto against the US imperialist war in the Gulf eased relations with Bush and his allies—whose condemnation of Tiananmen Square had been hypocrisy anyway.

## TANKS

"You can't crush an idea with tanks," said Bush—six weeks before US troops slaughtered thousands in Panama.

China continues to take its place in the world capitalist economy. But the contradictions between its productive



# Fight ACE scandal

A PUBLIC meeting in Derry's Central Library last month discussed the scandalous treatment of workers on ACE (Action for Community Employment) and similar schemes.

SWM members were prominent in the group of ACE workers and unemployed activists who called the meeting. The meeting was a first step towards organising a section of mainly young workers who have largely been forgotten by the trade union leaders.

One of the first decisions taken was to call on ACE workers etc to attend the May Day rally in the city and to ask the trades council for an ACE speaker on the platform.

Workers told of being docked an hour's wages if they were ten minutes late, or losing a day's pay if they didn't phone in sick before 10 a.m.

The meeting urged workers on the various schemes to organise themselves to stand up to the bullying of managers and management committees.

ACE, YTP (Youth Training Programme) and JTP (Job Training Programme) are all attempts by the Tories to "deal with" the institutionalised unemployment problem in the North.

YTP (for sixteen to eighteen year olds) and JTP are ostensibly to provide employment training for the jobless. ACE has many similarities with SES in the South and is supposed to provide jobs for a year in schemes run by community groups.

In fact, ACE schemes in particular have become major enterprises through which public money is channelled to "safe" groups, such as the Inner City Trust in Derry and Cathedral Enterprises (run by the Catholic Church) in West Belfast.

## CONTRAST

In contrast, a number of groups have had their funding withdrawn for allegedly "furthering the interests of a terrorist organisation". These have included Conway Mill in Belfast and Dove House in Derry. Dove House's funding was restored only after a high-level campaign supported by the local Catholic bishop and John Hume.

Derry Unemployed Workers' Group lost a PRO post after publicly supporting the campaign against the Actively Seeking Work legislation in 1989.

And the withdrawal of funding continues, with the Belfast Irish language group, Glór na nGael being cut off last year with no reason given.

ACE also has the effect of dragging wages down generally. The Department of Economic Development pays groups £92 a week per job, to cover administration and overheads as well as wages. There is some flexibility in the way this

money can be distributed between individual jobs within a particular scheme. But the stark reality is that all ACE jobs are low-paid by any standard.

It is by no means unusual for an adult to take home as little as £50 for a full week's work.

ACE is increasingly used to substitute for real jobs which have been cut by the Tories. In both Derry and Belfast, home help jobs have been cut—and ACE workers on "Community Care Teams" are being used to fill in.

Such abuses were a major factor in the decision last year of the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU to pull out of the ACE approval system. This would have been a welcome move if it had meant that the unions were going to fight ACE instead of collaborating with it.

Unfortunately, what's happened is that the unions have walked away, leaving ACE workers more exposed than ever.

## REASON

Although there are some ACE workers in trade unions, the vast majority are unorganised and, because of the temporary nature of their jobs, they are particularly vulnerable to bullying from full-time supervisors and from management committees whose sole reason for involvement in the schemes seems to be the building of a power base for themselves within the community/voluntary sector.

The same management committees also bend over backwards to fulfill every stipulation of the Department of Economic Development guidelines on ACE, irrespective of the effect this has on the workers or on the community.

The SWM is arguing within groups such as the one being set up in Derry that it is only by organising themselves in the workplace to take action that workers can improve not just their own situation but also the terms under which real, meaningful jobs can be provided for the unemployed and for young school-leavers.

We are also calling on the trade union movement to initiate a determined campaign of recruitment in the schemes, so that workers can tie in their industrial struggles with the wider working class struggles against the bosses.

■ DANNY BROWN, DERRY SWM

# Words as weapons



British miners' strike

**WORDS AS WEAPONS**  
—Selected writing  
1980—1990 by Paul Foot

**WORDS AS WEAPONS** is a collection of articles by Paul Foot spanning the last decade.

Foot is both a long-standing member of the Socialist Workers Party in Britain and a journalist who has twice won the Journalist of the Year Award.

His weekly page in the Daily Mirror, aside from being about the only thing worth reading in that particular paper, has established him as

a thorn in the side of the British establishment.

*Words As Weapons* contains articles from various newspapers and journals on a wide variety of topics from Eastern Europe to Ian Botham and the poet Shelley to the miners' strike, but underpinning them all is Foot's hatred of the establishment and his support for those who fight against it.

## ARTICLES

Sometimes the articles (especially the short ones) seem a little dated and I would disagree with some points raised in the

book, but Foot's commitment to ordinary people's struggles shines through.

The articles on the miners' strike and the tributes to Scottish Communist Harry McShane and murdered SWP member Blair Peach are both moving and inspiring. The corruption and brutality of the British ruling class are exposed and raged against in articles on the Birmingham Six, the public school system and the royal family.

At £11 this book is a bit on the expensive side, but if you can get your hands on it you won't be disappointed.

■ BRIAN HANLEY

**OUT NOW!**  
*The Road To Tiananmen Square*  
by Charlie Hore

Price: £6.00 (inc. post) from:  
SW Books, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

# Public sector under attack

**THE public sector is under attack.**

An Post plans to shed 1,500 jobs. B & I is being privatised. ESB expect their workers to accept reorganisation without a whimper.

Fianna Fail, regarded as the "champions" of public enterprise, are presiding over these attacks. Meanwhile they bail out private firms like Goodman's when the going gets tough.

The "left" leaders have offered no challenge to Haughey, however.

Labour and Workers Party leaders were so pathetic on the An Post issue that they were upstaged by Fine Gael's Austin Currie. He spoke at the recent march even though he was beaten by the Left's Mary Robinson in the Presidential election.

Spring and de Rossa lined up with the right in condemning striking ESB workers. This all-party show of unity was praised by the Workers Party's Pat Rabbitte, who said the workers should "take note" and go back to work.

Instead of using his power to build support for the ESB workers, ICTU leader Peter Cassells urged them back to work "for the sake of the economy".

Far from leading a fight, our so-called leaders accept the need for cuts and even privatisation. They have rowed in behind the philosophy of 1992 and the Single Market.

The defence of the public sector must start now. Privatisation must clearly be opposed but so must every redundancy.

In Britain the main attack on public sector workers took place before privatisation. Talk of privatisation created an atmosphere where "restructuring" was easier to push. Jobs and services were even destroyed where no privatisation took place, e.g. the Royal Mail.

The push for privatisation by people like Michael Smurfit in Telecom creates

a similar climate for cuts here. Telecom unions have accepted job losses to "make the company profitable and stave off privatisation".

## ATTRACTIVE

Yet clearly Telecom is being restructured to make it more attractive to private

buyers. The same is happening in An Post and ESB.

Many socialists have had illusions in the public sector as a means of creating jobs and improving the lives of workers.

Yet it has always only existed to help push private capitalism forward and provide an infrastructure for industry.

The loudest protests at the ESB strike came from industry. The ruling class have long depended on state industries to provide them with cheap services.

Now they are prepared to sell off state companies to help integrate Irish capitalism into the world economy.

The public sector has never been a paradise for

workers. As far back as the launch of the Shannon Electrical Scheme in the 1920s, the workers had to fight for decent wages.

## PROVIDE

Neither private capitalism, nor state-owned capitalism can provide decent jobs and services. Only a genuine

socialist society where workers control industry can do that.

Fighting for that society means breaking with the politics of "free market socialists" like Spring and de Rossa. For them, even defending the public sector isn't a matter of principle, let alone fighting for workers' control.

■ DAVE McDONAGH

## STRIKE TO SAVE POST JOBS!



Part of the An Post workers demonstration in April and (inset) Pat Rabbitte, Austin Currie and Billy Attlee

ON 20th April thousands of postal workers marched in Dublin against An Post's Viability Plan.

The Plan aims to destroy 1,500 jobs, close post offices and force a change in work practices.

An Post workers clearly demonstrated their anger at the proposed cuts by turning out in their thousands from all over the country. (This show of strength was not even mentioned in the media!)

But their union leaders are doing their best to keep that anger under control.

Instead of allowing shop stewards on the platform they invited Fine Gael's Austin Currie to address the crowd. He was accompanied by SIPTU's overpaid leader and Greencore director Billy Attlee.

Members of the Communications Workers' Union (CWU) voted overwhelmingly to strike for a six percent pay increase which An Post say they cannot afford. Yet CWU leaders have ignored this mandate. General

Secretary David Begg said the mandate would be used to "strengthen the union's hand" in negotiations.

## STAGE ARMY

The rank and file members are once more being used as a stage army by the leaders. They are wheeled out in a show of strength in demonstrations but not called on to take decisive action even when they vote for it.

Yet only strike action can defeat the plan and secure outstanding wage

increases.

Negotiations are a trap. They start from accepting the need for cuts and simply concentrate on modifying the extent of cuts.

If the bureaucrats are not prepared to lead action the negotiations will clearly go in favour of management.

Shop stewards in An Post should argue for making the strike mandate effective.

A campaign of industrial action is needed to stop all cuts. As one of the best organised work places in the country, Sheriff Street sorting office must be defended. This can only be done by occupying to prevent closure and picketing the new premises in West Dublin.

Unity needs to be maintained between sections and grades. No union should be allowed to accept aspects of the plan unilaterally.

All postal workers are under attack. They must fight back as one.

■ DAVE McDONAGH

## Industrial Notebook

by PAUL O'BRIEN

### P.E.S.P. not all gloom

■ SINCE the signing of the new Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP), agreement has been reached at many private sector firms on the terms of the deal.

Of the ninety or so agreements monitored by the Industrial Relations News to mid-April, twenty are far above the terms of the PESP.

It is clear that some of the deals above the PESP terms were in return for changes or increased productivity. Also some were under negotiation prior to the conclusion of the PESP agreement.

But it cannot be denied that in sectors where companies were perceived to be doing well and a tradition of militancy existed gains were possible.

In the pharmaceutical and chemical industry seven of the twelve agreements were above the terms of the PESP. Syntex Ltd in Co. Clare agreed to 7 percent,

6 percent, 7 percent over the next three years. Three companies agreed to five percent in year one only and discussions to take place next year depending on inflation and other factors.

Two deals have been concluded in the insurance and finance section. The Educational Building Society have agreed to six percent, five percent and 5.75 percent.

The best deal has been achieved by GE Superabrasives of Dublin—eight percent, eight percent, eight percent plus improvements in sick pay, VHI etc.

If we look at the seventy companies where the PESP has been agreed, we see that only in about eight cases was agreement reached on all three phases. The majority are waiting to see how inflation will move and to see if anything transpires from the review of the PESP in late 1992.

The public sector workers were paid the terms of the PESP from

January 1st. But in the commercial semi-state companies, most of which are not due till the middle of this year, it is expected that problems will arise.

Aer Lingus, An Post and CIE may argue inability to pay. This is further complicated by the ESB dispute over productivity and the six percent special award due to An Post workers.

The PESP will not end militancy in the way the government and employers envisaged. The three percent local bargaining available in year two has opened the door to a whole series of claims.

The evidence so far indicates that if you are willing to fight it is possible to break the terms of the PESP. What is needed is the determination and the organisation to do it.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT

■ FOLLOWING my piece last month on the new Industrial

Relations Act, the Irish Rail dispute at Connolly Station saw the first use of the Act and specifically section (9), which provides that the Act's immunities only apply in single-worker disputes where agreed procedures for resolution have been gone through and exhausted.

Irish Rail obtained a High Court injunction preventing picketing of named Irish Rail stations. The injunction named the driver concerned, one Tom Darby of the National Bus and Rail Workers' Union, as well as all who knew of its existence.

The dispute arose over a driver who refused to move a locomotive to Inchicore, on the basis that it was not part of his roster to do so.

Ironically, Kieran Mulvey, chairman of the new Labour Relations Commission—which was set up under the same Act—issued a harsh statement to the company about their failure to inform him that they were using the Act to obtain an injunction, just as he was frantically trying to get talks

under way.

Last month the owners of River Valley Products used the courts, and it is increasingly clear that injunctions will be a feature of disputes as long as the new Act remains in place.

## SIPTU—LIFE AT THE TOP

■ FOLLOWING on Bill Attley's appoint to the board of directors of Greencore, the privatised company that is taking over the Sugar Company, it is nice to see that his fellow joint general secretary Christy Kirwan has retained his place among the status seekers of the trade union movement.

He has just taken delivery of a new £36,000 plus Volvo 960. Now this might make sense if he had to use it over the next six or seven years. But Kirwan is due to retire in four months' time.

His position will also be abolished, so we want to know what will happen to the car. I hope the SIPTU executive are not thinking of handing over the £36,000 of members' money as part of a golden handshake. Watch this column for further details.

# Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism 35p

## WATERFORD STRIKES, SIT-IN

A SIT-IN by forty women workers at St Otteran's Psychiatric Hospital on Friday 19th April quickly escalated into a full scale strike

by 300 ATGWU catering, portering and domestic staff at three Waterford hospitals and thirty miles away at St Joseph's Hospital in

Dungarvan.

Angry at having to do extra work because of a lack of "cover" for sick leave, holidays, and a reduction in the working week, the workers at the centre of the dispute decided that they would no longer shoulder the burden of FF/PD government cutbacks in the health service.

In a separate development nursing staff

at Waterford Regional Hospital have voted overwhelmingly to stage a 24-hour stoppage in early May because of the severe conditions they are working under.

Both disputes stem from inadequate staffing levels and, in the case of the nurses, a demand for a 39-hour week, the filling of vacant permanent posts, and a stop to the blatant exploitation of student nurses.

The rapid solidarity action at Waterford Regional, St Patrick's and St Joseph's was taken by unanimous decision. It is a clear indication of the widespread dissatisfaction among hospital workers. They see this strike as a fight to ensure that the bureaucrats at the top of the South Eastern Health Board are not allowed to balance their books and conform with government spending guidelines at the workers' expense.

One of the workers on the picket line told *Socialist Worker*, "The workforce has been cut to the bone and we are expected to perform extraordinary feats in order to keep up with the workload, and we've had enough!"

### GRADES

Breda Fell, Chairperson of the ATGWU 11/15 branch, also spoke to *Socialist Worker*: "The central issue of this strike is the working conditions of those on the lowest grades in the health service. Traditionally their conditions have been poor, but now, due to the cutbacks, these conditions have become unbearable and the workers have been forced to take industrial action. There has also been an unwillingness by the employers to discuss the outstanding issues and the workers are totally frustrated by the manoeuvring of the bureaucracy in dealing with even the most minor matters."

### SUPPORT

During the first week of the strike the workers on the picket lines were joined by the River Valley strikers, who were in Waterford seeking support for their struggle. Bill Morris, Deputy General Secretary of the ATGWU, was also in the area seeking support for his bid to become General Secretary. He met the strikers on the picket lines and promised them full support.

Plans are afoot to organise an inter-hospital shop stewards' committee to fight for better conditions and to ensure a coordinated response against any further attempt by management to make the workers pay for the crisis in the health service.

### WATERFORD SWM

Donations and messages of support to ATGWU, Keyser Street, Waterford. Tel. 051 75438.

# DEFEND OUR HOSPITALS!

## BELFAST ROYAL FIGHT OPT-OUT

WORKERS at Belfast's Royal Hospital group have voted almost unanimously against proposals to "opt out" of the National Health Service.

3,466 of the 5,726 strong workforce, ranging from consultants to cleaners, took part in the ballot.

This 72 percent turn-out (allowing for the fact that 16 percent of the workforce are not at work at any one time) indicates how seriously the workforce is taking the issue.

One reason they take it seriously is that their jobs will be on the line if the hospital opt-out. Only two days after the ballot, the half dozen hospitals in London which have become trusts announced that they would be seeking hundreds of redundancies before the end of the year. Such job losses are inevitable if profit, and not looking after people who are sick, becomes the aim of the hospital group.

### ORGANISE

The unions have set up a joint coordinating committee to organise opposition to the proposals. They say that hospital managers refuse to answer questions about the future of the 24-hour accident and emergency department, geriatric care and routine diagnostic service—all high-cost areas.

Midwives at the Royal Maternity Hospital are worried that trust status would mean a reduction in

services for pregnant women. They foresee new mothers being discharged after only 48 hours, with a consequent increase in infection and re-admissions.

But despite the obvious implications for working conditions and inevitable job losses, the unions are pinning their hopes on a community, rather than industrial, campaign against the privatisation plan. Union leaders described the ballot results as "a mandate to take the issue to the community".

Undoubtedly, the involvement of the community in the campaign is important. The people of West Belfast will suffer most if the hospital leaves the NHS. Already, community groups and women's groups have organised opposition and thousands of signatures have been collected.

Community groups in opposition to the move are being set up as far away as Derry, where many realise that if the Royal Victoria Hospital is allowed to opt out, Derry's Altnagelvin will not be far behind. Indeed, even if other hospitals did not follow suit, privatisation in the RVH has implications for the health service right across the Six Counties.

If the RVH opts out, then the regional services which they presently provide within the NHS—eye, ear, nose and throat for example—will be costed and sold to the Health and Social Services Boards on a contract basis.



*Socialist Worker* spoke to one mother in Derry whose daughter was diagnosed as deaf as well as blind in Altnagelvin. When the parents insisted that their little girl could hear, she was sent to the RVH where more advanced diagnostic methods revealed that the parents were right and that the child needed only a small operation to be able to hear normally.

If such services had to be bought by the Western Board, they would have every legal right to argue that the service provided in Altnagelvin is adequate. Thus, more advanced treatment would be available only to the few who could pay.

Such community mobilisation is vital if the opt-out proposals are to be fought.

But a community campaign, no matter how well supported, does not have the kind of power needed to stop privatisation. A workers' campaign of industrial action within the RVH group, supported by solidarity action by other workers, would win.

### THREATEN

NHS workers aren't the only ones in the North being threatened by privatisation. Education and Library Boards are pushing through privatisation measures as well. And the workers of Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) know that their jobs are on the line too, as Major proposes to finish the job started by Thatcher of privatising the electricity

services.

Between them, these workers have a lot of power. In 1974, the workers of NIE showed that they have the power to change British government policy. Then, their action during the Ulster Workers' Council strike was not in the interests of working class people.

Today, an all-out strike against privatisation of NIE, linking into the tremendous popular support for the workers resisting privatisation in the NHS, would save jobs and services and greatly advance working class unity in the North.

Three years ago, a handful of nurses in Manchester went on strike to save the health service. Groups of workers from Fords to local councils came out in solidarity with the health service workers.

Socialists, trade unionists and community activists who are involved in the campaign to keep the Royal in the NHS need to argue for such action with rank and file workers in the RVH, in other hospitals, in the education service and—crucially—in Northern Ireland Electricity.

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