

THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

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National mis-Understanding?

NO DEAL!

THE HIGH drama is over. After the 'breakdowns', the 'deadlines', the 'dramatic pleas' the package of the National Understanding has been unveiled.

This little comedy act has been running for the last ten years now—and the lines are beginning to wear a bit thin.

For what we've got here is an agreement, pushed through by the misleaders of the ICTU, for trade unionists to step into yet another straitjacket.

But this time around, there can be no doubt about one thing: it's a wage cut and no-one is saying otherwise.

For years we've had hidden wage cuts through the manipulation of the Consumer Price Index.

Now the fig leaf is removed. We are getting a straight 15% for 15 months—with another pound thrown in.

Inflation in one year alone has gone well over 15%—and that's just on the official figures. Over a year and a quarter it will hit 22%.

How do we know? It comes straight from the bosses' mouth.

Announcing plans for an extension to its Limerick plant, Cement Roadstone made it known that it was allowing 25% for the increase in the inflation rate. If the bosses with all their fancy accountants and economists know it, why don't our trade union leaders know it.

The problem is that they do—but they lack the guts to do anything about it.

But it's also a wage cut with a sure promise of 44,000 redundancies. That's the official estimate that's in the agreement. Mind you, there's a promise of greater efforts to increase jobs—but we had the exact same promise last year.

All of that will not stop the trade union bureaucrats trying to sell this deal on the loss of its sugar coating—the social and economic proposals.

"You see, brothers and sisters, we've now got a voice in governmental policy"—the Carrolls, McQuinn and Cardiffs

are shouting. It's a load of rubbish. Every single one of last years promises were broken.

This year they have thrown in measures that have already been agreed, for example the quota of disabled people in the Civil Service.

The point is, the trade union movement never wins "an influence on policy" unless its prepared to mobilise its strength in direct action to impose its will.

Trading off wages for vague promises means weakening the strength of the movement. Its real effect is seen on the shop floor where the stewards and rank and file are excluded from real negotiations.

"Union bashing"

Haughey knows that. Unlike most of the leaders of European capitalism he has not taken the road of straight 'union bashing'. Not yet, that is.

His plea has always been that workers should obey their official union leaders. And he has got those leaders—like Mickey Mullen, straight where he wants them, mouthing moderation while selling jobs and wages.

Because the likes of Haughey are sure about one thing:—National Understandings and Agreements are not just about promises and wages. They are in agreement about what type of trade union movement we are supposed to get.

The aim of centralised bargaining has been disciplined trade unionism: a trade union-



ism which automatically refers everything to the so-called independent Labour Movement; a trade unionism which is fully incorporated into the State machinery; a trade unionism where all power is taken from the shop floor.

But that's only one version of trade unionism. There is another. It was seen in the faces of oil workers extending their strike through the flying picket. It was seen in the backing

the Esso workers gave their brothers when the Army moved in. It is seen, day in and day out, whenever workers support their fellow workers in countless shop floor struggles.

It's called solidarity! And that's the real version of trade unionism, the version that Larkin and Connolly fought for. It's far removed from the practice of trade unionism that Haughey is engineering—aided and abetted by trade union bosses.

As we go to press, Haughey has called in the Army to break the oil workers dispute.

This follows the workers' magnificent use of "flying pickets" around the country to spread the dispute.

The Worker says:—Not a stroke of work to be done where a drop of scab oil has been delivered—Victory to the oil workers!"

Full report page 7 and Aside page 2.

aside

ON SUNDAY the 28th of September, Fr. Lynch in Sallynoggin church gave the same sermon for his seven o'clock mass that had been given at all previous masses.

He banged the pulpit and gave a fiery sermon about greed. As an example he lashed out at the greed of the oil tanker drivers.

The same day Fr. (rock around the altar) Michael Cleary appeared smiling from the centre pages of the Sunday Independent and babbled on about morals, about greed, and the 'small greedy minority who use their position of power to achieve their own selfish ends' and 'their callous uncaring greed'.

He too was referring to the oil tanker drivers.

On the same page as Cleary, a banner headline ran 'Why you are being held to ransom!' The writer this time was political economist Moore McDowell. To this babbling the oil tanker shop stewards were 'obnoxious'.

A front page splash a couple of days earlier in the Evening Herald told the workers GO BACK, and called for army intervention.

The capitalist papers attack on the oil tanker drivers sought by any means necessary to demoralise and bash the strikers with lies, insults and half truths about the dispute.

The main idea behind the attacks was to create the atmosphere to allow Haughey to bring in the army.

Its nothing new of course for the capitalist press to bash strikers, but over the past couple of years the propaganda has become more subtle.

Attempts have been made at creating the idea in workers minds that any section of trade unionists who fight wage restraint or who out of sheer frustration with trades union bureaucrats, strike without official backing are mindless militants who strike at the drop of a hat.

If we take five groups of workers who have been in dispute over the last year or so we can see just how much crap the 'holding the country to ransom' bit put out by the media, is.

Lets take ESB, nurses, busworkers, corpo workers, and oil tanker drivers.

If busworkers are in dispute with CIE the press seeks to make nonsense of their claim as much as they can.

It lays emphasis on the hardship caused.

Its propaganda is aimed at the silent majority'. But who are the members of this majority?

It included no doubt ESB, nurses, busworkers, corpo workers, and oil tanker drivers.

When oil tanker drivers take action, the appeal from the capitalist press is to the same silent majority. Included this time are busworkers. If ESB workers strike, the appeal to the nation from the capitalist press seeks other workers including nurses, corpo workers, busworkers, and tanker drivers to turn against them.

The only answer from us must be 'stuff your lies and propaganda because we workers are in the same struggle'.

Only if we ignore their lies and slanders against all strikers and realise that the press has never been on the side of any workers in struggle, but rather on the side of the ruling class that we can begin to build an alternative workers press that can combat their anti-union and anti-strike slanders.

We must remember that it was the Irish Independent that called for the special execution of James Connolly after the 1916 rising, because he had built the trade union movement.

That paper carries on today in the same tradition.

Today socialists and many trade unionists swim against the tide in defending workers such as the oil tanker drivers, because of the power of the capitalist media.

We must keep swimming until the tide turns. **DERMOT BYRNE**

ON THE BLANKET

Lobby F.F. or build campaign?

IN "NINETY Miles from Dublin, Christy Moore sings of the protest of the blanket prisoners and how they resist all physical and mental pressures to give up their campaign.

Only ninety miles away, he says, their call for support goes unheard, and so he urges that we "show the Free State rulers that their silence will not do."

Perhaps we should be glad of their silence just now. If they were to break it, it could only be to condemn the continuing struggle for political status—that is, as long as the mass movement in support of the prisoners can still be ignored as a political force. The need to keep good relations with the British government and to maintain a consensus that republican activism is an obstacle to unity and reconciliation is much stronger than any pressure from the H-Block campaign.

But there are those who say that this is changing. They say that it is possible to push the major political parties into making some gesture of support for the protesting prisoners. If that cannot be done, they say, then it should be possible to move so many people in those parties, particularly Fianna Fail, that their failure to support the blanket protest in some way will be seen by supporters as an outrage and a scandal and will open up cracks in the system. At the last National Smash H Block conference held in Dublin during September, a resolution was adopted which declared that "putting the focus on southern politicians..... gives the campaign a political goal."

It does that, all right, but not one which the campaign should be aiming at. If this becomes in effect

the campaign's real political target—the sense of the H Blocks protest will be lost. No matter how much the prisoners' demands are twisted around, they cannot be made to mean just a call for improvement in conditions.

In resisting the prison regime of compulsory work and compulsory uniform and the right to organise their own education, the prisoners are demanding that the right to organise their own regime, as members and supporters of a political organisation opposing the state.

The British government can't afford to concede that much—they haven't got that kind of room to move in—and the "Free State Rulers" and most "southern politicians" understand that well. The best that any more than individual mavericks in a party like Fianna Fail can offer is the "Portlaoise solution" put forward by Tim Pat Coogan, in his recent book.

Tight-rope

Short of a massive upheaval with the capacity to rock the whole state (as was going on in 1971 and 1972 when political status was won) it is doubtful if the British government's tight-rope walking leaves even the "Portlaoise solution" open to them.

But the idea of lobbying politicians has more to it than meets the eye.

There were many more assumptions behind the argument which were not explained. Four or five years ago, Fine Gael councillors worried the Coalition government leaders by supporting calls for a prison inquiry at that time. Peoples Democracy, who have pushed for

the "focus on southern politicians" in the H Blocks campaign didn't propose then that the cracks be opened in Fine Gael by lobbying them on the prison enquiry issue. Nor do they propose today that the emphasis of campaigns on divorce and nuclear power, which also divide Fianna Fail, should be on lobbying politicians.



Behind the call to "show the Free State collaborators that we will not let them carry on this way" (as the proposer of the resolution put it) is the view that support for Fianna Fail represents the nationalist aspirations of the majority of

the 26 County population and that its failure to deliver unity can be used to split the ranks. "Workers and small farmers have political illusions," the H Blocks conference was told, "that Fianna Fail will do something about the situation in the North."

For over a year after the 1977 general election many Republicans and Socialists were saying that the reason for the land-slide to Fianna Fail represented a massive shift in favour of traditional republican demands. After last year's by-election reversals for the government in Cork, they didn't dare draw the only possible conclusion, based on this analysis—that in traditionally nationalist areas, there had been a massive shift in favour of the abstentionism, and worse, of Fine Gael, Labour and Sinn Fein—The Workers' Party, on partition and the presence of British troops.

Manifesto

That would have shown how absurdly one-dimensional the "analysis" is, how it has inflated a grain of truth into a complete perspective. The conventional view of political correspondents that Fianna Fail's 1977 election victory was based on the promises of its manifesto, and that the by-election losses in Cork had to do with the government's handling of economic and social issues, had rather more grains in it.

There ARE many in and around Fianna Fail who strongly desire to see the country unified and the British kicked out. But they do not desire it more strongly than they want a bigger, more comfortable niche in this society.

Fianna Fail's ability to rope in diverse social groups behind it is based on its populism, on its promise to lift all boats, of which the nationalist appeal is only a part.

The national question does not get debated in the ranks of Fianna Fail in a way which could offer a major division. Look at the most detailed analysis of the shift from Lynch to Haughey and you will find that personalities and estimates of vote-catching abilities were the main content of the argument (such as it was). Look what happened to Sile de Valera.

It would be a boost to the H Blocks campaign if it did become an issue which was a focus of anxious debate in the corridors of power, causing great turmoil. It might even help the campaign if the issue was discussed formally in the Dail. But that is only likely to happen and, indeed, it would only really be a step forward, if the H Blocks campaign is so massive that it can impose the issue on the parties and determine what exactly the issue is.

That will be done by building a mass movement, by appealing directly to people through local action, through their work-places, through their basic organisations of defence. For all the passive support that has been revealed, that has not yet happened on a large scale and been translated into continuing political activity.

The "focus on southern politicians" promises an illusory shorter route to victory.

It is in fact a diversion, a political perspective which can only be carried out at the price of the blanket prisoners' demands.

BRIAN TRENCH

POLAND

'Very good—but how long will it last?'

EVENTS IN Poland over the past few months have warmed the hearts of socialists everywhere. The party bosses and bureaucrats that exert a vile tyranny in the fraudulent name of socialism received a wonderful slap in the face from the workers.

The workers strike movement culminated in a strike committee that was in effect a Workers Council in Gdansk with directly elected delegates from hundreds of striking factories throughout Poland.

Rank and file organisation spread quickly as workers found—spontaneously—the form of organisation that suited their need, that relied on themselves.

Their chief demand was for a new "free" trade union movement and not some new faces in the state-run, bosses-unions.

The most frequently heard saying in Poland today is "very good—but how long will it last?"

After an amazing display of rank and file organisation, the workers were prepared to wind up their Workers Council.

This beginning of genuine soviet power was what frightened the Polish bosses into making real concessions.

Why did the workers not go forward when the whole question of the future of the Stalinhist tyranny was made uncertain by their actions? After all, if the worst came to the worst, an invading Russian army would consist of "workers in uniform" who,

themselves, have everything to gain by emulating their Polish brothers and sisters.

If it was worth risking for a few loaves of bread, why not for the whole bakery?

Every major political crisis has this crux—the rank and file are taking things into their own hands because the old hands are no longer acceptable.

Side by side for days, weeks or even months, are both the old power—offering more and more concessions; presenting more and more of a "left face", trying to find some formula to hold onto power, and the new power—unsure of itself but rushing forward, wary of the tricks of the rulers but inexperienced, defensive, careful not to bring down too much on their heads, fearful of the consequences.

It's a situation that can't last. A movement is either going ahead or falling back, the waverers are either made resolute by fresh successes or they drag their feet.

Such a movement is a tension between the most determined and enthusiastic on the one hand and those who will go along with something that seems to have a good chance of winning.

With the ebb of the movement,

the old power will take its opportunity to wrestle back the concessions it has had to make.

The logical conclusion to a major strike movement of this sort is the taking of full power—or rather the snuffing-out of the old power so that the new can flourish.

For this an organisation that is part of the rank and file but goes beyond its spontaneous outbursts is needed.

It is needed to organise the most enthusiastic workers so the less strong-willed will be given heart.

It is needed to argue—at first as just a minority—that the situation leads to one conclusion—seizure of power—or defeat.

It is needed to lead the majority in that seizure of power when it has won the support of the workers.

The absence of a revolutionary workers party in Poland explains why it was possible for workers to dismantle their central strike committee just as it had won them major concessions.

A party built as THE opposition in the workers movement BEFORE the revolutionary crisis, could prevent the leadership vacuum which allowed the leading



role to go to the church leaders and middle-class dissidents, etc—who will always step back from the final confrontation.

In Iran, the workers—whose strikes brought down the Shah—found only the mullahs to lead the movement and answer the question which the workers actions posed. The Ayatollah is the result.

In Portugal, the political turmoil unleashed by the fall of fascism saw workers occupying factories, newspapers and radio stations and the land being seized. Every boss politician called himself a "revolutionary" but because of the lack of a revolutionary party, leadership fell to the Portuguese Socialist and Communist parties. The crisis was defused and capitalism survived for another day.

Polish workers have not lost the chance to provide themselves with such a party. Although the tyranny's use of "marxist" rhetoric to mask its state-capitalist rule has profoundly alienated the workers from genuine socialist

ideas, and extreme repression and censorship have impeded the spread of authentic marxism from the oppositions in the West, the period of political space opened up may provide opportunities for the tiny numbers of genuine marxists to build.

We too must build in Ireland ahead of a crisis of Polish proportions. For although the political forms used by the bosses are different, we all suffer from capitalism and their problems will some time be ours.

Rank and file workplace organisation is essential to fighting the bosses independently of any bureaucrats—the Polish workers have shown this in fine measure, so must we.

A revolutionary workers party was not available to the Polish workers when it was needed. We must see we are not lacking this essential ingredient when our turn comes. Building this party is the central task the Socialist Workers Movement has set itself.

KEVIN WINGFIELD.

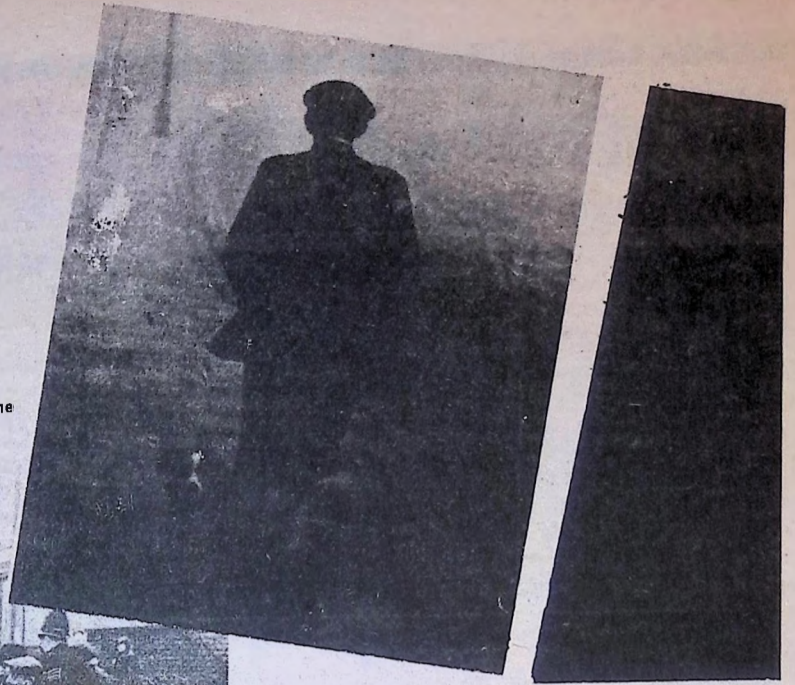
IRELAND 1930s

The remarkable poems which follow, were found under the title 'Free Verse for our Capitalists' in some old copies of the Republican Congress paper—we've no idea who their author ('AKS') may have been. The poems describe the crushing of the human spirit in the Dublin of the Depression, a city of rat-infested slums, mass unemployment and 'Free State' terror. Today they still convey a sense of the depravity of Capitalism wherever and whenever it exists. And also, as in 'a stone's throw', a spirit that will fight back.

long rows of elms
reflected in the stagnant waters
of our GRAND canals
stand as silent witnesses
to the last struggles of
t. brady, c. cairns,
t. downey, j. roche,
and countless others,
who drowned themselves
for three very good reasons—
no work, no money, no hope.



while playing in the street
near his house
michael croly aged seven
was killed this afternoon
by a large motor lorry
the wheels of which passed over his
head.
as the deceased shared one room
with his unemployed father
a mother who charred by the day
and several brothers and sisters
(two of whom had tactfully
died from pulmonary tuberculosis)
one cannot but congratulate him
on a miraculous escape from life



iveagh house, a large mansion
advantageously situated,
within a stone's throw
of the worst slums in the city
inhabited for perhaps
one week in the year
by the guinness family.
say when.



grangegorman,
portrane,
windy arbor,
three enormous asylums
salubriously situated
around county dublin
all full—and getting fuller.
one of the principal causes
of insanity
being malnutrition during
infancy—
a nation mad is a nation
chained.
rockaby baby!

IRELAND NOW Dublin Belfast

14% OF the houses in the North are unfit for human habitation. That's what the Housing Executive itself tells us in its latest report. 20% of the houses are lacking one basic amenity, that is a toilet or hot and cold water.

And 30% are in need of repair. This report only confirms what most working class people most people in working class areas of the North already know.

And now the British government expenditure cuts are going to make housing conditions worse. Already £30 million has been cut from the Housing Executive budget for the present year.

Many ongoing programs like the Markets redevelopment scheme are threatened and plans for rehousing and major repair programs have been dropped.

Current housing policy is now "patch up" or sell, instead of the needed clearance and rebuilding. But Housing Executive chairman Brett says that 15% of all homes need to be knocked down rather than patched up.

The government is now encouraging a do-it-yourself programme, giving home improvement grants to people who will fix up their own homes. This week a new scheme was introduced to rent houses at 5p a week to "sturdy and self-reliant people who would work to improve their homes with the aid of grants and loans".

These are building that are in such a poor state that they should be knocked down. But people are so desperate to find a decent house that they are queuing up to get a part of one of the government's self-help schemes.

Building workers in the North have been badly hit by the government cutbacks in the housing programme. Most housing executive sites are not unionised and workers are not prepared to fight the redundancies now facing them.

One building worker explained, "Workers are having a bad time with their bosses. They are afraid to speak out. They have to take crap from their employers because there is always someone to take their job. The boss tells us, "If you don't like your wages, you know what you can do".



Picture Derek Speirs IFL/Report

DUBLIN CITY is facing one of its worse housing crises since the late 1960s.

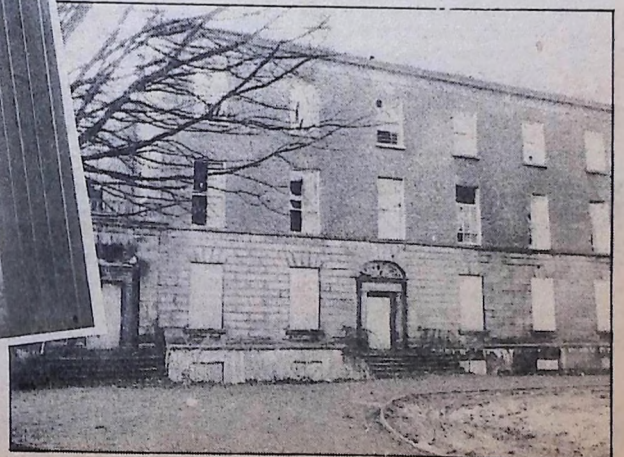
The Summerhill/Sean McDermott area of the city, has been deliberately run down by Dublin Corporation who want the whole area redeveloped into office blocks. Because of the run-down, essential repairs are not being carried out. In doing this the Corpo has forced most of the families out of the area.

As soon as a family leaves a flat it is immediately boarded up. The area has a very high crime rate, but what else can you expect. With nowhere to go or nothing to do, the only alternative is to turn to crime.

As a result of the high crime rate the media had a field day, reporting of groups of 11-14 year old kids being involved in organised crime. (Protections rackets) for instance, all of which was pure fantasy.

Since then, however, a group of people who are still in the area, have decided to fight back. By organising a number of marches and demos, they have also come up with a number of projects, such as drawing up of an alternative plan for the community which they have shown to the Corpo. Other projects have included a photography workshop sponsored by ANCO which was successful in getting some of the kids off the street and doing something practical.

The people left in the area are determined to win their battle with the Corpo. This can only be done by fighting back, by more militant action such as marches, occupations, and rent strikes.



FEMINISM AND

What is feminism?

FEMINISM IS the struggle against the recognised oppression of women. Central to this struggle is the right of the oppressed group—in this case women—to define their oppression and then to direct the course of action against it.

The victims of this oppression can be found in all social classes, in all workplaces and particularly in all homes. But having recognised that sex is the basis of oppression it is essential not to stop there.

Why is Maggie Thatcher not our sister? Obviously oppression varies a lot in its degree—class and privilege undoubtedly soften the blow for many women—and Thatcher is one of these. The vital connections between one oppressed group and others *must* be made here.

A feminist struggle which does not recognise other struggles and doesn't seek a broader understanding of its own struggle in relation to say, racism, is doomed to failure. It must be seen in the context of the system which oppresses it.

Women provide cheap labour, in the workplace, free labour and childrearing services in the home, and serve to facilitate the male workforce in both these places. To free them from this would not be in the interests of the present system. The state would collapse were all these freedoms gained. This would argue that in fact ultimate freedom for women, is not possible within the existing system. This is not to say that reforms shouldn't be fought for and gained in the meantime. It does not mean

however that these gains, however great, *must* not be seen as an end in themselves.

Socialist feminism recognises that total liberation for women without socialism is impossible. The existing system can, will concede women's demands from time to time. It is important to see this for what it is, accommodation to suit the needs of the system. In good times it means little to the state to grant legislation for equal pay—knowing that the chances of its implementation are minimal. The screws tighten when bad times appear—and women are usually the first to be hit, especially working class women. They provide a ready and cheap army of labour—creches can specially be granted (as in Belfast during the war)—and just as speedily withdrawn when the women have outlived their usefulness in that area.

This is why feminism with a socialist perspective is the only valid way forward for women as an oppressed group.

With a reformist view women will forever be granted demands which will just as quickly be removed—they will continue to be used as puppets to support a system which oppresses them.

Just as there will be no liberation for women without socialism, there will be no socialism without women's liberation.

MARY CUMMINS

Rape — fact and fiction

THE CRIME of rape is shrouded in popular myths. The most flippant and insulting one, of course, is that all women want to be raped. This 'joke' ignores the fact that rape is usually a violent act of aggression designed to humiliate the woman.

It is not usually restricted to intercourse but is frequently accompanied by other acts of violence and sexual degradation. By definition rape is against the will of the victim.

Another popular myth is that the woman was actually responsible for the rape—that 'she asked for it' by wearing provocative clothes, by being beautiful, by not learning self-defence.

The other side of this myth is that the rapist was overcome by an uncontrollable sexual urge. In fact the vast majority of rapes are planned, and at least half of them are pair or gang rapes. The victims have only one thing in common, that they are female, and can be any age from three to ninety.

But the most popular myth of all is that women tell lies—they make false accusations.

A study by American policemen indicated that they only believed 50% of the accusations to be founded, that is, true. When police-women looked at the evidence they held that only 2% of the accusations were unfounded.

Rape is considered by police everywhere to be the most unreported crime. It is very difficult for a woman to press a charge of rape. She usually feels shamed and humiliated, and from start to finish her story is treated with suspicion and the onus is on her at the trial to defend her accusation.

Women who have been raped are therefore far less likely to report it than victims of other crimes.

FBI figures reveal that the majority of convicted rapists are from the lower socio-economic groups—as are their victims. 47% of them are black and most of them already have records for other crimes, such as robbery and assault.

Rape is seen as an inevitable feature of ghetto life. However, as well as being a street crime English studies reveal that a woman is as likely to be raped inside her own house as outside it.

Rape—forced sexual relations of any kind on a woman against her will—can be perpetrated by husbands, boyfriends, fathers and family friends.

She says no and means no, but

he goes ahead anyway. Most of these rapes would not be reported.

Rape is a traditional feature of war. It is used systematically both as part of the terrorisation techniques of the invading army and as part of the booty for the conquerors, with the vanquished men having to witness the final humiliation of the rape of "their women".

During the 9 months occupation of Bangladesh by East Pakistan over 200,000 women were raped.

The rapes were simply part of the war strategy and they probably didn't even consider (not that it would have made any difference) the full consequences on the lives of the women. Because most of the victims, many of whom had become pregnant, were subsequently rejected by their husbands, with no opportunity of marrying again.

That was just a side effect of a particular technique of war.

In the power game where rape is used as a weapon the victim is meant as often to be the father or the husband as the woman herself.

Rape was first introduced in law as the crime of theft—with the women being the property of her father or her husband. Basically all rape involves using the woman as an object.

When Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther leader, decided to attack white power and privilege, he chose rape as his weapon. Then in order to prepare for his political campaign of raping white women he first practised on black women in the ghetto. But rape is only the most total and degrading way of treating women as objects.

Patriarchal and capitalist society has always regarded women as objects in a multitude of ways.

Advertising sells things through women's bodies. Prostitution sells the bodies themselves, and what can be bought can also be stolen.

Rape is about power. The masculine man, the hero of much popular culture, takes what he wants and women are included in the general list.

Sexual intercourse can be used to dominate in a society where women are seen as inferior. When women are despised having sexual relations with them becomes an act of masculine assertion.

Power means control of others and rape or the threat of rape is one way of achieving control. This can be true even when women are not present: in prisons homosexual

rape is used to create a social hierarchy—victims of prison gangs bangs are being "womanised" and the rapists are thereby asserting their place as "men" at the top of the hierarchy. The prisoners don't see themselves as engaging in a homosexual act—they are not homosexuals. Rape is simply the way open to them of asserting social dominance.

A man in a powerful position doesn't always have to use violence to rape. Slave owners in America were entitled to sexual intercourse with their female slaves. The slaves simply had no choice, and this right "right" was exercised frequently.

Incest with children also comes under this heading as again the power of the adult eliminates any possibility of consent on the part of the child: and women workers regularly find themselves in the position of losing their jobs or promotion if they don't respond to the sexual overtures of their bosses.

These are all forms of rape.

"But of course, so many girls are asking for it, you know....." (Gerry Collins, Minister for Justice)

In June of this year Gemma Hussey submitted a bill on rape which had been drawn up by the

Council for the Status of Women, to the Senate. Her bill would have changed the law so as to include rape within marriage and to extend the definition of rape to include penetration of the mouth and rectum, and with objects other than the penis. It wasn't accepted because Jerry Collins claimed that Fianna Fail were about to present their own bill.

It is unlikely that their bill, scheduled for the autumn, will cover the extensions contained in Hussey's bill.

On the initiative of the Feminist Federation a group (Women Against Rape) was set up to campaign widely around the issue of rape and the Fianna Fail bill.

WAR meets every Tuesday in Maquires Pub, Dorset/North Frederick Streets, at 7pm and is open to all women interested.

Also coming up on Tuesday 14th of October is a meeting with Kate Millett, organised by the Labour National Women's Council, in Liberty Hall at 7.30 pm.

Kate Millett's newly published book is on sexual violence.

MARY GORDON

Armagh—against im

IS THE Armagh question a feminist issue?

This question has raised its unlikely head in the *Our Times* page of the *Irish Times*. The discussion has raised vital questions about the nature of feminism and the relationship between feminism and other struggles.

Feminism is women in struggle. Women join battle on many fronts and it is not just the fight against patriarchal oppression that deserves the name of feminism.

The struggle for women's liberation involves them in battles against the capitalist against the church, against the imperialist aggressor.

This is not just a crackpot idea of socialist feminists; this year's Non Governmental Women's Conference at Copenhagen—not a radical gathering by any means—witnessed spontaneous demonstrations of women against the Poi Pot regime, the circulation of a petition for the release of Nelson Mandela, two widely-supported demonstrations against the military coup in Bolivia. A meeting on the last day of the conference rejected a quote by some VIP that "to talk feminism to a woman without water, food or a roof over her head is to talk nonsense." To talk feminism to such a woman is to talk about water, food and a roof over her head.

Because women are oppressed as women they can and do support the struggles of those who are oppressed in other ways.

Equally the women's movement knows that people in struggle adopt methods of struggle regarded as unsavoury by the establishment or disinterested observers. Anyone who has spent a night arguing for the use of the term "chairperson" will know the horror provoked by this small violence to the English language.

Force is the last weapon of the oppressed. This is a fact of history which the women's movement has accepted. Again to point to the example of Copenhagen, Sally Mugabe and Ielia Khalid (PLO) were only the best known of an array of women there who had adopted physical force in their struggles. And in prison, when all other means are taken away, the use of one's bodily functions is the last remaining vehicle of protest.

It is a matter of fact that the

Armagh women have gained the support of many feminists on the basis of these considerations—witness the 300 English women at the March 8 picket on Armagh and the unanimous support for the Armagh prisoners' demands at the December 79 Conference of the Feminist Federation.

However, to support the struggle in Armagh is to come face to face with political realities which go beyond feminism. The feminist case for the Armagh women, as presented by Nell Mc Cafferty, is that women in Armagh are being denied "bodily integrity" and that the problems shared by all prisoners, male and female, who are on the dirty protest, are compounded in the case of the women by the problems of menstruation and the dangers of vaginal infection and sterility.

The specific problems faced by women are a cause of grave concern to many in the women's movement. Yet to base one's case solely on these considerations is to lay oneself open to three retorts:

—So the Armagh prisoners are a different kettle of fish from the men in H Block?

—But the women themselves have done terrible things.

—If they're so badly off, they can come off the protest.

The only possible response to these accusations is to point to the fact that the men and women on the dirty protest are waging a POLITICAL struggle against British oppression in the 6 counties.

When Rose McAllister, just released from Armagh, was asked at the Dublin Conference on Armagh prisoners why she had been in jail, her answer was "Because there's a war going on. It's because there's a war going on that the women were beaten into their confessions and tried in juryless courts. It's because there's a war going on that the Armagh women are looking for political status. It is part of the propaganda war of the British government to deprive them of that status and dub them as mindless criminals.

The struggle of the Armagh prisoners is the same struggle as that of the H Block men—against the same war machine and for the same principal.



Picture Derek Speirs IFL/Report

D SOCIALISM

perialism

The bulk of feminists as I have pointed out will extend their solidarity to women in struggle. But this support will be tenuous and confused if it is not seen in the overall context of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland.

The political nature of the struggle explains the fact that some feminists oppose the Armagh women. They do so for political reasons which override their feminism. If your politics lead you to condemn all those who use force in their struggle against oppression as "terrorists" this of course will take precedence over your concern for the women in that struggle.

Happily most feminists who do not come from this political tradition have rejected this way of looking at the Armagh issue. And many feminists have come face to face with new political realities through their involvement with the Armagh question.

Armagh is feminism with a political plus.

MOLLY O'DUFFY



Russia feminists organise

Marx wrote that the degree of emancipation of women in a society was a key to the general level of emancipation. And it is true that whenever women have begun to organise this has been the herald of great political changes in society. The modern women's liberation movement which arose in the West during the late sixties and the seventies was an indication of a fundamental change in women's lives caused by changes within capitalism itself.

Up until now women's liberation ideas had been articulated only in the West. Their absence in Eastern Europe and within Russia itself led some people to believe that women there enjoyed a greater level of emancipation than women in the West.

The absence of any organisation that expressed women's discontent made the argument theoretical rather than real.

But a recent development has made the argument concrete at last.

"I INTEND to pursue my feminist activity because I consider feminism to be progressive, and because the women's movement is an essential part of the world democratic movement."

With these defiant words Tatyana Mamonova declared in a letter to the KGB that despite its harassment and interrogation she intended to remain a feminist activist.

Last September she was one of a collective of women who had produced the first issue of an illegal women's journal *Women in Russia*. Published in Leningrad, the journal included articles from women as far away as Novo Sibirsk. It was the first time that the dissident movement in the Soviet Union had produced any material specifically dealing with the situation of women.

Women have been involved in the dissident movement. Some became involved because their husbands or sons were arrested. Others became involved in their own right as dissidents. Helen Bonner was already a well known protester when the Western press started referring to her as Mrs Sakharov—a name she herself never uses. Half the members of the Free Trade Union founded in the Soviet Union to fight for rights like the right to organise and the right to strike, were also women.

But these women never raised the question of women's liberation. Women in the West may have concluded that meant that women in the Soviet Union were not fighting because they are more emanci-

pated than women in the West. But that is not true.

Women in Russia lead a life whose pressures are remarkably similar to those we face. They work in the worst paid, most boring jobs. And they have all the family and household responsibilities too. In 1976 one Soviet sociologist estimated that women spend up to 12 hours per week on cooking while men spend about an hour and a half, and that while women spend six hours a week doing laundry, the average man spends only fifteen minutes.

All this in a country where ninety per cent of women go out to work.

The familiar situation is made worse by the fact that there are few consumer goods such as washing machines and tumble dryers, and that the shops are always surrounded by endless queues.

Shopping is a nightmarishly time-consuming task.

The very burdens on women prevented them from organising to change them.

Crushed between work at home and in the factory, queuing for every household item, always tired, they never had time.

But they did show their discontent.

The traditional family began to experience many difficulties. The divorce rate soared—many of the women giving their reasons for divorce as drunkenness on the part of the husband. And one study showed that while only half of the divorced women wan-

ted to re-marry, over 70% of divorced men did.

The traditional attractions of family life for women seemed to have disappeared—for Soviet women are choosing to have far fewer children than before. The birth rate has dropped dramatically.

Women prefer the nightmare of the "meat-mincer" as Women in Russia describes the abortion clinic, to the joys of childrearing.

That Women in Russia appeared at all is remarkable. Even more amazing is that the women signed the articles with their own names and even included photographs of the contributors.

So what then was the nature of the magazine that these women produced. Were they provocateurs as the KGB suggested?

Bitterness

In the introductory letter from the editorial board the women state "we can be sure that no-one but ourselves will help us. It is by coming together to talk about our bitterness and suffering, by understanding and changing our own experience, that we shall be able to find a solution. Only in this way will we, and thousands of women who suffer like us, actually help ourselves..."

"We hope that our joint efforts will bring us back from the point of disaster, that they will relieve women's suffering and set women's liberation under way."

And in the articles women write passionately about the reality of women's lives—of the pain of childbirth and abortion, of the difficulties of bringing up children and of the hideous insensitivity of men.

Their words will strike a chord in many women. But their conclusions we cannot agree with. They see men as the enemy and particularly working class men. In their manifesto they end: "The conservatism of the alcoholic masses, the blind animosity toward women displayed by that proliferating, single-celled organism, that giant amoeba without will—that is the outrageous brake on social progress."

These women are so disillusioned with men and with the soci-

ety they live in they have placed faith in building an alternative based on "female values" and even religion.

So, in the absence of a working class movement fighting for general emancipation, these women have looked to themselves, to self activity, as the way forward.

They are wrong. But they are nonetheless brave for all that, and we support them because they are struggling towards organising women for emancipation. They cannot achieve that on their own, with their confused and often reactionary ideas about the working class.

But the fact that they are organising is a tremendous achievement both because it will inspire other women, and because it broadens the dissident movement fighting against a society that has discredited both women's liberation and socialism.

ANNA PACZUSKA

Build a women's movement

"SLAVE OF a slave" is how Connolly put it.

In this country the chains of women's slavery are fastened tight.

Denied any real control of our bodies, deprived of child care facilities; most of us are kept out of the workplace; degraded and humiliated by a set of Churches who look on us as child breeders—there could hardly be another country in Europe where a militant fighting women's movement is more needed.

But that movement doesn't exist. It waits to be built.

Instead, dotted around the country there are one issue campaigns and small local women's groups.

Those one issue campaigns have mainly tended to rely on the same method for winning reforms:—presenting a respectable front in the hope that by lobbying the politicians long enough they will listen.

What has been missing is an idea that we need to build a militant feminist movement on the issues, that through direct action imposes its will on the politicians.

The Divorce Action Group is probably the most recent example of that sort of a campaign. Instead of saying we want free divorce to increase the independence of women, it argues that divorce will actually strengthen the family and clear up anomalies when it comes to passing on inheritance. Its appeal to the middle class and a plea for reforms from above.

Reforms from above there certainly have been.

We have now got stacks of legislation that guarantees non-discrimination, equal pay, the right to work.

Yet today women are still only earning 56% of the average male wage. If we are married we are still seen as easy scapegoats for unemployment; and the maze of discrimination has not been broken.

Real gains have only come from struggle. It is only the confidence gained from direct collective mobilisation that will ensure that any reforms will be carried out. Yet it is precisely that experience that is missing in Ireland.

Only in the North around the anti-imperialist struggle, have thousands of women broken from the traditional roles to become organisers and fighters.

But even here they have as yet not gone so far as pushing forward their demands as women inside that struggle.

That will be essential if their fight is also to benefit them as women.

The problems that confront feminists in Ireland start from this point.

A militant women's movement can only come about if it is prepared to direct its appeal to the broad mass of working class women. Only these women have no privileges which might stand in the way of fighting their oppression.

That is not to say that it ignores the oppression that all women face—or indeed that its appeal is only to working class women.

But it is to recognise, who will be the most consistent fighters on the issue.

The beginning can start from now. Tiny as it is the Feminist Federation has brought together those who stand for militant action. But it needs to transfer itself from a body which simply spreads information and publicity to a campaigning body.



That means organising itself on an open activist basis prepared to throw all its energies into organising around issues from a feminist standpoint.

Those issues will sometimes be the larger issues of the day. On other occasions, they will be the small petty discrimination we face—for example the men-only pubs and sexist ads. But only militant action by women, who demand uncompromisingly an end to sexual oppression, will begin to break down the walls that face us. Liberation will not be handed to us on a plate—we must organise, fight and bring all women into the struggle.

Feminism & Socialism Women's Day School



SATURDAY 25th OCTOBER at the CENTRAL HOTEL, EXCHEQUER STREET, DUBLIN 2.

10.30a.m.—5p.m.

Creche provided. Accommodation available.

SESSIONS

1. FEMINISM AND SOCIALISM.
2. CURRENT ISSUES.
 - a. Armagh, b. Abortion, c. Rape.
3. WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN IRELAND.

POLITICAL POLICE

WHEN HAUGHEY first became Minister of Justice in 1963, he made it clear that his first political priority was the smashing of republican and communist groups!

A bit of a contrast to his nationalist rhetoric you might think but his rise to the top job has brought about the existence of a new more blatant form of 'political police'. Of course this totally fits in with savage economic policies and his determination to quash any type of opposition.

Since the creation of the Special Tasks Force immediately after he came to power, sections of the Gardai seem to be becoming more like the army. Indeed, Haughey and the class he represents have no qualms about bringing the army onto the streets to crush workers exercising their democratic right to strike.

Under the guise that republican activity was getting out of hand, the STF was established as a crack armed unit. However, it is clear that the STF are nothing less than a military wing of the 'political police' which have been with us for some time in the form of the Special Branch.

In recent months the 'political police' have shown their true colours as ruthless protectors of the state. Their activities have been directed increasingly at trade unionists and socialist groups. Their presence outside shop stewards meetings, harassment of paper sellers, regular arrests of H Block activists, and automatic use of the Offences Against the State Act, bear testimony to this.

If the existence of these so-called 'guardians of democracy'

serves any useful purpose it is to shatter illusions in the benevolence of the state.

One wonders just to what lengths Haughey is prepared to go. The precedent has already been set as regards the operation of the 'political police'. All the government has to do is declare something 'special' so that we've now got a Special Branch, Special Courts, Special Powers Acts etc.. Its funny how all these specialities appear to be pretty permanent.

As Haughey steps up the harassment, it is all the more crucial now for workers to resist. With the economy helplessly struggling to emerge from recession and with talk of legislation against unofficial strikes, it is clear that the 'political police' exist for more reasons than merely to monitor republican activities.

KEVIN CALLINAN

Right Choice

THE Women's Right to Choose Group, as the first step in its campaign, has opened a pregnancy counselling centre.

The centre provides counselling and information on all aspects of pregnancy including abortion referral to clinics in England.

The counselling is non-directive, that is, it is designed to elicit from the woman her own feelings about her pregnancy so that she can make a confident decision about what course to take.

The centre (The Irish Pregnancy Counselling Centre) is at 3, Belvedere Place, Dublin 1 (beside Mountjoy Square); phone 787160.

The Woman's Right to Choose Group meets at the same address every Wednesday at 8pm, and all women are welcome to attend.

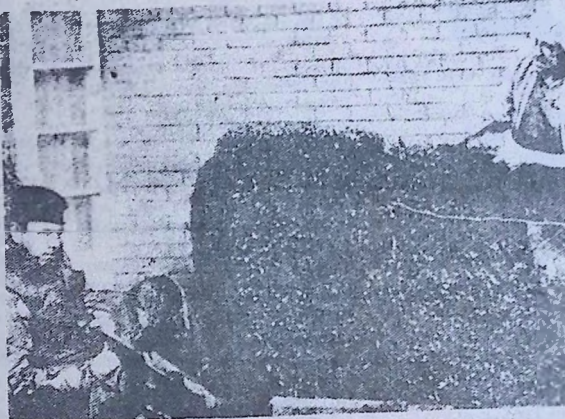
Union bosses back RUC

OVER THE past few years trade unionists in the North have attempted to raise the issues of torture, repression, and the H Blocks in the trade union movement to attempt to mobilise this potentially powerful weapon in the fight against imperialism.

On the occasions of Brian Macquire's death in Castlereagh, Willie Gallagher's hunger strike, and the use of the PTA against workers, hundreds of workers went on strike and marched, on one occasion through Belfast city centre, led by the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression.

Such activities raised the ire of the trade union leadership in the North, particularly the Northern Committee of ICTU which has consistently refused to do anything on these issues. TUCAR was constantly denounced both inside and outside the trade union movement.

A recent article in the Irish Times further exposed the trade union leaders who stated at a secret seminar organised by the RUC that "that there was no ambiguity in their support for the RUC. In 1977 they had cancelled the May Day Parade at the request of the RUC and in the face of considerable left wing criticism."



This seminar was organised during the past year by the RUC as part of its drive to get the RUC back into the Catholic communities of West and North Belfast. The entire Northern Committee of ICTU was present. This included those who consider themselves to be some sort of socialist—like John Coulthard of NUPE, Paddy Devlin, ITGWU and United Labour Party, and John Freeman, ATGWU.

The trade unionists did raise some problems with picketing and mildly criticised the use of the Prevention Against Terrorism Act, saying the police sometimes used the PTA to simplify and facilitate their response to ordinary crime.

They did not criticise the existence of the PTA and other emergency legislation which deprives all against whom it is used of the normal safeguards of the law.

The trade union leaders fears of activists who think repression is something trade unionists ought to oppose was made clear at the seminar when they claimed that TUCAR demonstrations were organised by the Provisional IRA. They also claimed that IRA leaders were trying to enrol H Block protesters in trade unions. The trade union movement "needed all the help it could get

in resisting these developments" they told the police. In particular, they suggested, "the police could help by careful checking with ICTU officers whenever a demonstration was described as a "trade union" activity."

The bankruptcy of these so-called leaders could not be further evident. For years the trade union leaders have fully cooperated with the authorities—they were represented on the Prison Authority and the Prison Visitors Board while hundreds of their own members went through the RUC torture centres. Activists who raised the repression issue were immediately branded 'Provos'. Now we see they are so afraid of their own members that they've asked the police for help.

In any society the police are used by the state to attack the working class when it fights back. They may interfere with pickets, harass young people, arrest protesters. But in the North, the sectarian murderous history of the RUC makes it even more odious to read of trade unionists collaborating with the police force.

It is up to rank and file trade unionists—north and south—to fight to end this trade union support of the British Army and the RUC and once more make trade unions the organisations that defend workers—in the factory, on the picket line, or in the H Blocks and Armagh jail.

D is for DEMOCRACY

DEMOCRACY HAS different meanings to different people, and to different classes—wrote the American marxist George Novack. And how right he is, as revolutionary socialists we have a completely different concept of democracy. We believe that the society in which we live is not a democratic society. It is a class society in which a tiny minority of the population own and control the means of production i.e. factories, machinery etc. This minority which we call the Capitalist class, through its wealth and power, is backed up by the state to enforce that power, and to make sure that nobody takes it away from them.

These are the people who are always talking about 'Democracy' and the 'free' world, but it is their kind of democracy they are talking about—bourgeois democracy. But what is bourgeois democracy? In fact what is democracy all about?

Democracy is a system in which all the people decide the affairs of the society we live in, fair enough, but the closest we get to that under a capitalist system, is every 4-5 years, when the people elect the political party of their choice to represent them in parliament. And even this is not democratic!

In Chile in 1973, the Labour Government of Salvador Allende, was overthrown in a right-wing coup. The reason for this was that the Government tried to bring in reforms for the working people that elected them into office, but because this was contrary to the policies of the bosses, because these reforms would have meant some of their vast wealth being taken away and divided out, so that everyone would benefit, the army simply smashed Allende and his comrades, thus knocking all notions of democracy on the head.



Some people would not agree with what has been said so far, they would say that the fact that people are free to choose who ever they wish to represent them in parliament, even leaving aside the Chilean example, is positive proof that we live in a democracy. They would go so far as to say that people are free to do a lot of other things—free to buy whatever car they like and so on, without anyone else objecting to it. But are people free to say how these and any other things are produced?

It is here that we get to the crux of the matter. You and I do not have the power to say how many cars the Ford motor company produce every year, the people with that privilege are a group of executives, who have never seen most of the people that produce cars for them, never mind those who buy them.

The whole of the capitalist system is like this, a tiny group of bureaucrats say what and how every thing is to be produced. It is these people who say how many nuclear warheads and military aircrafts are produced to increase the strength of the armies; these are the people who give the go-ahead for millions of pounds to be spent on luxuries for the rich, while the basic needs of the working class, such as schools to educate our children, hospitals and medical equipment, such as kidney machines, to treat sick people; homes to house families, are simply left aside because it is not profitable enough.

Only under a socialist system will real democracy exist. When the working class take into it's own hands—the means of production—and utilises them so that the entire community benefits; only then will everybody have a fair share in decision making.

There will be no-one to represent the workers, for as we always say, you cannot represent the working class—they must represent themselves.

PAT GANNON

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I am interested in SWM and would like more details.

I would like to join the Socialist Workers Movement.

NAME

ADDRESS

OILWORKERS

WHAT A sick joke. An Army 'helper' sitting beside an army driver in the cab of an oil tanker one month after the oilworkers had demanded a helper as part of their pre-productivity working methods.

What could not be conceded as a matter of oil-company 'principle' was conceded many times over when the State moved in to break the strike.

Rather than give one inch to the oilworkers reasonable claims, the taxpayer was put to enormous expense to finance a horde of fumbling blacklegs and a massive show of Garda force. The desperate efforts of the state forces to get out a fraction of the normal deliveries showed how truly the oilworkers earn their so-called 'high Pay'.

But what a shock to Charlie Haughey—the only millionaire ever to worry about 'the future of the trade union movement'—when the ultimate standby weapon of the boss class, next to the repression of the oilworkers, backfired. The use of the Army, with the full co-operation of the oil managements, showed for the fourth time since November 1978 that the Defence Forces are there to defend by force the interests of the bosses when the workers' struggle gets too hot.

But the Esso men's response also showed that it is not only in Poland that workers' unity can paralyse the establishment.

The use of the Army, was not the only issue or point of principle raised in this strike. Now, more than ever the oilworkers, who first accepted productivity deals in this country, realise how much they lost out in jobs and concessions to the companies.

When their productivity deal ran out on the date August 31st, written in black and white in the agreement, the most natural move in the world for any trade unionist was to do what the Texaco workers did! Revert to normal working as they had no agreement to work otherwise and especially as the company would not negotiate a new one.

For that the Texaco workers—and those in all the Dublin depots bar Esso and Ola—were taken off the payroll.

It was the bosses, the state and the union leaders who forced the oilmen onto the centre of the industrial and political stage.

The employers themselves admitted that they would not process the claims until the terms of the National Understanding were known.

Red-tape

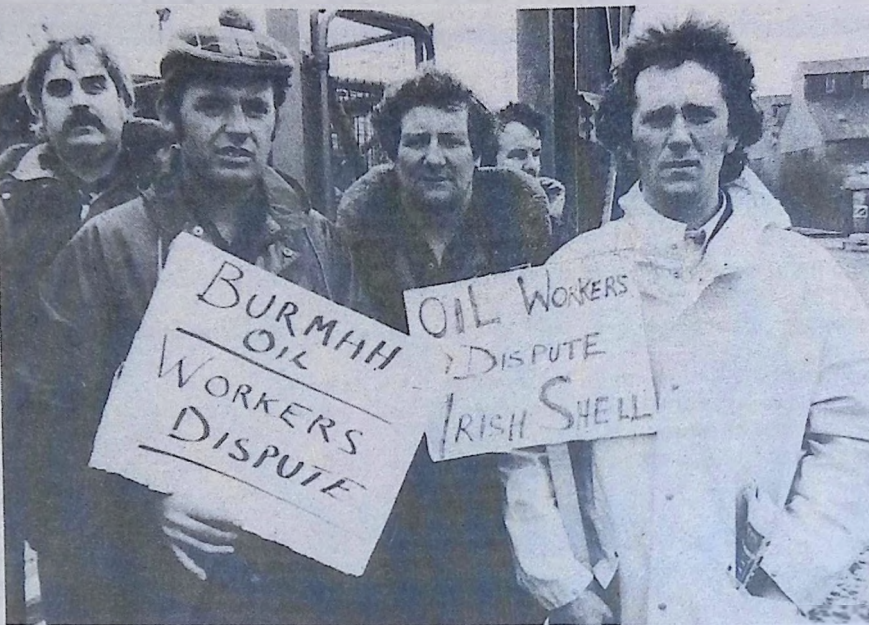
The ICTU told the unions not to lodge claims in breach of the probable terms of a new understanding. No need to tell the ITGWU bureaucrats that! They had enough red-tape in the rules and procedures to ensure that even a return to pre-productivity working when a deal has legally run out will not get the support of the Liberty Hall powers.

That's why Harmon, the National Group Secretary, was slow-handcapped out of a general meeting in Liberty Hall.

But the next stage in the artificial 'tied hands' set-up was that the Labour Court 'could' not intervene in an unofficial strike. That, by the way, is not in the law—it is in the bosses' unwritten law that they won't negotiate, if at all possible, with unofficial rank and file action!

Was it any wonder that the oilworkers decided to stick it out, despite the 'no holds barred' campaign against them in the press.

Despite the media's best efforts—not hindered by the stewards' reluctance to publicise their case—to isolate them as a highly-paid elite who were screwing the



Picture Derek Speirs IFL/Report

punters and wrecking the economy. A higher-paid RTE interviewer bargained a harassed shop steward to 'come forward and reveal your names' as faceless multi-national directors caused petrol queues and job insecurity.

The oilworkers action deserves the support of every trade unionist.

Their claim shows a way through the straitjacket of national wage agreements. That's why the boss had to throw everything at them—plus the fact that they have the power to smash through wage restraint. With organisation and rank and file solidarity ALL trade unionists would have that power.

Army intervention is a threat to all trade unionists. If 'essential services' was the true concern of the state they would have ordered the companies to concede to any of the interim formulas proposed by the shop stewards, or even ordered the Labour Court to intervene long before it did.

'Essential Services' (whatever that means, because from day one of the strike the oilmen delivered to hospitals and emergency services) got less petrol following the military take-over as the troops used (non-productivity) non-pressure hoses, broke pumps and spilled the precious liquid over the Texaco yard.

As the oilworkers introduced the flying picket into Ireland the use of troops spelt out the message of the ruling class: 'thus far you shall go and no further'. But Esso went further, as did the oil clerks.

The backing of wider sections is also needed: dockers, local authority workers, busworkers, ESB power workers—and all trade unionists whose future strike action is threatened by Army intervention.

Because the Army, which is now so obviously a drilled force of uniformed scabs for services 'essential' to the capitalist class, has another more dangerous role to play outside of direct blacklegging: that of naked armed force to suppress strikes—a role presently confined to the naked (unarmed) force of the Gardaí (as the post workers found out).

Union branches, committees and Trades Councils should move to get the troops out of industrial disputes.

Not one gallon of army-delivered oil should be let into a factory gate without a 'down-tools'.

Report by
DES DERWIN

THE WAGES

A tanker driver's basic is £68.35 plus £33.15 for productivity—for which helpers and bonus were abolished, overtime curtailed and shift introduced. Total 'basic': £101.50 per week. Shift allowance (for four ten-hour shifts) £17. Outside of the usual meal allowance (drivers only) the average weekly wage would come to about £125 before tax including an hour or two overtime. Yardmen and craftsmen are also in dispute. To earn the sums quoted in the papers they spend longer hours guiding up to 6,800 gallons of potential flame alone, through the winding roads of Erin.

THE CLAIM

Wage increase for increased productivity, shorter week, higher shift, a weeks holiday for 20 years service, double-time for rest-day working, better pension scheme, increased petrol allowance, total package £30-£40 per week. All items were negotiable.

THE PROFITS

Oil Companies' profits in recent times have increased rather than diminished despite chronic shortages of oil and petrol. In 1979, Texaco's profits rocketed by 101 per cent from £444 million to £848 million.

In the same period, Shell's profits soared by 180.9 per cent from £1,086 million to £3,051 million. And, in the same year, British Petroleum's haul grew by an amazing 265.1 per cent from £444 million to £1,621 million. Their vast worldwide interests and monetary gains leaves them wealthier with larger financial gains than many countries' GNP's and in a position to 'blackmail' governments.

NORWICH UNION

300 CLERICAL workers in Dublin Branches of Norwich Union Insurance Company, have been on official strike for the past 7 weeks.

The strike began when their union, the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, put forward a 10% wage claim to management.

After some beating around the bush by management, the workers decided to take some limited industrial action which took the form of a work to rule, management reaction to this was to suspect some of the militants.

The immediate reaction of the rest of the workers in the

company was to come out on strike in order to get the suspensions lifted.

Since then talks between union and management have been in deadlock.

The strikers response to this was to hold a protest march through Dublin which was very successful.

As we go to press the strike is still going on; some people are passing the picket on Head office in Dawson St, but not at other Branches.

Workers in other Insurance offices are financially supporting the strike.

Other contributions and letters of support should be sent to the ASTMS Head Office.

"An experienced fitter was attempting to re-align a conveyor belt by adjusting the tension screws attached to the return drum of the conveyor which of necessity required to be in motion. It appears that the tool he was using slipped off the screw head and he was jerked on to the bottom belt and was drawn into nip with the return drum sustaining fatal injuries. This accident could have been avoided had a suitable guard been fitted to the return drum as prescribed by legislation . . ."

"During inclement weather, an elderly quarry labourer was cleaning up spillage in the vicinity of the vee belt drive of a stone crusher. His clothing became entangled with the drive unit and he sustained fatal injuries. The drive unit, being dangerous and exposed, was not provided with a guard as prescribed by legislation . . ."

Safety at work

THE DEPARTMENT of Labour "Labour Inspection Report for 1979" includes the report of the industrial inspectors who are responsible for seeing that protective legislation is implemented in Irish factories, mines and quarries.

During 1979, 32 workers were killed and 3,601 injured at work—this includes the seven Irish workers killed in the Whiddy Island disaster—the 43 French sailors were not included at all.

At least Whiddy had the effect of getting the Minister for Labour to implement the Dangerous Substances Act 1972.

This act remained unused for 7 years because of a bureaucratic muddle.

Not that safety legislation offers much protection to Irish workers. The '72 Act, along with the Factories Act '55 and the Mines and Quarries Act '65 form the main protective legislation. But they mainly deal with general regulations rather than specific limitations and so have large loop-holes that employers can escape through report points to the irony that while there were no industrial diseases reported by the employers in 1979, there were 246 occupational injuries benefit claims paid out for industrial diseases.

The law is inadequate mainly because it relies on the employers to report on accidents and dangers. Employers are out to make profits and safety cuts into their profits. So they don't report. Tougher laws can only fail where these present laws fail—in enforcement.

The only defence for us is our

Bad enough as the legislation is, the policing of it is a good deal worse. This is not the fault of the inspectors—as the last three annual reports show—because they are understaffed. There are supposed to be 51 inspectors to cover 20,000 factories, but there are only 45. This has been the case for the last three years—last year they managed to visit 16000 premises!

But this leaves one in five premises not visited and the remainder visited only once in the year.

Even then the inspectors give the employers at least 24 hours notice of an inspection, thus allowing them to cover over obvious dangers. And of the 996 requests for certification of fire escapes, only 30 were completed leaving 966 outstanding for 1979 alone.

The chances of the employers being caught breaking the law are slim. Even when they are caught the courts let them off lightly with average fines of £15 for the 98 convictions in 1970 or £50 in the 15 cases involving death or injury of workers.

The report shows that the inspectors spend much of their time advising on precautions and the use of toxic substances rather than prosecute for such trivial penalties.

And this is the nub of the problem. The safety legislation depends on the employers to report on dangers. It doesn't happen. Even this own organisation. We must ensure that our unions fight for safety at work.

The new Safety in Industry Act provides for elected safety reps. The pressure and the onus must be put on the employer to prove that a job or material is safe before any work is done.

'A useful guide to dangers in work and what to do in your union is The Hazards of Work by Patrick Kinnersly, published by Pluto Press.

TOM O'CONNOR

"A man welding chequer-plate floor sheets supporting steel framework at second floor level, was killed when he stepped back and fell through an opening 31 inches by 31 inches and then through a larger opening on the first floor. His total fall was 36 feet. These openings were neither covered nor fenced off and there was no safety net provided . . ."

"While two brothers were roofing a warehouse with sheets of asbestos one of the sheets broke and they fell some 32 feet to the concrete floor below. One was killed and the other was injured. No ladders, crawling boards or safety nets had been supplied by their employers . . ."

Members of the Socialist Workers Movement sell copies of the WORKER and socialist books and pamphlets every Saturday afternoon out side the G.P.O. in Dublin. Why not stop for a chat?

THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

THE TRADE Union subcommittee of the National H Block Committee is making plans for its national conference to be held in Dublin on Sunday, November 16.

Trade unionists who support the five demands of the prisoners in the H Blocks and Armagh jail are welcome to participate. Trade unionists in Belfast and Derry are actively campaigning on the issue.

The executive committee of the Belfast Trades Council met in special session to discuss the H Block issue. After a close vote in favour of the prisoners demands, the committee agreed to discuss the matter again.

The H Block trade union subcommittee is holding a public meeting on October 16.

The meeting is to be addressed by leading trade unionists.

KEEP THEM OUT

IT'S BEEN eleven years since the RUC was thrown out of the Catholic areas of Belfast and Derry. Now Catholic politicians and professional people have joined the Brits and the RUC in a concerted campaign to 'bring the police back in!' They seem to say forget the sectarianism of 60 years, forget the torture and murders carried out by the RUC. Paddy Devlin, ITGWU organiser, claims the force is impartial. SDLP members say there's just a few rotten apples. Some people look to the police to protect them from increased crime in the working class areas of Belfast. We say keep them out. Murder and torture are not just their history. Murder and torture is still standard practice for the RUC.

Early in 1977 two companies of Brits were deployed on either side of the Andersonstown Road as a police land rover screamed through at top speed a short distance on the road and out to the safety of the motorway. This was the obvious start to the process of ulsterisation by which the British government intends to push the RUC to the fore in the fight against republicans. First they came into the districts with army mobile patrols, usually to serve a summons. Then with army foot patrols. Now they occasionally go up and down the Falls Road on their own.

This year on August 9 and 12 in Belfast and Derry, it was the RUC who went in first to put out the internment anniversary bonfires and stop the protests. The Army had to quickly come to support them against the young rioters. Three people were killed in West Belfast as a result of this joint activity. The Brits and the RUC have probably felt encouraged at the lack of local reaction to these killings.

But the most difficult problem in getting the RUC back in was convincing people living in republican areas to allow them back. After all it's not too convincing to claim the police are accepted if they have to be surrounded by a company of soldiers just to serve a summons. So they had to change the sectarian image of the police in order to gain the confidence of the Catholics. They seem to have won over a section, at least, of the Catholic middle class—not that they take much convincing at the best of times. So, no longer is blatant anti-Catholicism publicly acceptable. The baton charges and shootings that are the history of the RUC were no longer to be standard practice. "I will not tolerate misconduct on the force," says the new chief constable, Jack Herman. And of course they all regret that more

ORMEAU ROAD PROBES RUC KILLING

"IF THERE had been a warning shout, we'd have heard it," testified one of Michael McCartan's friends at a fact-finding tribunal investigating Michael's death.

The tribunal met in a marquee near the spot where Michael McCartan was gunned down by the RUC while he was painting a slogan on a wall last July.

The tribunal consisting of representatives of Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, Association of Legal Justice, Association of Socialist Lawyers and Bernadette McAliskey and Father Denis Faul, heard testimony from people living in Belfast's Ormeau Road area which showed that there had been no violence or demonstrations in the area.

It had been several years since there had been any attacks on the RUC or the Army. This was in answer to the RUC claim that their men had been attacked nearby earlier that day.



Picture Derek Speirs IFL/Report

Catholics don't join the RUC. It is this new look RUC that Paddy Devlin, the Sticks and the middle class point to in their attempt to get the police accepted by local Catholics. At a recent series of meetings the RUC had with professional groups, trade unionists, doctors, teachers, the clergy, businessmen and lawyers were all in agreement about the acceptability of the RUC. The main problem facing the professional types was HOW to help the RUC come back in. Among the suggestions made were that visits by uniformed police to Catholic schools should be increased; teachers could tactfully express their support for the police. Trade unionists wanted help from the RUC in resisting dissidents who raised repression and H Block. But has the RUC really changed? No way. They have new, non-sectarian leaders. Undoubtedly they are better trained and equipped. And they are more skilled at the use of propaganda. At a recent

Ormeau Road demonstration over the killing of Michael McCartan, the police waited until the TV cameras and press went away before they moved in and physically moved men, women and children who were blocking the road. The recent conviction of RUC sectarian murderer William McCaughey is used as an example of the new intent to punish all wrongdoers. But what about the ones that were freed? McCaughey was convicted of the murder of a Catholic grocer and the kidnapping of a Catholic priest. Three other RUC men, part of McCaughey's murder gang, were convicted of arms and explosives charges. But they were given suspended sentences and were allowed to leave the courtroom free men. That's why it is disgusting for people like Paddy Devlin to tell us to support the RUC.

Have they changed? Young Michael McCartan was gunned down on August 9 while painting wall

slogans. Will the policeman who pulled the trigger be 'punished'? We doubt it, since he was put right back on patrol in the area after he murdered McCartan.

"Forgot"

Have they changed? How many men and women went through the RUC torture centre in Gough barracks and the notorious Castlereagh? Numerous reports have shown that 80% of the men and women in the H Blocks and Armagh jail are there because they were forced to sign statements by the brutal members of the RUC.

In his report in September the new chief constable "forgot" to mention violence carried out by Loyalist groups such as the UDA, though it is well known that they are responsible for the killing of Miriam Daly and John Turnley and recent bombings of republican buildings in West Belfast. His report did concen-

Witnesses testified that the nearest attacks that day were blast bombs thrown in the Short Strand, several miles away on the other side of the River Lagan.

When last seen by his friends, Michael was carrying a tin of paint and a brush and testimony showed that the night was bright enough to clearly see that the brush was not a gun!

Hundreds of local residents crowded into the marquee to hear the testimony.

But notably absent from the tribunal were the local politicians and priests.

Local SDLP councillor Alistair McDonnell, who did a lot of talking to the press when Michael was shot, hasn't been seen in the area since.

Father Newberry, local parish priest, did not reply to the Committee's invitation, nor did he put in an appearance.

Alliance Party members who were invited preferred to give their evidence to the RUC.

Paddy Devlin couldn't make it to the Tribunal either.

The work of putting on the tribunal was carried entirely by the people of the Ormeau Road area.

They held the tribunal in a rented marquee because they were not able to get anywhere else to meet.

A local community centre stood unused a few yards away from the marquee.

The management committee had said no. The local Catholic Church wouldn't give them room.

Another youth centre threw the committee out at the last minute after hearing about the Tribunal on the radio.

While the Tribunal was hearing the evidence, the SPG and the green undercover police van from which Michael was shot were patrolling a few streets away.

The policeman who killed him is still on active duty.

The police are dragging their heels on this investigation. Finally this week they passed papers on the case to the DPP, but they were returned with a request for further information.

The committee is demanding an independent public enquiry into McCartan's death.

They also want the immediate suspension of the policeman who killed Michael.

But evidence given at the Tribunal and the feelings of the people from the area show much more. There can never be a welcome for the RUC in these areas.

The Provisional IRA tried a programme of kneecapping young people. That didn't stop them.

Bringing the police back in won't stop them either. Policing doesn't cure the social evils that produce poverty and crime. Only a socialist revolution will do that.

Bringing the police back in will help defeat the war against imperialism. That's why the British want them back. Policing is a normal activity of state. That's what the H Block protest is all about. The Brits would like to have 'ordinary' criminals and 'ordinary' police. They wouldn't look so bad in the eyes of the world if they were able to bring their troops back home. So they think.

What can we expect if the RUC were allowed back in? More killings like that of Michael McCartan, more attacks on all protesters, more sectarian attacks and more torture.

SO LET'S KEEP THEM OUT.