

THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

North and South FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK!

On Saturday 13th March, Trade Unionists from various centres throughout Ireland met in the ATGWU Hall in Marlboro' St. to launch what could be the fightback against unemployment—a People's March for Decent Jobs. Sponsorship from several trade union branches has already been given as have commitments from delegates at the conference such as Waterford Trades Council. Unemployed groups throughout the country are to seek support from their branches for the march to take place in early July.

It's up to workers in general to recognise that unemployment is not just a social disease but a tactic being used by employers and the government

to lower wage demands and thereby lower the living standards of the entire working class. It is those trade unionists who recognise this fact who are working to make this People's March for Decent Jobs a success with the political climate which prevails we could not have picked a better time. Donations, messages of support etc to: People's March Organising Committee, c/o ATGWU, Marlboro St, Dublin 1.

Charlie Nolan, UCATT
Shop Steward

PRSI:

MAKE THE

BOSSSES PAY!

During the last few weeks there have been many protests against the increased PRSI levy. It started with Aer Lingus workers walking out and was followed by one day stoppages at Semperit tyres in Ballyfermot, Fords of Cork, and many others around the country.

The protest area about the increase in the levy from 4.75% to

7.5% from April, which means a pay cut of about £3 a week for the average worker. The Pay Related Social Insurance is made up of two parts, 6 1/2% of incomes up to £9,500 per year plus 1% on total income. It is unfair because it hits the lower paid far harder than the higher paid.

A worker on the average industrial wage of £6,000 per year will pay £450 (7.5 per cent of income) while a

managing Director on £20,000 per annum will pay £813 per annum (4.06% of income). The more you earn the less you pay as a proportion of your income.

The government claims that these increases are necessary in order to pay for higher social welfare benefits. But why should working people pay? The multi-nation-

als in Ireland pay no tax at all. Even local industrial companies pay only 10% tax. There is no wealth tax on the likes of the McGraths or the Smurfits, who have amassed millions over the years. The money is there to pay for a free comprehensive welfare system, but none of the politicians have been prepared to stand up to their friends on the multinationals, and big business.

It is important that

the protest by workers are aimed where they belong, against the government and the rich, rather than those on the dole.

Both the Waterford and Dublin Trades Councils have planned action and the theme of the May Day March in Dublin is to, protest against the increased PRSI.

Already the media

and trade union bosses are trying to channel the protest into safe areas such as talks between the ICTU and the government or Sunday morning marches through Dublin.

One thing the tax marches taught us two years ago was that they will only listen to us to when we walk out of factories.

Then as now we say, Make the Bosses Pay. Tax the greedy not the needy. Paul O'Brien

'We have won the battle but lost the war'

by MOLLY O DUFFY

The recent High Court Case on married women's dole has led to another 'Irish solution to an Irish problem'. The story began when Roisin Conroy's pay-related benefit ran out (3 weeks earlier than if she had been single or a man). She applied as a matter of course, for unemployment assistance. She was told that she was not eligible for it as she was married with no dependent children. Such women were specifically excluded under Section 136 (d) of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 1981. Whether you are separated as Ms Conroy is, or even divorced, was irrelevant.

Ms Conroy decided to take the State to Court to prove that this section of the Act, which discriminates clearly against

married women, was unconstitutional. The state, in the form of Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Eileen Desmond (supposedly committed to equality for women) decided to contest the challenge on the grounds, simply, that she should be claiming maintenance from her husband.

A group of women came together to campaign around the case and highlight the ludicrous situation that all married women are regarded as dependents of their husbands.

Married women have become so used to being refused the dole

that they have given up asking why or putting pressure on the system by appealing; the means test, unavailability for work and the notorious Section 136 are trotted out daily by Social Welfare Officers in their attempts to save the state money and to keep married

women off the register of unemployed.

While the Women's Campaign for a unified Social Welfare Code was trying to raise consciousness and money, the state, in the form of Michael Woods, was having a rethink. It's not that they remembered that they have to bring in equality in the Social Welfare Code by 1984 according to an EEC directive. (Sure they won't sidestep that too if they can get away with it?).

It's not that they decided that married women had been getting a raw deal. No: they were afraid that the case would be won and that this would call into question the constitutionality of the whole Social

Welfare Code. But how to stop the case without actually giving married women what they wanted? The dilemma was easily solved: they decided to give assistance to *separated* women. This would remove Roisin Conroy's complaint and prevent her from continuing with the case. Thus the question of married women's dole in general could not be discussed by the courts.

The case was heard in the morning of Friday 26th March and adjourned on a technicality. That afternoon a special meeting of the Senate met to ratify the new measure on separated women. An attempt to have it extended to all married women was defeated while a picket of 50 demanded the right of married women to work on the dole. It is highly likely

that when the case comes up again (on 15th May) it will be discussed on the grounds that Roisin Conroy will be eligible for assistance under the Separated Women's Clause.

This clause is a victory for the campaign, in that it introduces a new category of marital status in the Social Welfare Code: separated. But we have won the battle and lost the war. The state will still get away with refusing assistance to married women who are not separated. The women's Campaign for a Unified Social Welfare Code will continue to agitate for full equality for women in the Social Welfare Code. The campaign can be contacted at 189, Gracepark Heights, D9.

only increase their confidence to have a go at others. It is a question of not just taking up this murder investigation but also of organising politically to end the 1861 Act which outlaws male homosexuality. That act has rightly been called a 'blackmailers' charter'. And the blackmailers also come dressed in blue uniforms.

Gay and suspect

Can you imagine a murder case where a whole community is put on the suspect list? That, to take an example, all the Protestants of the South were visited or arrested simply because one of their number had been murdered. Not exactly the most scientific form of police detective work.

members to co-operate with the police. The existence of an active social scene was seen by many gays as akin to official acceptance by the state.

It is vital that all socialists and trade unionists come to the assistance of the gay community. Any strengthening of police powers to harass minority groups can

Yet that is exactly what is happening in the Charles Self case. Charles Self was gay. He was murdered one night in January. Since then over 400 gay people around the country have been visited by the police. Many have been taken to Pearse St Garda Station. Some have been illegally photographed and had their finger prints taken.

The police explanation is simple. It is necessary, they say, to eliminate them from the list of suspects. Using that pretext they have engaged in questioning about the individual's sexual activity. They have resorted to blackmail and threats to discover the names and addresses of other gays. Those who haven't been so co-operative have been told to expect a police visit to their workplace or to have their parents informed of their sexual orientation.

The police are using the case to build up a profile of the gay community in Ireland. Gays are responsible for crime and moral degeneration, is how one of their spokesmen put it. Over the past few years three gay clubs have been opened in Dublin. Other regular gay meeting places have been established in Cork, Limerick and Galway. The gay scene has developed—despite the repressive Catholic atmosphere.

The Garda are now trying to catch up on years of harassment. The attack on their community has come as a shock to many gays. The National Gay Federation, for example, originally asked its

NO to the amendment

If you were a school child in Ireland you would have seen some pretty horrible slides and leaflets over the past few months. They show fully formed fetuses in rubbish bins and bloody embryos inside the womb. Your first and gruesome introduction, in a curriculum devoid of sexual education, to the whole murky area of sex.

They are what the 'Pro Life' groups and the Society of the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) have been putting around, unopposed, Irish schools. They are part of a concerted organised campaign of the 'anti-abortionists'. Their latest coup, with the backing of people in high and Catholic places, is the declaration by Charlie Haughey that a referendum to outlaw totally abortion in Ireland will take place at the end of the year.

Abortion, as the 1861 Offences against the Person Act makes clear, is already an imprisonable crime—for both the women involved and the procurer. But quoting a case in Britain in 1938 where a doctor was acquitted after performing an abortion on a raped woman, the Pro Life group claims that an amendment to the constitution would block any such loophole. Taking this example they are clear to stress that a woman who has been raped should under no circumstances have an abortion—and also that such a raped woman who has an

abortion should, on top of all her suffering, go to prison as well.

And Charlie Haughey has been only too pleased to take up their calls. What better, with a nearly hung Dail, increasing economic crisis and crippling unemployment, than a gung-ho catholic crusade that talks of invincible morality? But the blinkers on and the other problems will go away—especially if he gets a resounding yes, and by the same token a vote of confidence to Fianna Fail. Crusades always have a habit of flying in the face of reality.

400 Irish women every week go to England for abortions. Contraception in Ireland is expensive and dependent for the most part on the whims of doctors and chemists. Unmarried mothers receive little state support and all the stigmas. These realities the referendum not only ignores but also hypocritically transfers the whole problem to the realm of moral crime.

But the argument against this referendum goes further than this. The proposed amendment represents a real attack on women. Mounted by the most right wing elements of the catholic church, it seeks to force on women the exclusive role of motherhood. They want to quash forever a woman's right to decide herself whether she has children. but

turn a blind eye to the women who have the means and money to procure abortions outside Ireland. it is a vicious hypocrisy at the cost of the most basic democratic right—the right to choose.

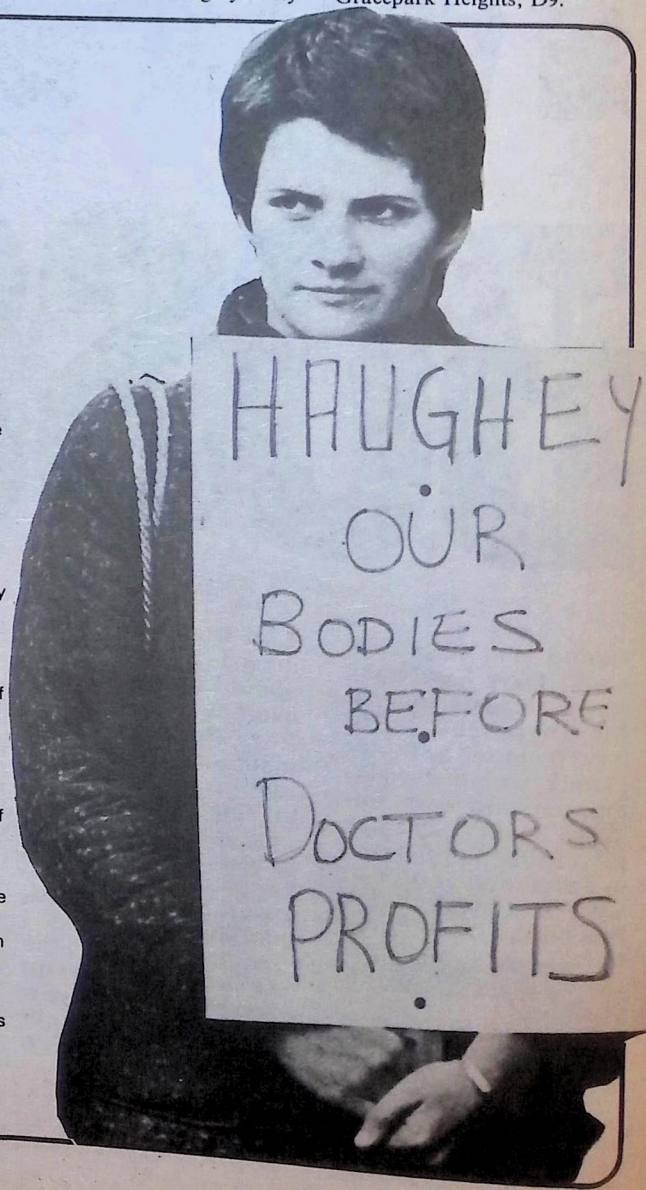
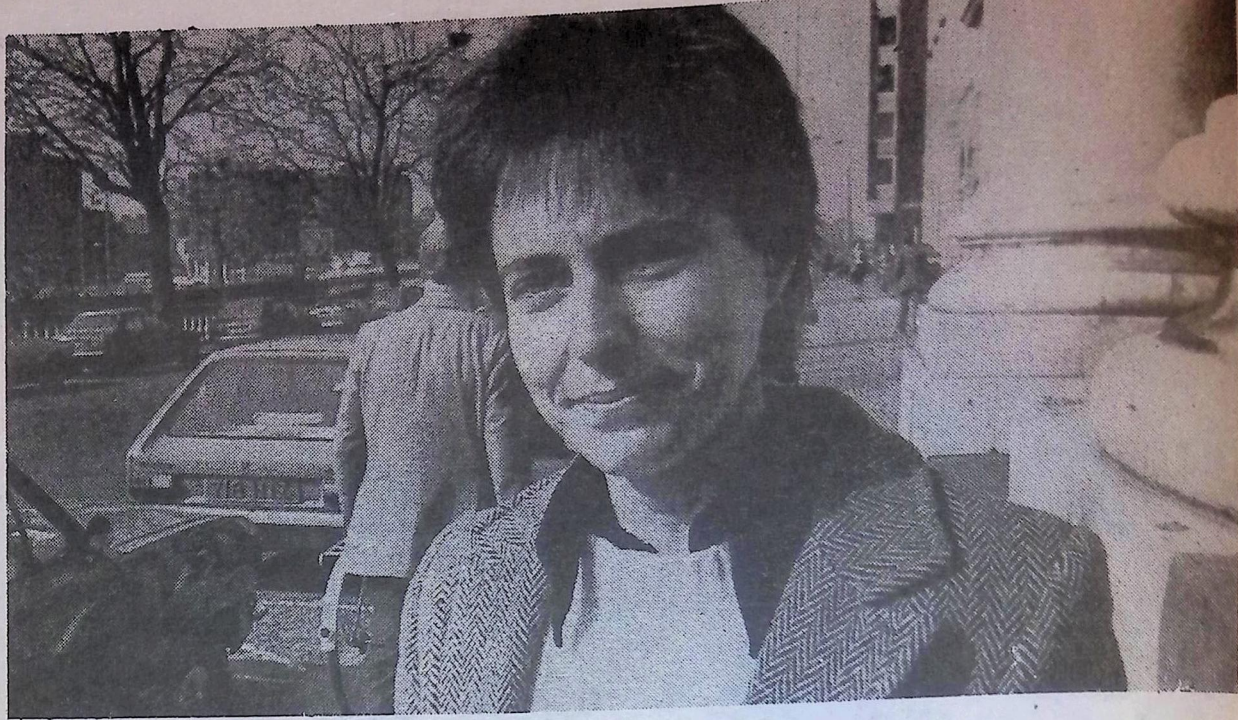
If this amendment goes through, the existing contraceptive clinic, women's clinics and referral clinics will, in the climate of clampdown, be undoubtedly outlawed. The service that they are forced to provide, in the absence of the state providing it, will be unavailable and contraception itself become an inaccessible and expensive black market.

And worse, a 'yes' to the referendum will score a victory for the most reactionary elements in this society. It will return squarely to the Church a role not of individual conscience but another arm of the state.

The newly set up Anti Amendment campaign will be holding a public meeting in Dublin at the end of April. We need to counter the barrage of the so called Pro Lifeists and let our arguments be heard. Many are not prepared to be used as a moral majority in the hands of right wingers.

We, as socialists, should join with them to make the 'no' to this amendment as massive as we can. Our future, both as women and socialists, depends on it.

Marnie Holborow
Dublin



WELL AT LEAST
ITS SAFE FOR
DEMOCRACY NOW!



Falkland Islands

A war to save Thatchers' face

The British are going to war to defend their Empire. As we go to press the British Navy is preparing to launch an attack on the Falkland Islands and the British press is full of patriotic hysteria.

Barbara Wilson

The Falkland Islands and South Georgia formed the largest single chunk of the British Empire... apart from Northern Ireland. They were seized by the British in 1833.

The Argentinians have always claimed them as part of their national territory and on Friday 2 April they seized them back.

It is obvious that Irish socialists have no interest in maintaining the last vestiges of Britain's Imperial past. The marines whom Thatcher will land tomorrow in the Antarctic are the same marines who were yesterday shooting down Irish people

fighting for their own freedom.

Yet the Southern Irish Government, in common with all the major European governments, has pledged full support for Britain including economic sanctions against Argentina.

Half of the Falkland Islands are owned by the Falkland Islands Company, a subsidiary of the giant Coalite group. They own half the Island's sheep and most of the 1,800 islanders work for them.

The Islanders live in tied

cottages and when they are too old to work they are forced to leave the Islands.

The Falklanders are not a nation; they are a tiny colonial settler population. All of the talk by British ministers and their allies here about respecting their wishes are sheer hypocrisy. This is the same government which has tried for years to force the islanders to join Argentina and which cares nothing for them now

It is a government which is responsible for the sectarian Northern State.

Why then is the Southern Government supporting this imperial adventure? Because they too share a vested interest in the world order and when the chips are down they find they have more in common with the toy town Admiral Nelsons of Britain than with working people of Ireland, Argentina or anywhere else.

Argentina has a perfect right to the Falkland Islands but the military dictatorship of General Galtieri is just as cynical as the British Tories. They and successive British governments—Labour as well as Tory—have traded happily in military hardware. Half of the current Argentine navy was built in Britain.

Galtieri and his torturers have presided over 12,000 murders of their opponents since they seized power in a coup in 1976.

Galtieri is using popular enthusiasm for the recovery of Las Islas Malvinas, as they are known in Argentina, to head off rising working class opposition to his regime. He occupied the islands just four days before a massive trade union demonstration was due to take place.

So far, he has succeeded; all but a very few extreme left-wingers have fallen into line behind the generals.

The best way to ensure that Argentine workers break with their class enemies is for the issue of the islands to be settled quickly. The defeat of British imperialism will not only be a defeat for the rulers of Britain but also for their counterparts elsewhere.

Despite all of this hypocrisy and war-mongering, there is an opposition to the war in Britain. At present it is only the extreme left which is prepared to argue that THATCHER is the main enemy.

As world capitalism moves further into crisis, predatory wars occur with the inevitable loss of workers' lives.

The 'victory' over South Georgia may help Thatcher's credibility but it's no help to the millions of unemployed and sooner or later it is that army she will have to face.

REDS

When I first heard that Hollywood was making a 50 million dollar epic on the life of John Reed the American communist, I was very sceptical indeed as to its outcome.

I had fears of a remake of 'Gone with the wind', only this time with the Russian Revolution as the background.

The I heard that Warren Beatty was to play Reed. Now a quick look back at Beatty films to date reveals a committed and talented artist.

But with 50 million or so of Paramount dollars riding on the outcome I still had strong doubts that they might push the media-created image of Beatty as a charismatic stud, and in the process trivialise everything John Reed stood for.

So it was in this frame of mind that I went along to see the movie. As I sat through it I realised my fears were completely unfounded. It is artistically a very important film. But more important its an honest chronicle of the life and times of John Reed, a radical American journalist, who specialised in covering political upheaval and industrial disputes, including the activities of the Wobblies—The Industrial Workers of the World—the Mexican rebellion led by Pancho Villa, and finally the Russian Revolution of 1917.

But what comes across very strongly in the film is not just Reed the radical reporter, but Reed the activist who was directly involved in the struggles he reported. This led him to be

in Russia for the great Bolshevik revolution of 1917, side by side with the masses not just as a reporter, but as a fellow revolutionary socialist.

His reports of the great events provided the material for his book '10 Days that Shook the world' which Lenin described as 'A truthful and most vivid exposition'.

He became actively involved in the formation of the American Communist Labour Party. His view that for real success the revolution must be spread, comes across very well in the film, and as recent events in Poland have shown, you have got to have the international support of workers to break the hold of both state capitalist and capitalist bosses.

So it was great to see one of the most honest political films to come out of Hollywood. Alongside the political honesty there's a committed attempt to draw communists as real and sympathetic characters. You get the feeling—quite rightly—that all the arguments are necessary.

Revolution is a serious business. It brings out the problems of Reed's personal life conflicting with struggle for socialism. It shows him facing the arguments of his friend and fellow revolutionary Emma Goldman and spelling out clearly the importance of the Bolshevik Party to the success of the revolution. It shows his difference with Zinoviev and Radek in the Comintern but through it all never losing his commitment to the Bolshevik Party and their vision of a world run for human need and not where people

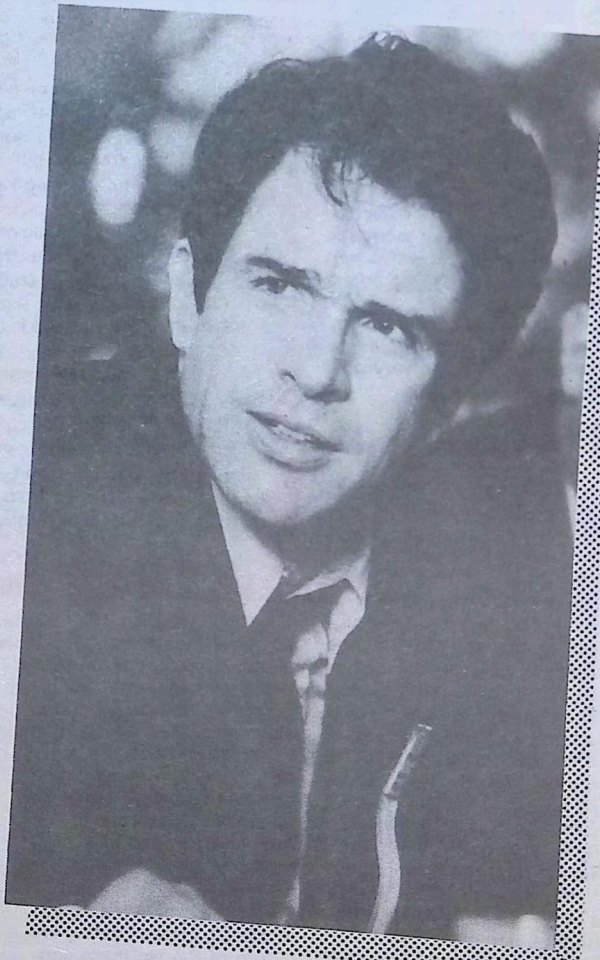
starve to maintain bosses' profits or die in their millions when bosses decide to have a war over their profits.

All this is played against a background of a fairly straightforward love story. In fact it reads like script straight from the Hollywood conveyer belt. Reed marries writer Louise Bryant—played very sensitively by Dianne Keaton. They constantly fight about the time he devotes to his revolutionary work. She has an affair with writer Eugene O'Neill—Jack Nicholson at his cynical best—but returns to Reed and becomes closer to his political ideas.

Towards the end when Reed is captured by Finnish White Guards and held in jail, she journeys half-way across the world to be with her man and they are reunited just before he dies. Sounds real corny, but this is a very well-researched film and that appears to be just the way it happened.

My main fault with the film is the rather drawn out over statement of the love story, in contrast to the sometimes rather scrappy shots of political debates and activities. But maybe that just my revolutionary socialism getting in the way of my romanticism.

So all in all it's a film that should not be missed. The scenes of the October Revolution, the anti-war movement in the US the feeling of power as the masses march on the Winter Palace, should move anyone with any sort of socialist ideas. Warren Beatty's portrayal of



Reed is his best acting to date.

As he develops the character you forget you are watching Beatty, but rather a man called Reed with all his integrity and commitment coming through, which is what acting is all about.

Reds is a triumph for Warren Beatty. I never thought I would sit through a three hour film from Hollywood that has the potential power to change ordinary people's ideas about communism.

Beatty's next film is to be on the live of Howard

Hughes—the American multi-millionaire and recluse. It should be interesting to compare Hughes who personified capitalism with the revolutionary life of Reed. Howard Hughes ended his days, a lunatic with billions of dollars the product of a lunatic system. John Reed, on the other hand died after a lifetime of struggles in the interests of humanity. Beatty's next film will be showing us the other side of the coin.

David Byrne

H-BLOCK CAMPAIGN

It is a workers struggle

Over 400 activists involved in the H Block Armagh campaign packed the West County Hotel on the 14th March, in an attempt to pick up the pieces as the campaign entered its lowest period since its foundation.

The result after a long list of Resolutions and speeches was a decision to drop any attempt to expand the campaign, but rather to continue on for six months with commemorations for the dead hunger strikers.

Most of the people who came to the meeting felt that the H Block campaign was finished, yet many had come to reactivate the campaign towards a different direction. The direction to be taken which was supported by SWM activists was to tackle the root cause of the prisoners' plight and all violence and oppression in the six counties — British imperialism and its state forces.

The SWM argued to a slowly built British withdrawal campaign which concentrated on the Labour and trade Union movement could have given a lead and propagandised on the real role of the British army in the six counties.

The H Block-Armagh Campaign was a massive campaign involving over 250 action groups throughout the country. It was an inter-

national campaign and it was militant, but its failure right from the start as its liberal-nationalist approach to the struggle.

The statement issued by the Republican prisoners after the ending of the hunger strikes showed the failures of the campaign. The manoeuvres of the Catholic priests and bishops had put enormous pressure on the relatives of the hunger strikers and attempted at all times to demoralise the campaign. The middle-class nationalists in the South and the SDLP politicians in the North, used their influence to defeat the campaign rather than lead it to victory. Those sections of society however were to be wooed at all times throughout the campaign by the National Committee. Many activists are now saying it will never happen again. Never again will we depend on the Church and Fianna Failers in our struggle. The problem is however that it can very well happen again.



As long as bourgeois nationalist ideas continue to dominate the anti-imperialist movement. Real lasting victories against imperialism will not come about.

Those who view the struggle to dismantle the Orange State as a fight by the 'whole' Irish people against the British presence are making a grave mistake. The 'whole' Irish people as was clear during the H Block campaign, includes all classes. Exploiter and exploited, right wing or left wing, provided they are sympathetic to the national cause. This is a view held even by the Republican left.

To combat these ideas as fellow anti-imperialists is one of the hardest tasks for a small revolutionary left group. At conference after conference, it is in a minority. Yet the lessons of the H Block campaign justifies the minority position taken at conference after conference. The only section of society which has the interest in taking the struggle forward against the British presence and its sectarian state is the organised working class. That is not to say however, that the working class particularly in the South, is to be used as a battering ram to activate

Workers, Republic and the War of Independence

The period of the war of Independence (1918-1922), and indeed the whole period from 1916 to the end of the Civil War (1923), is generally viewed as the glory days of the national struggle. The fact that the class struggle also reached its highest point at this time, and overlapped with the struggle for an independent Republic, has been wiped out of the history books.

The Labour movement under the leadership of the executive of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party played a major role in the struggle for independence. A substantial contribution was given through the general strikes against conscription (1918), against British transport permits, in support of the Mountjoy Jail prisoners and against the transport of munitions (all in 1919). The Limerick 'soviet' (also of 1919) against British militarism, initiated by the Limerick Trades Council, was a fantastically heroic fight.

It was the working class and the rural masses who provided the fighting strength of the guerrilla war. It is often overlooked, too, that the 'War of Independence' was not just a military struggle but a mass struggle involving monster meetings, huge demonstrations and systematic civil non-cooperation.

The trade union movement grew from 111,000 in 1914 to 300,000 in 1920. The tragedy was that the labour leaders declined to take the leadership of the independence movement, especially by standing down in the 1918 general election, and handed it over to the Sinn Fein and the IRA.

The Republicans' policy was of course that 'Labour must Wait'. The workers became the backbone not the head, of the rebellion.

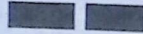
But despite that, workers small farmers and landless labourers, at local and workplace level, took independent action of a revolutionary nature on their social and class demands. This movement was not unconnected with the

National War as many workers saw the struggle for the Republic as offering new hope of a better life. The agitation of landless labour and small farmers for division of the big estates, which began in parts of the country, had a direct connection to the war against Britain in that most of the landlords were Anglo-Irish or English, who supported the British connection.

But there was more happening in the world at this time than the Irish upheaval. In Russia, Germany, Poland and Italy workers were in revolt. The inspiration of the Russian Revolution reached these shores too.

In the spring of 1920 land seizures began in the West. The Dail condemned the seizures and used its armed forces to end them. Peadar O'Donnell said later 'Many an IRA man in jail in '22 and '23 cursed his use as a defender of pure ideals to patrol estate walls, enforce decrees for rent, arrest and even order out of the country leaders of local land agitations.'

In Wicklow at a later stage a landlord handed a pistol to a Republican policeman for the purposes of defending his property. How easy it would have been to break the workers from the middle class leadership of Sinn Fein if only there had been a workers' party to offer political leadership all along. But the connection with Connolly's ideas and practice had been broken.



In May striking ITGWU members of Knocklong creamery, Co Limerick, seized control of the plant. They ran up the red flag and continued operations, declaring 'We make butter, not profits'. They called on the trade unions to buy their products and the Belfast Co-operative Society agreed to do so. At Arigna mines a year later, ITGWU miners were faced with a pay cut and seized the mine.

The Truce of July 1921 brought a host of land and workplace seizures in the period. In Cork the harbour board was taken over and in Drogheda a foundry was seized. The Rotunda in Dublin was occupied by a group of unemployed for three days. There was a series of seizures in the South (mainly in Tipperary and Limerick, with the occupation of the Cleaves Company in Bruree, whose workers continued production, being the most famous). In December 1921, a Munster Council of Action was set up. In May 1922 'soviets' were organised in a dozen Munster factories.

There was some little involvement in this by the new Communist Party, which began in 1921, when a pro-Bolshevik group took control of, and renamed, the Socialist Party of Ireland. But the seizures movement was largely led by an amazing trio of ITGWU organisers called McGrath, Hedley and Dowling who blazed through the South between 1920 and 1923.

The Sinn Fein government in December 21st 1921 ordered the Republican police and troops to expel workers who had occupied a plant. Even Constance Markievicz, the Minister for Labour, although she sympathised with the workers, regarded the movement as a danger 'which will disrupt the Republican cause'.

The class struggle raged on during the Civil War. The remoteness of that war from the direct struggle of workers is well illustrated by the incident when a group of workers were inside a creamery in Tipperary town while the Free State and Republican forces fought it out around the building.

This was the premises of Messrs Cleaves Bro who owned the Bruree mills and bakery seized the previous year. In 1922 a group, referring to themselves as Communists were active in Tipperary seeking the establishment of 'Workers' Councils' under the Red Flag. When they took over the Cleaves creameries in Tipperary town, issued their own

nationalist demands. That simply doesn't work, as the H Block campaign showed. It is only by seeing the working class as a class which must fight its immediate bosses and their spokesmen, and then go on from here to understand the role of the British army and the RUC etc, that we will make progress.

Workers have a class interest in understanding the nature of the Northern conflict, but will not move against the forces of imperialism unless anti-imperialists are seen to be anti-capitalist and fight on issues facing the working class.

The Republican argument even in its left form offers at present, little to Southern workers. Unless it begins to see and argue that the removal of the British Army and the ending of the sectarian state is necessary not because 'all' Irish people need to be united (including the bosses) but rather that a fight needs to be waged by the workers of the South

against their own bosses, and the struggle is part and parcel (indeed the main reason) why the British maintain the Northern state.

They maintain the State in the interests of the capitalist class, in Britain and Ireland. It is not a question therefore of asking the southern working class to help in the fight for a united Ireland, but rather at all times fighting within the Labour and trade union movement on class issues in the struggle against capitalism.

It is only then can we explain why the troops are on the streets in the North. We must be consistent, on wage struggles, on redundancies, on women's rights and all issues which show up the contradictions within capitalism.

Then we can begin to build a truly socialist and anti-imperialist movement. There are no stages in the struggle. We are either socialists and fight for the workers interests, or we are not.

Dermot Byrne



SOLIDARNOŚĆ: FROM GDANSK TO MILITARY REPRESSION

On December 13 1981 Jaruzelski's army moved in to crush Solidarność. The most powerful workers' movement in Europe since the war was halted in its tracks. How did it happen?

In this first full length analysis written since the military take-over Colin Barker and Kara Weber trace the unfolding crisis and the debates it provoked in Solidarność. Drawing on a variety of original Polish material they argue that real revolutionary possibilities existed but were only realised by the radical wing of Solidarność too late.

160 pages
£2.50 plus 50p postage
from
41 Herberton Park, Rialto,
Dublin 9

icans



Jim Larkin in O'Connell St. 1923

cheques and stirred up the unemployed to violent action, the farmers appealed to the Anti-Treatyite forces. Shots were exchanged and 'order' partially restored. When pro-Treaty troops advanced on the town the anti-Treatyites set fire to the Cleaves factory and blew up the water mains to stop the fire being put out.

As at national level neither side were particularly attractive to the allegiance of workers in struggle. Free State troops drove workers from plants on several occasions.

In Leitrim the Direct Action Committee led evicted tenant farmers in the re-occupation of their land. The IRA complained of 'evil disposed and unauthorised persons' and the Free State Troops arrested their leader Jim Gralton. However the Republican cause had an indirect connection with the workers' cause and it was no accident that the defeat of the Republican forces coincided with the end of the movement of direct action and the great working class upsurge since 1911.

The last of the occupations was that of the Cork Flour Mills in February 1923. The Civil War ended in May. In July an employer's announcement that wages would be reduced led to a strike of dockers and transport workers in Dublin and Cork, led by Larkin who had returned from the US. A violent farmer—farm labourer conflict throughout the summer in County Waterford ended in defeat for the labourers.

After the August 1923 elections the government reduced old age blind pensions and teachers salaries. Then it cut government employee wages and stopped unemployed money not covered by insurance. The counter-revolution was well under way.

Lack of labour leadership, economic crisis, the defeat of the republican forces all contributed to the ending of the great working class upsurge of 1911-1923. The defeat of the IRA gave the Free State government the political power and confidence to attack massively the living standards of the workers. The middle class republic had been achieved. It could offer nothing to the working class but emigration and poverty.

The reason is simple. Working people were the backbone of the struggle. But they had not taken the political leadership to direct that struggle into the fight to root out capitalism itself. The missing link was a strong revolutionary workers' party.

Des Derwin

The Left in the Dail

TIMES change. Socialism no longer means the Labour Party. There is now in the South an organised political force to the left of them.

In a situation where there has never been a Labour government, where those on the left have been represented previously by political eccentrics like Noel Browne, it has a wide open field of appeal.

The emergence of the Stickies, of Kemmy's, SDP and Gregory has not coincided with an upturn in working class struggle. Quite the reverse. The last two years have seen the bosses drop the facade of indexation in National Wage Agreements and go for open wage cuts... By and large, wages have been held to the 15% wages norm. The new reformism has emerged in a period of defeat.

But the growth of Southern capitalism in the last decade has also prepared the ground. There is now a much more numerically strong industrial working class. A working class that has expanded through the introduction of the multinationals and native Irish capitalism. However, that expansion has not yet led to a growth in industrial strength. The level of strikes in IDA factories is abysmally low compared to that of workers in the public sector. The small size of the factories, their location in rural areas, and the feelings we are at their mercy account for the weakness.

When victories cannot be won on the shop floor through industrial strength, then the tendency is to rely on political representation. Take PRSI and PAYE. Every increase in that form of robbery should be met by a push to raise wages. When the movement is weak, though, it relies on one-off demonstrations of strength to impress the politicians.

The problem, though, is that the Dail socialists cannot do the trick. They have already moved too far to the right.

In the first place, their base is purely an electoral one. All of them have adapted to the patronage system of Irish politics. Electorally, they succeed through a mixture of populism and fixit merchants. Even in the case of the

SFWP there is a real distinction between their electoral politics and their hard core internal Stalinism. In Tony Gregory's case, it is taken to the extreme. Privately, he has 'views on the National Question', on abortion and even on socialism. Increasingly he has less room to express those views. His job is to fix it on a far grander scale—not just for individuals, but the north inner city.

Secondly, their politics has led them to sell out their independence as working class representatives. It wasn't only Lenin and Marx who insisted that socialists do not support or participate in bourgeois government. Even the Labour Party of '68 knew it. The strategy of the then Labour Party was to force the main bosses' parties together by refusing to vote for either. But look at the new Dail left. Each one has their particular view of who is the more progressive bosses' party. They have all voted for the budgets.

Now the last budget increased PSRI. It was supported by Tony Gregory and the SFWP (Kemmy didn't—his favourite party, Fine Gael, was opposing it.) It is only now when workers are moving themselves through industrial action that they have got second thoughts.

Thirdly, Kemmy and the SFWP see the main enemy in Ireland as the paramilitaries. They oppose the struggle against the Northern state and will therefore increasingly support repression to deal with it. They will align with more right wing forces to bring that about. Kemmy's own party, the DSP, disagree on everything else but opposition to republicanism. You don't have to be a socialist to join, just a rabid anti-provo.

When the workers' movement is weak, the socialist TDs will be looking to for political clout. But once the class is moving—whether on its economic struggle or in support of the fight against the Northern state—those same representatives will stand as an obstacle to its advance.

The forces of revolutionary socialism are living in Ireland today. They cannot presently offer a viable alternative to the Dail left. But they can do one thing: they can build in the workplace, to encourage the fightback that is necessary. They can agitate on issues like employment by supporting the People's March for Decent Jobs. They can connect the struggle against the Northern state with class politics.

by Kieran Allen

What we stand for

The Socialist Workers Movement is a revolutionary workers movement organisation which aims to organise the working class in the struggle for power and for the overthrow of the existing social order.

The system under which we live, capitalism, is based on production for profit and not for human need. It is a system that leads to poverty and war, racial and sexual oppression.

Only the working class can destroy capitalism and build a socialist society based on workers control of production. Our political action to prepare the working class for that is based on the following principles:

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

There is no parliamentary road to socialism as the left in the Dail believe. The system cannot be changed by piecemeal reform. The state machinery—the courts, parliament, the police and army—are used to maintain the dominance of the ruling class. The real power lies in the boardrooms of big business.

We stand for a workers revolution which produces a different and more democratic society—one based on councils of delegates from workplaces and localities who are democratically elected and subject to recall at any time.

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

That kind of socialism does not exist anywhere today. Workers have no control over countries like Russia, China or Poland. They are exploited by a state capitalist class. A workers revolution is required in those countries too.

A SOCIALIST ANSWER TO THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The six county Orange State is propped up by British imperialism. By bribing loyalist workers in the past with privileges in, for example, housing and jobs, Protestant workers have come to see their interests as being served by the British-backed Unionist boss class. This divides the working class and delivers a section of the workers as allies of imperialism. The Northern state is sectarian in essence and must be smashed.

The slow task of building working class unity against imperialism must be begun.

However imperialism must be fought in the here and now and we support all forces engaged in that struggle regardless of our difference of programme.

We stand for: Immediate withdrawal of the British Army. Political Status Now.

The Disbandment of the RUC and the UDR.

In the South, the bosses are junior partners with other European and American bosses in world capitalism. The main enemy is the boss at home. Nationalism or a united capitalist Ireland offers nothing to workers. The only republic worth fighting for is a workers republic.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

We support feminism as being the legitimate progressive and necessary struggle by women against their oppression as women and believe that the self-emancipation of women as a sex is central to the meaning of socialism.

Only through socialism can women achieve full emancipation and therefore the women's struggle must be led by working class women as part of the struggle of the whole working class for socialism.

FOR A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

The main area of political action for socialists is the mass organisation of the working class, particularly the trade unions. We fight for the independence of the unions from state interference, democratic control of all union affairs and the election of all union officials.

We oppose all anti-union legislation and all forms of national wage understandings and wage restraint. We oppose all redundancies. We say: Occupy to demand Nationalisation under workers control. Fight for a 35 hour week. We support the building of a rank and file movement which draws together militant trade unionists to oppose the class collaboration of the union leaders.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS PARTY

The SWM is a democratic centralist organisation open to all those who accept its principles and objectives. The struggle for a workers republic in Ireland is inseparable from the international struggle. The SWM fights to build a mass party of the working class as part of a revolutionary international of working class parties.

THE WORKER is produced by the SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT. If you would like more information on our activities and policies, would like to become a member of the SWM or would like to take out a subscription to THE WORKER—£3.50 for a year—clip and post this form to SWM, 41 Herberton Park, Rialto, Dublin 8.

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

I would like more information about the SWM

Name

Address

INDUSTRIAL NEWS

Report by Waterford SWM

THE KNIFE in the gut of the unemployed in Waterford got another severe twist just before Easter, when it was

announced that Fismar Ltd, manufacturers of Badedas and Midas bath additives as well as UHU glue, were to

close completely, with the loss of seventy jobs.

The company, which had been operating since 1970, in a 37,000 square foot factory, issued the employees, 55 women and 16 men, with their cards at one hour's notice. Mr Michael Bell, the General Manager, told the union committee that the closure was primarily a result of the high level of inflation in Ireland and its effect on the factory's operating costs!

The workers were quite rightly stunned, especially given the fact

that production efficiency had been improved greatly over the last 12 months with the acceptance of new working methods and new mechanisation and all this on top of the recent acceptance of huge drops in real take home pay.

This news was just hours old when it was announced that a further 20 workers employed at Waterford Ironfounders Ltd, a member of TMG Group, who manufacture solid fuel stoves, were to be let go. Again the management said it was as a

Fight for Right to

SMALL wonder that the morale of the workers, employed and unemployed, is at a low ebb. The bosses' age-old strategy of using the spectre of the dole queues to cow and intimidate its workforce into accepting virtual wage cuts is again working a treat.

The mighty Waterford Glass factory, always the pace setter in this area during wage negotiations, this year despite much

increased profits accepted a miserable 15% phased over 15 months. With the increased PRSI contributions on top of that, what you've got is one heck of a pay cut.

Needless to say, other less organised workers in weaker industries have done even worse for themselves. And, if things look that bleak for a fightback from those with jobs, what then can be the prospects for the unem-

ployed?

Only a fool would say the task of organising the unemployed will be easy, yet it must be done and done fairly soon if the tide is to be turned.

Nobody who eads this paper would need convincing of the need for organised unemployed workers' groups linked to the trade union movement, but another element has been introduced which adds to the

urgency of this need, and that is the battle that is looming over the aforementioned PRSI contribution increases.

Will the bosses and the media, in what is likely to develop into a street campaign, be able to avoid the temptation of attempting to divert the hard pressed workers' anger away from the real problem—and onto a helpless and voiceless scapegoat: the unemployed?

This is a real danger: in times of crisis simple but false solutions, and targets, have an attraction for a lot of people. That very little of the money collected from PRSI goes towards social insurance payments and that therefore 'scroungers' are not to benefit from the increase will not be so widely publicised.

That is why the unemployed must be organised now. Then the scapegoat will be neither voiceless nor helpless.

When the workers take to the streets against this claw-back tax, the unemployed should be right beside them with their own banners and workers should say not only 'Stuff the PRSI hoax' but also 'Stuff the ten percent youth employment levy, the workers will not finance a Tebbit-style scabs' army'. We want real jobs for real wages for all.

But of course in calling for unemployed workers' organisations we need to know what kind of a set up we want, or, more precisely, what set up we don't want. The UW Association in Waterford is now about six weeks old and very much in the formative stage with



result of a significant drop in the Irish market.

It was announced later in the week that another local industry, ACEC (Ireland) Ltd, were discussing with the unions possible redundancies. It was understood the company wanted to cut 12 jobs on the factory floor as well as lay-offs in the clerical section.

All this, even before the labour market is flooded in July with the latest batch of school-leavers, has, as you can imagine, a very nauseating effect on the 4,000 (official figure) unemployed in the city.

Organise and fight

Unemployment is the first priority of the new Fianna Fail government. Or so they say. Under the leadership of Jack Lynch in the last Fianna Fail government they were even more daring in their commitments. 'Any government that allows unemployment to go over the 100,000 mark deserves to be thrown out of office' is how Lynch himself put it. Martin O Donoghue, the then Minister for

Economic Planning was even more enthusiastic. 'There will be full employment in 1982' he proclaimed.

During the seventies Irish capitalism went through its greatest periods of growth. Investment in industry grew at a fantastic rate. In 1977/78 Southern Ireland had the fastest growing economy in Europe.

But it couldn't provide the jobs. There was not a single year in which the rate of unemployment fell below 90,000 between 1975-1982. Even in its period of greatest growth, Irish capitalism could not satisfy the simplest demand of the working class—the right to work.

The bosses have attempted to find a scapegoat for their own failures. It repeated day after day in the media. 'Irish wages costs are too high and business is afraid to invest and create jobs'. It's a tissue of lies. There has been massive investment and still the jobs have not come. Irish wage costs are still among the lowest in Europe. Wages have been held down for a decade through National Wage Agreements. The bosses pay less on social insurance and taxes than elsewhere.

What are the real reasons for why they cannot provide the jobs?

Firstly, sections of traditional Irish industry are in decline. Industries like textiles, shoes and clothing were established for a protected home market. They survived with little new investment and on cheap labour. With the removal of protectionism, they have gone to the wall under fierce competition. Those that are trying to survive are making thousands of workers redundant and at the same time paying below average wage increases. Between 1975 and 1981 the textile industry made 9,611 workers redundant while the clothing industry put 5,485 on the dole. Secondly, the new IDA industries like those in chemicals and electronics are providing fewer jobs for a much higher level of investment. A higher rate of exploitation and productivity has meant that they have done with fewer workers. The national figures bear it out. Between 1974

and 1977 investment has averaged 25% of GNP. Yet total employment rose by a mere 8,000.

Thirdly, on top of all that, Ireland has the youngest population in Europe who are now looking for jobs. The numbers employed in agriculture are falling by the day. In order to cope with the numbers, they need to create 14,000 new manufacturing jobs each year. Up to now they have only averaged 3,000 a year.

And that was in relatively favourable conditions. Foreign investment was brought into Ireland on one promise: cheap labour in order to produce for the EEC market. In the early seventies it was alone in offering the combination. Now Greece, Spain and Portugal are getting in on the same act. The competition is getting tough just as the international recession is getting deeper.

Charlie Haughey is banking on one thing. That the world economy will pull itself out of the slump this year. Only then will the markets open up and give him the ability to repay the massive debts.

He is wrong. All the signs are that it is going into deeper recession. The miracle economies of the seventies like Brazil and Poland(!) are up to their eyes in debt. The return to protectionism, the high interest rates, the thousands on the dole queues are all cutting back on the possibilities for expansion.

We come back to the problem. If Irish capitalism cannot solve unemployment in its boom times, how the hell can it cope in a world recession? It cannot. That is the starkly simple message that even conservative economists are proclaiming. Richard Baker, when speaking at a recent ESRI conference claimed that by 1991 a quarter of Irish workers would be unemployed.

The only answer is to organise, to resist, to fight. It is about defending every job by resisting redundancies, by occupying to demand nationalisation. It is about fighting for the 35 hour week. It is about banning overtime and fighting for a decent wage. Above all, it is about fighting for socialism—a planned economy under workers' control.

Kieran Allen

the Work

some very good starts made in some areas, the gaining of recognition from and delegate rights to the local trades council being one and the tentative support for a march on Dublin another.

But even in these early days the Jimmy Saville syndrome is attempting to dominate it. This is the tendency which prefers to call the movement the Unemployed Advice Centre and which requires of its members only that they become totally conversant with the social welfare system, so that when an unfortunate person has trouble with a claim at the Labour Exchange he need only consult one of these gurus on the dole (cap in hand, no doubt) and, hey presto, Jim'll fix it!

Such a tendency will do nothing to make the centre a fighting headquarters of the unemployed, more like an ego massage parlour for the advising elite.

An unemployed group, if it is to stand any chance of surviving, must go to the factories and join the workers in their struggles, arguing that productivity deals, overtime working and the like cause unemployment.

When workers strike for wage increases and improved conditions the unemployed workers fight. Such an alliance would be invincible.

And what of the official movement? Is there any doubt that if the resources of the official trade union movement were unlocked and used to organise the unemployed as part of the movement, the prospects for workers' unity against the

ravages of slump would be unprecedented.

At union branches and conferences the demand must go out for the union bosses to quit the fine speechifying and put the resources of the workers movement behind the fight for jobs. These arguments must be won with the rank and file, in workplaces, shop steward committees and branches.

That is the task, a fighting movement that says 'Unemployed and employed unite, Fight for the Right to Work!'

DUAG conference organise march

AT A conference in March about 70 trade unionists and unemployed decided to organise a 'People's March for Decent Jobs'.

The conference was organised by the Dublin Unemployed Action Group and was supported by 13 trade union bodies and four trades councils.

Since then many other trade union bodies have given their support.

The march will consist of two legs, one from Waterford and the other from Dundalk, both arriving in Dublin on July 3. Along the way it is hoped to arrange meetings, visits to workplaces and demonstrations about the fight against unemployment. The march is not just for the unemployed, but hopes to bring together the employed and unemployed to start some fightback against redundancies.

The central demands of the march are as follows:

1. Opposition of all redundancies
2. Nationalisation of all firms closing down, without loss of jobs
3. The fight for a 35-hour week to create more jobs
4. A living wage for the

unemployed.

It is hoped to have about 40 marchers on each leg of the march with groups of unemployed and trade unionists joining the march as it passes through their town. A mass rally with supporters from all over the country will be held on July 3 in Dublin to greet the march. All of this is going to need substantial support around the country, organising local support groups, raising money, arranging accommodation for the marchers and so on. Every trade unionist should be supporting this march by getting their trade union branch to support and sponsor it. For details see below.

We feel that the time has come for a major initiative to highlight the ever growing dole queues, and while a march in itself can do nothing about unemployment, it could be the start of a fightback by workers and the unemployed against the wave of redundancies now hitting the country.

Proposed March

Route 1 Waterford — Kilkenny — Carlow — Newbridge — Naas — Dublin

Route 2 Dundalk — Drogheda — Balbriggan — Dublin.

Peoples' March for Decent Jobs, c/o ATGWU, 112 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.



I first became disillusioned with full time union officials during the early sixties.

As an apprentice plumber on building sites, I had seen a considerable amount of unofficial disputes with workers prepared to fight for improvements in working conditions. Not been long a trade unionist I was surprised and indeed disgusted at the response of the majority of officials to those disputes. What surprised me most was the influence that a small number of full time officials had over a very large section of workers. When workers took action there would be an air of militancy and comradeship. But as soon as the official made his appearance, or was contacted by phone all this changed. More than likely the men would be told to go back to work in order that talks could commence, and that would be the first stage in the sell-out. After that it was quite easy for the official to get the men to accept a compromised settlement. And that is the reason we find today that the conditions on building sites has remained virtually the same, with only slight improvements. What you may ask was the shop steward doing while all this was going on? The shop steward would be in a very tricky position. On the one hand he would support the action of the men. That is, until the official had a few words with him. Then he in turn would start changing his attitude and talk about a return to work. And that is how it is today.

The full time official not only has great influence over the rank and file but also over the shop stewards. We see this at every meeting. The official will constantly tell us how hard he is working for us and that he has not got a minute for himself or his family. The men will see him as the one with all the responsibility. And he will spend a lot of time complaining about the small attendance at union meetings. He will criticise men who do not attend meetings and call them apathetic.

Certainly this is apathy, but what does he expect when every time workers take action they cannot rely on the support of the officials. At committee level it's the same story with the officials dominating the meetings and the rest of the committee reluctant to speak against his proposals.

While we have a ruling class, we obviously need a strong trade union movement. But the structure must be democratic: we must replace a full time official with working committees comprising not only shop stewards but also rank and file members.

At present workplace committees are usually set up during a dispute and after a return to work they are disbanded. Every effort should be made to keep workplace committees active, and in doing so help to bring forward the day when workers truly can say 'we are the Union'.

John Byrne

PMPA: Insure against scabs

Joe Moore, the boss of PMPA the insurance company, is one of these creature who prides himself on a rags to riches story. One of those true Fianna Failers whose nephew will organise a car for Charlie on election day and he himself will dig deep for the funds. In short a born and bred native Irish capitalist.

The workers at the PMPA company have gone on strike over a wage claim. 1,040 clerical workers have received the support of 60 catering colleagues. But PMPA plays it dirty. The management and the non-union staff are scabbing. In addition even before the strike PMPA had recruited 14 temps from Alfred Marks, who are also scabbing. When the workers go back, they want Alfred Marks out and permanent jobs created.

The workers put in for 30% rise. They know the company can pay up—and with PRSI rises since the budget, they need it to keep their heads above water. The going rate for Insurance Companies is well above the 15% norm. Irish life, new Ireland and Irish National have all got a 24% increase.

PMPA workers have also made substantial concessions on productivity and new technology. Management again refused to pay up. Last October they put in a productivity

claim because of the introduction of micro-filming of correspondence and computerisation. They have got nothing yet.

Just before the strike, the workers' left their old union, the IUDWC en masse. The straw that broke the back was the union's refusal to pay the cost to fight the High Court the PMPA were taking against an equal pay order made on them. The IUDWC have the reputation of one of the most moderate unions in the world.

They switched over to the ITGWU. Now, the ITGWU is not everyone's idea of a militant union. In fact their acceptance of the ITGWU will strike a note of irony to those workers who have fought unsuccessfully to get out—and have been told that they can't because of the Congress rules on poaching. Just a half an hour before the

strike, PMPA made a 10% interim offer, with the promise of further negotiations. The workers were having none of it. They wanted to see the full money on the table.

Many now reckon the strike could be a long one. If they are to win it must be spread.

• Insurance premiums are being paid through the banks. The officials of the bank union, the IBOA, have been approached about strike breaking. We need a determined campaign to win over the rank and file bank officials through a mass picket of one or two of the branches concerned.

• PMPA is not just an insurance company. It owns the Sunday Journal, Premo Retails and a home heating oil company. If management don't concede the pickets should be extended.

• Alfred Marks runs a big business in 'temp' employment. It is a scab firm. It should be blacked by all trade unionists and the case of PMPA highlighted.

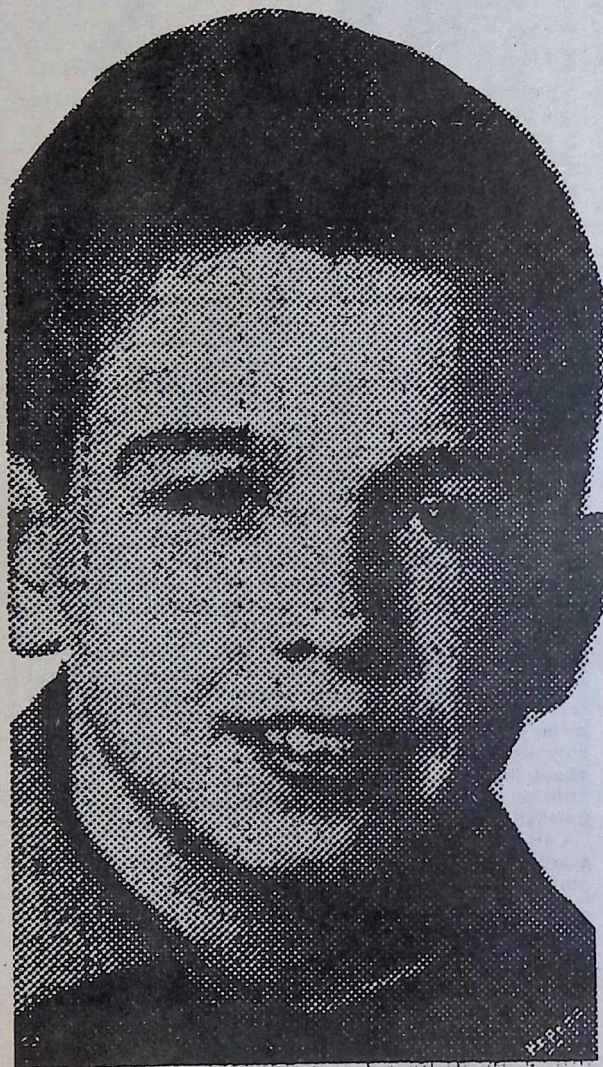
• Joe Moore himself doesn't take strikes too lightly. He is at present up on a civil assault charge for attacking a woman picket.

THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

CAN you imagine the resources needed to produce even an eight page paper like The Worker?
You can help to make sure The Worker is on the streets regularly by contributing to our fund. Send whatever you can manage—large or small amounts—to: The Worker Fighting Fund, 41 Herberton Park, Rialto, Dublin 8.
KEEP THE WORKER ROLLING OFF THE PRESSES EVERY MONTH. SEND A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR FIGHTING FUND.

Steven McConomy latest victim of Pryor's 'political initiative'



May 8th is the anniversary of Bobby Sand's death. His hunger strike was the beginning of the biggest mass movement since Bloody Sunday. Although it lost it severely shook the rulers both sides of the border. They have responded with political initiative and increased repression.

The Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act is now being wheeled into full use. The first case was one where escapees from Crumlin Road have been tried in the South for just that—escaping.

Gerard Tuite is now facing trial in a further extension of that act. The way is being prepared for RUC interrogators to be brought down South on top of all that the Embassy 20 and the Belfast 24 are awaiting trial.

The regimes on both side of the border, are attempting to deal a body blow to political activists who initiated the H Block campaign. Whatever the disagreements of the political initiatives required, they are fully agreed on the need for more repression.

Those who half believed that a Fianna Fail government would go soft on Republican activity are being proved cruelly wrong.

Pryor's rolling devolution plan is a further political response to the rise of the H Block movement. Everyone agrees it is 'unworkable'. It is the

mass of anti-unionists would never accept even a modified Stormont regime.

Pryor's plan is to breathe life into middle class politics in the North. It is to give politicians of the SDLP the chance to regain credibility.

Meanwhile, political

initiative or not, the cost of maintaining sectarian Northern State continues to be counted in people's lives. Recently eleven year old school boy Steven McConomy from Derry died after having been shot at point blank range by a British soldier with a plastic bullet. This is the means by which the

anti-unionist population is to be prepared for the so-called 'political initiatives'.

The real political initiative that is needed is the organising of working people North and South to put an end to capitalism and to institute a 32 county workers Republic.

Fight the cuts

More power to the elbows of the supermarket shop assistants. At a time when much more "powerful" sections of the trade union movement have settled wage claims well below the rate of inflation, these badly-paid, traditionally moderate workers have struck for £30 across the board. They may not have the strength to pull that kind of increase off but whatever deal finally emerges will be significantly higher than what most workers can look forward to this year.

The shop assistants' strike is, at the time of writing, only the second major instance of industrial action over wages since National Understandings came to an end in November 1981. The other was the token one-day stoppage of the private sector craft workers in January. Called to force the employers to negotiate a national deal, it has proved singularly unsuccessful with growing number of craft workers settling locally for no better than average increases.

Only two major strikes in over four months of free collective bargaining tells its own story. Most workers simply have not felt confident enough to take on the employers

for the increases of 25-30% that were claimed—higher than what the ICTU was prepared to accept in November when trying to rescue centralised bargaining at all costs. The system has worked in the sense that rank and file workers have come together (often across unions and grades) to formulate claims and, to some extent, control their progress. Dire right-wing warnings of 'the low paid going to the wall' and 'anarchy breaking loose' have proved unfounded.



The real reason for settlements well below what is necessary to maintain, never mind improve, living standards is simply the economic crisis—and in particular,

the ever-growing threat of unemployment. The bosses, private and public, are succeeding in shifting the payment for that crisis on to the backs of the workers. No significant group of workers has felt confident enough to challenge this situation head on—the threat of the dole queues is too strong.

It all adds up to a very serious situation for socialists and militant trade unionists. Whilst we are not in a period of massive working class defeats, the trend is inescapable and there is no point in disguising the facts. A strategy of militant resistance on all fronts—wages, jobs, welfare, cuts—needs to be devised and implemented that will develop the rank and file organisation possible under free collective bargaining. And the sooner, the better.
JOHN CANE

the worker

THE WORKER is produced by the SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT. If you would like more information on our activities and policies, would like to become a member of the SWM or would like to take out a subscription to THE WORKER—£3.50 for a year—clip and post this form to SWM, 41 Herberton Park, Rialto, Dublin 8.

I want to join: I want a subscription and enclose £3.50:
 I would like more information about the SWM

Name

Address

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

May Day Social

Film El Salvador: The People will win. Followed by Social with Folk and Blues music.
Dublin — Ryan's Pub Parnell St, Friday 30th April 8pm.
Waterford Cha O'Neills Barracks St, Sat May 1st 8pm.
Reds' and the Russian Revolution. Discussion meeting. Speaker Paul O'Brien (SWM) Dublin ATGWU Hall, Marlboro St, 8pm Thursday 20th May.