

Socialist Worker

February 22nd 1992 Price 5p or donation

14-year-old Rape Victim:

LET HER GO!

SOMEWHERE in Dublin a 14-year-old girl is not only suffering the trauma of rape—but she also

has to face the barbarism of the Irish state.

Harry Whelehan, the Irish Attorney General,

was in office for only a few days and he decided to spend his energies hounding a 14-year-old girl.

This staunch Fianna Fail supporter who was an active

member of the Catholic Marriage Advisory Bureau, is nothing but a thug.

When Larry Goodman was swindling EC grants, Fianna Fail attorney generals were not so quick to slap injunctions on him.

When Haughey's friend Dermot Desmond was trying to hide his property scams in taking over the Ballsbridge site of Johnson Mooney and O'Brien, there were no court orders forcing him to reveal his front companies.

But when it comes to the treatment of Irish women it's a different story.

It is high time to put a stop to this return to barbarism. No fourteen-year-old can be condemned by the Irish state and watched by the Irish gardai to make sure that she becomes a mother.

to Britain for an abortion without fear of injunction—is *People Power*.

Debated

Reynolds and Fianna Fail want to shut us up while the matter is debated in the Supreme Court by elderly men who are hangers-on of the Fianna Fail or Fine Gael parties.

We must say now Let Her Go.

She cannot hang on for their deliberations. We do not trust these privileged anti-women judges.

That is why we need thousands and thousands to come onto the streets.

There should be demonstrations every weekend.

The unions must get of their resolutions and take action to defend the rights of their women members.

SPUC, Family Solidarity and the moral police must be confronted before they wreck anyone else's lives.

Don't wait on the Supreme Court! Mobilise to let her go!

Defend women's rights Scrap the Amendment

IN the light of the injunction served against an innocent 14-year-old rape victim, the 1983 Amendment to the Constitution has been revealed for what it is: a vicious attack on the right of women to have control of their own bodies.

Nor should we be under any illusion that the forces responsible for initiating the Amendment, SPUC, LIFE and their ilk, were not acutely aware of what it might lead to.

William Binchy, a leading member of LIFE and chairman of the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC) made it clear in a statement given on RTE shortly after the story of the present case broke that the serving of the injunction restraining the girl from seeking an abortion in England was the logical result of the 1983 Amendment.

The response of people such as Binchy and Dr Mary Lucy—president of SPUC—to the dreadful

plight of an innocent fourteen year old girl makes plain their total disregard for the right of women to control their own fate.

If any doubt remained about what all this meant in regard to the legal status of women in Ireland it was made crystal clear in one of Judge Costello's comments at the High Court hearing on February 17.

Suicide

When informed by a psychologist that the fourteen year old might attempt suicide rather than carry the pregnancy to term, Judge Costello said that such a danger "is much less and is of a different magnitude than the certainty that the life of the unborn will be terminated".

As far as the law in Ireland is concerned, the life of a foetus is of greater importance than that of its mother.

It is now beyond doubt that the consequence of the 1983 Amendment is to make a mockery of the notion that any individual freedom for women exists in this country. The present injunction and the "pro-life" Amendment represent an unacceptable infringement of basic civil liberties and the right of free choice for women.

Now, more than ever, it is vital that we defeat the hypocritical moralism of groups such as SPUC and the church who claim to be pro-life and yet are in fact set on turning Irish women into second-class citizens in their own country.

To do this we must fight the injunction tooth and nail, and also campaign to repeal the 1983 Amendment to ensure that more such tragedies do not befall women in the future.

We must also be clear that to make a campaign successful, questions being asked in the Dail are not enough.

It was only through people taking to the streets in protest that the case of the fourteen year old was brought to the centre of public attention.

We must learn from this example. If SPUC and LIFE are not to be let away with this shameful intimidation of women it is vital that we continue to hold mass demonstrations. Those concerned in fighting the bigotry of church and state should set up "Scrap the Amendment Action Groups" in their own area or join those already established. It's only through this sort of action that we can best support the unfortunate victim of this injustice and defend the rights of women in this country.

Suffering

During the High Court hearing it was stated that the girl was suffering extreme psychological stress. Judge Costello disregarded this because he said that her foetus had an equal right to life.

The only thing that can help this girl now—and every woman who wants to travel

Socialist Worker
MEETING

THE POLITICS OF ABORTION

Speaker: MARY SMITH

8.00pm Wednesday 26th February,
Bachelor Inn, Bachelors Walk, by
O'Connell Street.

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Abortion: A women's right to choose

ANTI-abortionists claim the unborn has "an equal right to life" with the mother. This is nonsense. The foetus is merely a potential human being. It cannot, up to certain point, exist outside the woman's body—it is dependant on her.

What the SPUCists want to enforce is the "right" of the foetus to exist inside a woman's body against her will.

That is why we insist that the woman, her right to control her own body, her health and wellbeing must come first. To deny a woman the right to choose is to devalue her, her life, her relationships, her hopes and aspirations.

We insist each pregnant should have the right to decide her own destiny.

This is a political issue because at the moment, that decision is made for her by the church and state, by the politicians, clergy and judges.

It is also a class issue. Working class women are far less likely to have the money for travel to Britain and to pay for an abortion. Their access to advise and counselling on all aspects of pregnancy is virtually non-existent.

The rich, on the other hand, are well able to afford the fees of private clinics in Britain and travel expenses.

If women are ever to be liberated they must win freedom from the chains that

keep them in the home. The single biggest chain is lack of control over their own fertility. If cheap, reliable, safe contraception was freely and widely available, a great step to this freedom would be made.

But even the most reliable contraceptive—the Pill—has side effects; other forms of contraception are more risky. This combined with the denial of abortion rights,

means many women have little or no choice as to whether or not to have children.

The provision of free abortion on demand would therefore be a great stride towards women's liberation. The first step on this road must be the repeal of the amendment which denies women the right to make their own choice.

Join the campaign!

Scrap the Amendment groups are being set up this week under the slogans: Lift the injunction, Scrap the Amendment and Rape victims have the right to abortion. Below are details of Scrap the Amendment group public meetings this week.

Rathmines:

Thursday 27th Feb, 8.00pm, Madigans Pub, Rathmines Road

Ballyfermot:

Tuesday 3rd March, 8.00pm, Senior College

Phibsboro/Drumcondra:

Tuesday 25th Feb, 8.00pm, Bohemian Clancy

Rialto:

Tuesday 25th Feb, 8.00pm, St Andrews Hall

Ballymun:

Tuesday 25th Feb, 8.00pm, See posters for details

Bray:

Thursday 27th Feb, 8.00pm Cois Fairrge, Strand Road

Dun Laoghaire:

Tuesday 25th Feb, 8.00pm Portview Hotel, Marine Road

For information on abortion:
Telephone 6794700

SPUC: Smug satisfaction in the face of suffering

THE only people drawing any satisfaction from the current case are SPUC, Family Solidarity, and the "Responsible Society".

They united in 1983 to form the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC), with the aim of ensuring that abortion would never be available in this country.

The recent injunction shows how horribly successful they have been. For all their po-faced statements of concern for the 14-year-old girl, they are still determined that no Irish woman will be allowed to have an abortion.

The people behind SPUC are not simply citizens concerned about the "the right to life of the unborn". They fight every attempt to allow freedom in sexual matters. All around them they see a conspiracy to subvert the family, the Church and private property.

Not content with their victory in the amendment in 1983, which copperfastened the ban on abortion in this country, they succeeded in stopping the Open Door centre and the Well Woman centre from referring Irish women for abortions in Britain.

They hounded students who published abortion

information, dragging them through the courts and getting more injunctions. They have succeeded in getting women's health books removed from public libraries.

So far SPUC have been winning in their campaign of legal intimidation and censorship. But they can be beaten.

Freedom

When the Brook Centre announced plans to set up a clinic in Belfast to offer advice and information on sexual matters to teenagers (including information on abortion) SPUC vowed to stop it. They collected together Catholic and Protestant bigots to halt the opening.

But they didn't get things there own way. The Socialist Workers Movement took the initiative to form the Campaign for Information and Choice. This campaign mobilised people on both sides of the sectarian divided, Catholic and Protestant, trade unionists, academics, students, women's rights and gay rights activists which forced Belfast City Council to support the Brook Clinic.

A similar campaign is needed in the South to smash SPUC's sectarian, anti-abortion amendment.

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.....

