

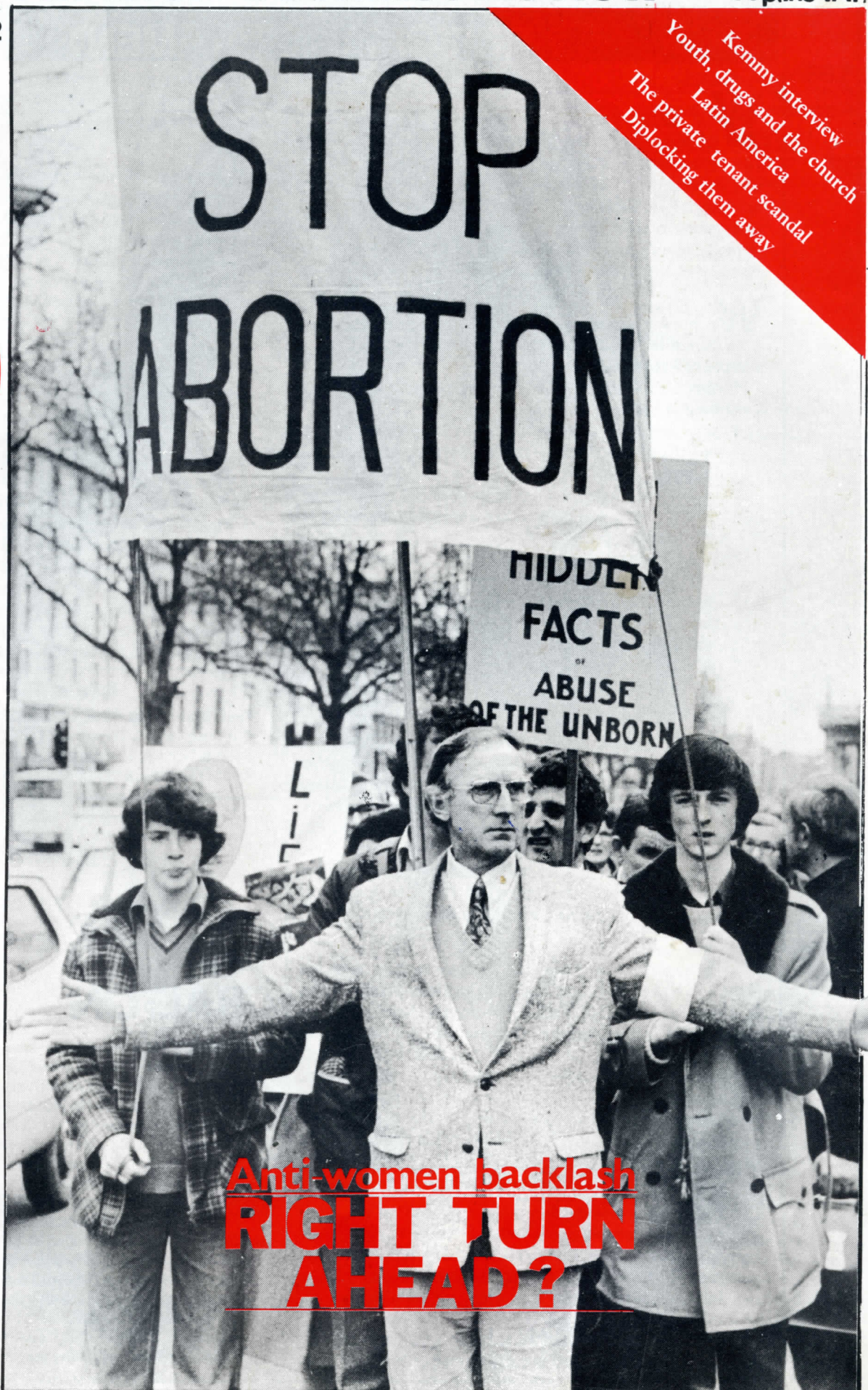
No.2

An Irish Socialist Review

50p(Inc VAT)

June/July 1982

GRATTON



Kemmy interview
Youth, drugs and the church
Latin America
The private tenant scandal
Diplocking them away

Anti-women backlash
**RIGHT TURN
AHEAD?**

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

What kind of people are producing *Gralton*? What kind of people will read it? We think the answer to these two questions is the same: those interested in discussing the realities of Irish society and the methods of radically changing it; those who feel that no existing publication or organisation is at present providing a forum within which the experiences, victories and defeats of the past decade can be assessed and learned from.

We hope *Gralton* can become that forum. Our aim is to promote debate and discussion centering around a number of broad positions:

- * that capitalism is not a force for progress and has to be replaced by Socialism
- * that Socialism consists essentially of people controlling their own lives in the workplace and the community
- * that such a change of system goes far deeper than anything that can be achieved through parliamentary methods alone
- * that real change cannot be brought about through the actions of any small elite group, whether guerilla army or state bureaucracy, but requires the action of masses of people acting consciously together to establish their own power
- * that none of this change can be achieved solely in an Irish context

But *Gralton* will not be simply discussing ideas. We also aim to give practical support to the struggles and movements of the day by providing information, commentary and factual analysis of service to trade unionists, feminists, socialists, political and local activists — and by opening our columns to those actively involved even if we do not share their political viewpoint. We believe there is a close link between the experience of activity and the development of ideas and we shall always be seeking to strengthen it.

The Editorial Board of *Gralton* reflects who we believe to be our audience: individual socialists and activists in a wide variety of left-wing movements. Some of us are members of left organisations, more are not. Among us there are differences of tradition, political bias, interests — even some sharp disagreements on major political issues. But we all share a basic political approach and method: that of looking towards and participating in the struggles and movements of the working class and all the oppressed and exploited sections of society.

Believing that the successful mobilisation of people is itself a political gain contributing far more to real change than the mere existence of a political party, *Gralton* will be independent, broad-based and non-sectarian in all its coverage. Independent, because only freedom from the control or dominance of any organisation can produce the kind of open, self-questioning exploration and exchange of ideas that is necessary. And this is partly a recognition that none

of the existing groups contain the full answer themselves — although some individuals may consider certain organisations closer than most.

G*ralton* will not be handing down any firm “line” Our articles are the responsibility of the authors alone. We welcome articles from currents and organisations of the left by way of contribution to the debate, but we are not a “heavy theoretical journal” so they will have to be written in ordinary English and priority will be given to articles from whatever source which raise real questions or which provide useful information. Sexist terminology will be cut.

If *Gralton* is to succeed in its aim of providing a forum for debate, discussion and analysis then the widest possible number of people involved with the magazine the better. To facilitate this, the overall direction and control of the magazine is being vested in a body called *Gralton* Co-Operative Society Ltd., consisting of all individual readers who are in broad agreement with the aims of the magazine as outlined above and are committed enough to the project to take out a Supporters Subscription. The Editorial Board will be accountable to the group and in future will be elected from it. We hope as many readers as possible will identify with the magazine in this way — and by writing for it and selling it — and thereby help to make *Gralton* as relevant as possible to the advance of the left in Ireland.

Editorial Board

Paul Brennan ■ John Cane ■ Michael Cronin ■ Mary Cummins ■ Des Derwin ■ Colette Fallon ■ John Goodwillie ■ Goretti Horgan ■ Gene Kerrigan ■ Pete Nash ■ Tom O'Connor ■ Molly O'Duffy ■

JIM GRALTON



JIM GRALTON is the only person to have been deported from the 26 Counties for political activity. Gralton was not prosecuted for any criminal offence. His offence was to have helped give the poor, the landless and the unemployed of County Leitrim the confidence to fight for themselves.

In the early Thirties, Gralton devoted himself to establishing a social hall for the people of Gowel, Leitrim. For this heinous crime he was denounced from the pulpits and the hall was eventually burned down. Finally, in 1933, the De Valera government succeeded in deporting him — despite a vigorous campaign on his behalf waged by left wing trade unionists and republicans, unemployed activists and local supporters.

Gralton's name represents a challenge to established authority, a call for people to take their fate into their own hands and an imaginative application of socialist ideas in a difficult environment. For all that, and more, he deserves to be remembered. That's why this magazine is named after him.



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Cover photo by Derek Speirs
(Report)

COMING SOON . . .

- *Neutrality, Irish style
- *Taxation and socialism
- Radical theatre
- *Communists in Western Europe
- *The rise of Irish CND
- *Debate: wages for housework

Opposition to the anti-abortion referendum at the TCD Elizabethan Garden Party in May. On page 12 Goretti Horgan reviews the proposed constitutional amendment and its political implications. On page 14 Brian Trench examines the retreat of the Catholic Church in southern Europe in the face of demands for women's rights.

Private tenants, public scandal

There are two important differences between the Housing (Private Rented Dwellings Bill) 1982 introduced by the Fianna Fáil government to regulate 35,000 formerly controlled tenancies and a similar Bill of the Coalition's last year. One, the rent to be fixed by a District Court in the absence of agreement between the landlord and tenant need not now be a 'market rent'. In fixing the terms of the tenancy the Court shall take into account the requirements of justice.

Under the Coalition's Bill the Court was restricted to fixing a rent based on what the highest bidder was willing to offer and what the landlord was willing to accept.

Two, the phasing-in over five years of rent increases is abolished. That section was held to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The Coalition's Bill had been referred to it by the President.

What both Bills have in common is their denial of any concept of tenant right. Basically, tenant right consists of the following: 1. the right to remain in possession provided the rent is paid (which would have been a market rent at the beginning of the tenancy). 2. the right to renewal of the lease. 3. the right of assignment, i.e., the right to pass on the tenancy to relatives and/or others.

The Bill limits the tenancy to the lifetime of the tenant in possession when the Act becomes law and also to the spouse of the tenant. It also provides for the passing on of the tenancy to relatives for a limited period of 20 years from the commencement of the Act. In the Fianna Fáil Bill if a relative becomes a tenant during the last five years of the twenty year period he/she will be entitled to keep the tenancy for five years.

The Bill provides for the Minister for Social Welfare to make subsidies available for tenants who would otherwise suffer hardship by reason of increases in the rents of their

The Private Tenants Action Group meets to discuss strategy for opposing the government measures.

dwellings. But no further details are given. Clearly, therefore, the Bill destroys tenant right.

The only progressive feature—common to both Bills, is the requirement that the landlord register the tenancy with the local authority and the Minister is to set standards for accommodation let for rent. If these are not met by the landlord the local authority may carry out the improvements and recover the costs from the landlord through the courts. The Fianna Fáil Bill also requires the landlord to provide the tenant with a rent book. Unlike the rest of the Bill these measures apply to all classes of rented accommodation.

Sections of the Rent Control Acts were held to be unconstitutional by a decision of the High Court in April, 1980 (subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court) because they discriminated against a category of landlords, provided no compensation and made no provision for the recovery of the property by the landlords. A report (unpublished) commissioned by Jimmy Tully when he was Minister for Local Government

estimates that in 1946 there were 161,092 such tenancies, it gives a rate of decline as follows: 1961: 100,495, 1971: 65,048 and it projects a figure of 42,282 for 1981.

Rent Control was introduced in 1940 by the government as part of a series of war-time measures which included a wage freeze. The tenants didn't ask for it. Successive governments failed to make rent adjustments for fear of losing popularity with such a large number of voters. As the numbers dramatically declined (the majority of tenants purchased houses, others qualified for local authority housing) those who were left were the economically weaker sections.

The Private Tenants Action Group who are fighting the tenants' case carried out a survey which shows 60% are over 60 years old, 60% are women either single or widowed; 52% get their income from pensions, 7% are on social welfare and only 30% are employed — mostly in lower paid jobs. The Supreme Court decision confronted the tenants with large rent increases, in many cases greater than their total income, it shattered their security of tenure (in many cases they are second generation tenants) and it plunged

them into a highly stressful situation.

The new legislation, although an improvement on the Coalition's, is still heavily biased in favour of the landlords. The rents (in the absence of agreement between the landlord and tenant) are to be fixed by an unpredictable judge who has no experience in this field. And at the end of 20 years most families face the prospect of being put out of their homes.

In the same period the landlords can look forward to the prospect of recouping their original investment a hundred times over. The loss of tenant right also deprives the tenant of the opportunity of purchasing his/her home as a sitting tenant at about a third of its value under vacant possession.

The present situation was allowed to develop by weak and irresponsible politicians who, having protected the tenants' rights by statute for over 40 years, now turn their backs on them when they are most vulnerable. During passage of the present legislation through the Dáil they have pleaded that their hands are tied by the property guarantees in the Constitution.

Ruairi Quinn who made a useful contribution during the debates, went so far as to denounce the Supreme Court judges for their ruling. What he and they seem to forget is that the Constitution is the work of politicians, not judges. There is an obligation on them to bring in legislation which is equitable and to face up to the consequences. Instead they trim their legislation in line with an outdated and reactionary Constitution.

The present legislation probably reflects the balance of class forces in society and in the Dáil. But what of the Socialist T.D.s? With one exception they voted in favour of one or other of the Bills — the exception was Tony Gregory, who was conveniently absent when the vote was taken. To vote for legis-



Derek Speirs (Report)



25 Drury Street, Dublin 2

**Foot Shaped Shoes for
Foot Shaped Feet!**

lation which favours the landlord against the tenant is to vote the wrong way on a straightforward class issue. It is to say the least unprincipled.

To be fair, Jim Kemmy subsequently made it a condition of his support for a new Taoiseach that he held a referendum on changing the property clauses in the Constitution. Such a change is necessary not only to resolve the tenant's problems satisfactorily but also to allow for the implementation of the Kenny Report on building land and to prevent the monopoly position of state companies from being challenged in the courts.

The Private Tenants Action Group originally proposed that rent controlled property be taken over by the local authorities with the landlords being compensated in property bonds. When it met Fergus O'Brien, Junior Minister in the Department of the Environment, he rejected the proposal as unconstitutional. It was pointed out to him that it was the mechanism the British government used to dispossess the landlords and that it was still being used by the Land Commission. He said he thought the Land Commission was unconstitutional. Aren't the farmers lucky that Independence came late rather than early!

The present demands of the PTAG are: a Rent Tribunal, Rent Control, Full Subsidisation and Constitutional change.

The PTAG is also advising tenants on their bargaining with the landlords. Probably a majority of them will strike a bargain without going to court. Our advice is to keep their maximum offer inline with how they would be assessed for rent on their wages or salaries under the differential rent scheme operated by the local authorities. It assumes tenants not employed will be subsidised.

The rent so assessed should be less an allowance for improvements to the property carried out by the tenant. Under the Bill the court will make a similar allowance from the gross rent for such improvements. If they cannot strike a bargain at or below such a figure they should break off negotiations and refer the matter to the court.

This is a strategy by the PTAG: to re-establish tenant right for private tenants — basing it on tenant right secured by council tenants over the years. That is the message the PTAG will be trying to get across to the tenants in its bulletin, in letters to the press, at public meetings etc. in the coming weeks.

PAT MURPHY
Chairperson
Private Tenants Action Group

By Joe Duffy,
Education Officer, USI.

Students: organising for defence

The Union of Students in Ireland is stepping up its campaign of protest actions against fee increases. Following occupations in University College Galway and in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, plans are being made for a major demonstration on December 2nd. The campaign is to build up to a general student strike in February next.

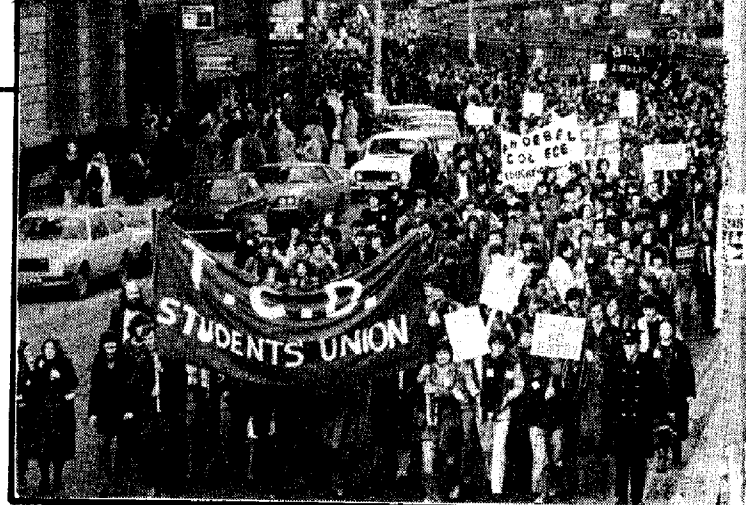
"Now we have to go on the offensive and for this we have to very quickly clarify the basic requirements of the student/youth for an organisation that is an entirely student one, based on: the self organisation of the students and people of Ireland for a decent education and social system." These were words contained in the first motion passed by the 24th Annual Congress held in Belfast in April.

A lengthy motion on campaigning was passed which laid down clear tasks to be undertaken by the full-time officers in head office, local students' unions and the area committees. A unanimous decision was also taken to increase the number of full-time officers working in head office. Alex White (TCD) and Pat O'Doherty (Maynooth) were later elected Union Development and Campaigning Officers at the USI National Council.

The section of the Congress headed "Education" was set in the context of these union organisation and campaigning motions. Analysing the role of education in the state, as a direct requirement of, and benefit to, the rich, it highlighted the importance of mass actions by the students. More importantly, it asserted that students, as trainees for the economy, do have economic power.

Congress asserted its full support for a general strike consisting of a refusal to attend lectures, the mounting of pickets and selective action on college and government institutions.

In calling for more discussion on curriculum and assessment many delegates spoke of the difficulties involved in the examination system and methods of assessment being



implemented in some colleges to replace them. On primary education a call was made to reduce the Irish pupil teacher ratio, at present the highest in the EEC. It also called for the introduction of pre-school education as a matter of priority.

For the first time women's rights were discussed at Congress. A women's rights action group was established embracing both active and representative functions. An advisory committee (WRAC) will be elected by a non delegate women's conference that would have the right to formulate USI policy which would be ratified by Congress.

A motion submitted by WRAC calling for the eradication of the concept of illegitimacy was also passed. A motion highlighting the state of Armagh women's prison, and opposing the building of a new womens prison in Clondalkin, Co. Dublin were also passed.

On abortion a long debate called for the decriminalisation of abortion and condemned the proposed pro-life amendment referendum as a waste of money. A

motion calling for the convening of a conference for lesbian women was also passed.

On international affairs, the Congress condemned the US involvement in El Salvador and recognised the FMLN as the true representatives of the El Salvador people. The Congress also condemned the imposition of martial law in Poland, and expressed full solidarity with the independent trade union and student movement in that country.

All colleges were urged in the debate on South Africa to affiliate to the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, to stop the sale of South African goods, support the struggle of the ANC and SWAPO as the only authentic representative of the people of Namibia and South Africa respectively.

The growth of nuclear weapons was also condemned in a motion that called on all colleges to affiliate to the CND movement.

But centrally, the Congress laid the ground for the organisational development of the union into a true defence organisation of students.

After the dole case

A major victory was won for Irish women in late March this year when the Fianna Fáil government, under pressure from the Women's Campaign For A Unified Social Welfare Code, made it possible for separated women, with no dependents and who are not receiving maintenance, to get unemployment assistance.

The existence of separated women has finally been recognised by the Department of Social Welfare.

The original High Court case challenging this discrimination against married women was adjourned on a technicality on March 25th after the government announcement. On May 19th Roisin Controy, who had brought the case, eventually had her claim for unemployment assistance granted in full with costs against the

government.

However, this still leaves the vast majority of married women ineligible for the dole. This is because, in social welfare law, they are defined as their husband's dependents — even in a situation where they are supporting their husbands. A woman married to a student, for example, is considered to be his dependent even though he has no income.

The Women's Campaign For A Unified Social Welfare Code intends to use the money collected for the original court case (over £3,000) to fight cases such as these and others.

If you wish to help, the campaign can be contacted at 189 Gracepark Heights or phone Noreen O'Donoghue at (01) 767518 or Molly O'Duffy at (01) 889393.

Hand me down my walking shoes

On Tuesday, June 29th, around 30 people will start walking out of Waterford.

So what's new? Now come on, Waterford ain't that bad, even on a Monday. There's more to it. Four days later — god and blisters willing — they will arrive, tired but happy, in Dublin.

Ah . . . some charity thing.

Wrong again. Jimmy Saville doesn't even know about it — yet. No, this is something else again. This is an exciting, new, vital initiative in Irish politics.

Oh . . . the Democratic Socialist Party, right?

This is getting ridiculous. We are talking here of nothing less than . . . **THE PEOPLE'S MARCH FOR DECENT JOBS.**

Never heard of it.

Look, you heard of unemployment, right? Growing dole queues, redundancies, that sort of thing. Everyone's against it — politicians, unions, the Pope, John Healy. It's in all the papers.

Okay . . . I heard of it. So what?

Well, now instead of just talking about it, some people are actually starting to do something about it.

You're kidding.

No, it's right. And — dig this — it's the bloody unemployed themselves!

Christ . . . you mean the scroungers are actually taking to the road? Marching? Agitating? All that stuff.

Absolutely.

Christ.

Tell you something else. They're actually getting support for it too if you're to believe this propaganda they shove out. Says here that upto mid-May they already got the backing of 4 union executives, 7 trade councils and 10 union branches.

What about Young Fine Gael?

Doesn't say. Seems they're more interested in the unions, factories, tenant associations, that kind of thing. "Uniting the employed and the unemployed in a common cause" is what it says here.

What does that mean?

Doesn't say. I think you get a lot of that kinda stuff on these leaflet yokes.

Seems to me that there may well be a little crack going here. There's a lot of stuff about gigs and "events" happening. In Dublin and Carlow and Kilkenny and Newbridge . . .

Newbridge? They gotta be kidding.

Anyways, apparently it's not just four days of blisters and looking at cows. "Visiting factories, along the route". What you think that is?

No idea. More agitating I guess.

Yapping to workers about resisting redundancies and 35 hour weeks. Getting them agitated.

Agitate, Educise and Organate. Right. I heard that before. That's probably what all this is about. But the unemployed getting in on the action. You gotta admit, that's new.

Right. Some union bloke told me they

was "apathetic" or something. He said that they should really leave it to something called "this great movement of ours."

What the fuck is that?

Dunno.

Well, as I see it, this pans out as basically a good thing. I mean when all's said and done, at least someone is doing something. Maybe it won't change the world. After all that's kind of a big job. But who knows, perhaps somewhere, somehow a tiny ripple may . . . Besides it's free.

Huh, what you mean?

It's free to go on the march. Don't cost nothing. They're asking for unemployed to get involved, join the march.

What you mean actually WALK from Waterford to Dublin? Now just a minute

But the crack, the agitation, the bonhomie, the free ciggies. Let's go. Besides, what the fuck else is there to do?

What the hell. Okay, okay. But maybe we'll skip Newbridge, huh?

Now where's them contact addresses?

The People's March Organising Committee can be contacted c/o ATGWU, 122 Marlboro St., Dublin 1. or by Phone on Dublin 505213, or in Waterford c/o Waterford Unemployed Information and Advice Centre, Wellington Street. Phone Waterford 55142.



Derek Speirs (Report)

The Garda Band marching through Sheriff Street — where many a squad car has come a cropper. U2 on a barge on the Liffey. Films on show in pubs. Floating sculptures. This is "a celebration with a purpose" — the Inner City Looking On Festival which takes place at various points around the north city centre during July.

Festival committee chairperson, Mick Rafferty, sees it as "a kind of Mardi Gras", but also a way of provoking questions about how the city is developing — and, above all, why. The title is a complicated word play, inner city looking at themselves, others looking on.

Inner City Festival

"But it goes much wider than just the strictly defined inner city," says Mick Rafferty. "We'll be looking at the power structures which determine how the city develops. In a series of conferences which the Dublin Trades Council is sponsoring along with us, we'll be prompting the unions to think about subjects outside their usual range."

The plan was well under way before the general election. But it was given a welcome boost by Tony Gregory's election to the Dáil. Now it is to get funds from the not-yet-established Inner City Authority, which was part of the Haughey/Gregory deal. AnCO will be paying four people as trainees while they organise the painting of

murals on city centre walls. The Corporation, the Arts Council, and others are contributing too.

About 1,000 photographs taken in the city centre have been assembled for a series of exhibitions to be held at a number of city venues during the month. "They will represent a history of how the camera is used as well as a history of the city," says Mick Rafferty.

Among the bands who will play concerts in Mountjoy Square are Tokyo Olympics, Some Kind of Wonderful and The Business. Also included in the music programme is Eileen Reid. "The programme is designed to attract all age groups," the festival organisers explain.

Stirring it up

Sitting down at your coffee break, keeping the body awake at a long drawn out meeting, you probably never think at all of the "world in your coffee cup", a world of sweated labour, of decreasing incomes and of international exploitation. So could the message be: **THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK!**

After oil, surprisingly, coffee is the most valuable commodity traded in the world. Its history, in world trade terms is, like other basic cash crops, one of colonial exploitation, slave labour and destruction of local crop diversification techniques. This era of colonialism has set the pattern for trading relationships to the present day, except today the language is one of "investment" and "aid" rather than "exploitation" and "destruction".

Unlike the oil market, the producers of the crop, the 20 million coffee growers of the Third World, are without wealth, power or prestige. The wealth and power accrue instead to large landowners in some Latin American countries, to the many middle men operating around the "Futures" market, and in particular to the Multi National Corporations (MNCs) who control approximately 85% of world trade in the crop.

It takes four years for a coffee plant to begin to bear fruit. When it does, after an involved drying and crushing process the skin is removed from the coffee cherries leaving the final "green coffee beans". These beans are then packed into 60 Kg. bags and make their way onto the international commodity market. In the process the income of a coffee worker for a 12 hour day, all year round is an average IRE55 approximately **PER YEAR!**

The coffee is then bought by large corporations either roasters and/or instant coffee manufacturers but also by middlemen who in turn sell to the companies. For Instant Coffee the beans go through a further "atomisation" process before the final packaging. It is in the Instant Coffee business that the better profits are to be made because the level of price fluctuation can be kept at a minimum. So why don't the Third World countries start their own processing plants? Latin America

has many but the only ones not owned by actual foreign corporations are in Brazil which is itself dominated and controlled by foreign investment, in fact 60% of coffee processing plants are 100% foreign owned.

But this is not the only problem. Witness the fate of Brazilian Instant Coffee companies who managed to capture 15% of the U.S. market in 1957. General Foods (Maxwell House), proclaiming this to be unfair competition, successfully lobbied the U.S. government who threatened to cut off U.S. aid to Brazil and to refuse to renew the International Coffee Agreement. Brazil under this pressure from "Big Brother", of course capitulated. The main winner was General Foods; the only loser the Brazilian treasury.

Coffee, strangely enough, though in no way essential to human survival as a consumer product is, very often, crucial to the survival of a whole producing nations economy as for instance the case of;

Country	Coffee as % of export earnings
Burundi	83%
Uganda	79%
Ethiopia	48%
Tanzania	30%
Brazil	21%



A poor country like Tanzania is caught in the vicious circle of dependence on exporting raw materials to finance payment of the foreign loans needed to finance development programmes. It can only pay for the loans by exporting primary commodities, such as coffee, when it has no mineral wealth so that means developing the production of the commodities which in turn needs to be financed with investment in storage and transportation and the necessary education of workers and administrators.

So, in the particular case of Tanzania the original goal of self-reliant development is often hard to keep in perspective as they end

up "running in order to stand still". Witness the price of a 16 ton truck which in 1970 would have cost the equivalent of 4000 Kgs. of coffee beans and now costs approximately twice that amount.

Tanzania, in 1963, soon after independence, realising how much its coffee earnings were in the hands of the MNCs who control the world market, set up a factory to process coffee. Its history has been one fraught with problems, a lot of them brought about by the necessity to having to import the technology and use the expertise of Nestlé people.

The factory only began to make a profit in 1972 and has still not reached its production capacity of 550 tons per year. This is due to a variety of problems among them the closing of the border with Kenya (the most direct route for export markets) the high rise in oil prices needed to keep the factory going and difficulties with the Nestlé consultants. The position is improving, helped by the setting up of Alternative Marketing Organisations throughout Europe who import the coffee direct and through the work of Tanzanian commercial attachés.

Here in Ireland, the Tanzanian Instant Coffee is imported through the U.K. from one of these Alternative Marketing

Organisations called **TRAID-CRAFT** and marketed on a voluntary basis by a group within Comhlámh, the Association of Returned Development Workers. The present price (@ £1.25 per 100 gm) compares favourably with the Multinational brands on offer, who of course benefit from mass production and advertising. The main aims of the Coffee Campaign are:

- to sell Tanzanian Instant Coffee to the Irish Public;
- to inform the Irish Public of the structures, the inequities that exist in the present world trade system and through this information process to create a climate for increased awareness and positive change;
- to support any system that puts "people before profit".

At present the group is importing and selling close to 1 ton of the coffee per year. It hopes to expand this through a variety of outlets and hopefully in the future to import direct from Tanzania once a base of funds has been built up. If you are at all interested in either buying the coffee or joining/supporting this operation you can contact: **Comhlámh Coffee Group, 4/5 Eustace Street, Dublin 2.**

COMHLÁMH COFFEE GROUP



NATIONAL GAY CONFERENCE

Friday 18th, 7—11 p.m. Registration and films.
Building No. 6, Trinity College.

Saturday 19th, 10 a.m.—6.30 p.m.

Workshops include:

Coming Out/Personal Liberation and Gays
in Patriarchal Society

Sunday 20th, 10 a.m.—5.30 p.m. Workshops include:
Gays at Work/Trade Unions and Structures
for Change.

Information from
National Gay Conference Steering Committee,
P.O. Box 1076, Dublin 1.

Trinity College Dublin
June 18—20th

A CLASH OF OPIATES

Youth, drugs, the church and the state response

Church

Six months ago I was invited as City Councillor for the North City to attend the opening of a new hotel in St. Mary's Place, off Dorset Street. Hotels seem to close rather than open at present in Dublin, so it seemed enough of a rarity for me to accept the invitation, especially as it came from a rather unlikely source: the Catholic Youth Council.

The occasion was a splendid success and, for the promoters, a huge triumph. Leaders of Church and State were in abundance — yet another testimony to the continuing influence, indeed control, exercised still on all aspects of public policy in relation to youth by clerical forces.

The hotel itself is a good example of the CYC in operation. An old school building run by the Christian Brothers, disused due to the recent construction nearby of a new national school for the same Brothers, was renovated to make the youth hotel (a beautiful job, if I may add, and a splendid amenity). The State, through the Department of Education, contributed a generous grant as did the Archbishop and the Bank of Ireland while Bord Fáilte provided useful pertinent advice. The attendance of senior public officials and many such as P.V. Doyle and Joe Malone from the private sector shows the capacity of the

CYC to call upon resources and assistance at will in order to pursue their plans.

This summer Dublin Corporation will spend £66,000 on summer projects. These are schemes to organise games and outings in large residential areas like Coolock and Ballyfermot for school-children during the summer holidays. The bulk of this money will go to the CYC who organise most of the projects, appoint the leaders and plan their activities. In the various estates they are generally talked of as CYC projects despite the large public funding.

Similarly, many of the youth clubs in these estates come under the general aegis of the CYC. They get generous routine grants for equipment and running costs from the VEC's Youth Service Council, which has a £250,000 budget from the State. Individual clubs with ambitious development programmes can get very large grants to aid construction from both the Corporation and the State. One in Whitehall, for example, got a £100,000 Department of Education grant as well as £25,000 from the Corporation.

The facilities provided with this money are valuable and much needed — especially in the huge estates disgracefully

No section of the population has been the target of more empty rhetoric than young people. No single statistic is more frequently trotted out in political debate than the one about half the population being under 25. Ministers' script writers never tire of referring to young people as "our greatest national resource". But outside of the political speeches and departmental briefs, the language is changing. The most unlikely people appear as prophets of revolution. At professional conference after professional conference, speakers open their remarks on "youth in crisis" by assuring the other delegates that they are not radical left-wingers, but . . .

Those who have the most direct experience of trying to provide facilities or guidance for young people making the key decisions in their teens seem to despair at ever acquiring the resources to satisfy their needs.

In the following articles, PAT CARROLL looks at how church-run organisations are trying to keep the lid down by winning more control of youth services, social worker BARRY CULLEN matches the hysteria about drug abuse against the allocation and direction of funds, and BRIAN TRENCH examines the contradictions of the proliferating special projects and schemes.

left without any amenities for years. What I do find galling, however, is that the provision of social amenities is tied so firmly to religious denomination. These are Catholic projects for Catholic kids, Catholic clubs for Catholic Youth. Open in theory, of course, to all but with control exercised without question by local and diocesan clergy.

It is a direct mirror image of our education system and reflects a determination by the clergy to ensure that all youth policy, in and out of school, is kept under their direction whilst always, of course, reminding public authorities — both central and local — of their funding obligations.

The past decade has witnessed an enormous growth of community-type movements particularly around Dublin. Residents and tenants moved into new estates, private and public, and found they had to create residents committees and action groups to fight for open spaces, play facilities and community centres. Often these groups displayed remarkable militancy and attracted widespread support.

This gave rise, amongst many socialists, to the belief that they were a kind of civic equivalent to trade unions in the workplace. In practice though, clerical influence is a major feature of many of these groups and more often than not, the local priest is President or Chairman of the Community Council. Interestingly, one exception to this is the National Tenants' Association (NATO) under Matt Larkin who for years maintained a spirited independent approach with a trade union-like philosophy.

Clerical domination is evident too in

the Inner City areas, often cited as examples of militancy. I had some meetings with a Youth Employment Action Group which is, rightly, seeking work opportunities in the area and had the support of Dublin Trades Council for its demands. Curiously however, I found that this group structured its demands around the parish. They identified the community as the parish and the community leader, without hesitation, as the parish priest. They wanted houses, schools and jobs so that their parish could survive. And they were hostile to a State school in their area such as a purely vocational school. They wanted a "community" school, i.e., one with explicit guarantees for their parish head man.

Of course, what the Church people are doing is filling a vacuum left by the failure of public bodies to respond to genuine community needs. Satellite towns of huge population density like Tallaght or Blanchardstown are planned and constructed with money and advice but are reluctant to become involved in the day to day responsibilities of youth clubs or community centres. The diocese has become really adept at filling this role.

In the youth policy area, the CYC now covers everything from leadership courses to summer projects — with



Tea and sympathy from the bishops

pilgrimages to Rome every summer to meet the Pope as a reminder of the higher cause that is served by all the humdrum work. And to finance all this, a special Church collection is made, this year yielding £125,000. Meanwhile, in addition to special grants for individual projects, the Department of Education pays out a grant of over £100,000 — more than it gives to the National Youth Council.

The Tony Gregory deal envisages the creation of a National Community Development Agency as a substitute for

Combat Poverty. This agency was promised a sum of £2 million in the Dáil. "Community Development" is a kind of catch-all phrase that, in practice, replaces any chance of developing independent, self-reliant local groups (including claimants unions) with the kind of clericalist parish committee so common at present. Now, however, a huge sum of money will be available to copperfasten their influence. The Bishops will be pleased.

PAT CARROLL

Drugs

A little over twelve months ago, Dr. Michael Woods, Minister for Health, speaking at a seminar in Maynooth College warned against becoming 'alarmist' about illicit drug use. He said "It would appear that even for the few who have become involved in this form of drug abuse, it is a transient and experimental form of behaviour, attractive to rebellious youth".

Last month, the same Dr. Woods, in a speech in which he assured that he was not being "sensational or emotive", announced the allocation of £250,000 to the Health Education Bureau for a National Programme of Drug Education and Prevention.

I believe that this money would have been better allocated to community groups and projects already intensely involved in this problem for the past two years — despite the lack of encouragement, enthusiasm, and initiative from the Health Education Bureau and other professional and statutory bodies.

Just over two years ago a social worker

working with a group of teenage palfium (opiate) experimenters, in an inner city community, applied to the Health Education Bureau for funding to assist a small drug education project in the community. The project was designed to provide a counselling/youth service for the experimenters, while at the same time educate everyone else in the community before they too became involved. The application was backed by local professionals and the tenants group.

The group of people supporting the project were very well organised and had already established contacts with Coolemine Therapeutic Community, the Drugs Squad, and Jervis Street Drug Advisory Centre. The Health Education Bureau turned down the application and, without offering any assistance or guidance, deflected the group to the Eastern Health Board. This, despite the Health Education Bureau being set up in the first place to initiate drug education programmes.

After being turned down for financial assistance from the Health Education Bureau the project I mentioned collapsed; the palfium experimenters turned to heroin; heroin spread like wildfire through a community that was ill-prepared; children became addicts; there was an outbreak of hepatitis; some people died. Since then, the community has been able to pick itself up again and persist in arguing for the type of resources that are necessary to deal with the problem. But, much of the damage had already been done.

This is just one example of how public money is allocated for a specific purpose, i.e., to prevent young people from using drugs, but is never in fact used for that purpose. How will this HEB money be used to prevent one single young person from experimenting with heroin? It will not. The money will be spent on research, leaflets, posters, seminars, international conferences and reports on international conferences.

All these will be aimed at people, doctors, teachers, parents, youth leaders, who it is felt, at some stage will come in contact with young people who are potential drug abusers. At this stage the 'knowledge' is imparted to the young person. The approach fails on two accounts.

Firstly, no attempt will be made to confront any of the social, economic and

political conditions surrounding and contributing to drug addiction. In the Dublin communities where drug addiction has been experienced at epidemic levels, teachers are part of an educational system that young people have rejected and left at an early age, resources for youth leaders are virtually non-existent and many doctors have themselves contributed to the escalation of the drug problem through the repeated over-prescription of pharmaceutical drugs for the relief of stress caused by poverty, unemployment and bad social conditions.

Drug addiction cannot be prevented in isolation from the daily experience of frustrated and powerless communities. Drug addiction concerns the allocation and distribution of resources. It is therefore political. A genuine response must involve a re-allocation of resources to community groups for themselves to tackle the problem they now live with.

It is within the power of the community to do this. It is within the power of the community to improve the social experiences of young people so that they will be more interested in fulfilling themselves, than destroying themselves.

This cannot happen in a vacuum, without resources. The Health Education Bureau money, earmarked for an information process designed to inform people in two years time of the nature of the problem they themselves have experienced and lived with for the past two, would be better spent in the funding of 'Community Drug Action' and 'Awareness' projects some of which already exist in affected areas.

Secondly, the young person through being designated the mere 'recipient' of sacred knowledge on drugs, becomes alienated from the "Drug Education Process". This process, instead of developing an awareness of drugs amongst young people, re-inforces any alienation they might already have experienced. In fact, the process, being a repressive one and one that allows for no active participation by the young person, could precipitate a young person's first experience of drugs, in the very same way that other potentially repressive processes (education, employment, family) have already done.

Amongst West European countries, Ireland through its institutions of Church and State, stands out in its consistent and prolonged suppression of youth, its culture, identity and values. In denying to young people the legitimacy of their understanding of complex urban society, such institutions have alienated youth.

It is simplistic to suggest that young people who become addicted to drugs are

merely 'escaping' the pressures of urban society. Their path to addiction can be compared with Laing's analysis of the schizophrenic's path to madness. The schizophrenic was not escaping the responsibilities and duties of family life. His or her movement to the schizophrenic condition was the most rational and logical conclusion to an irrational and contradictory family situation.

Similarly, the potential addict very often reaches a high level of consciousness and understanding of the social and human condition. When the legitimacy of this is denied the young person is alienated and pre-disposed to drug abuse. If that consciousness is firstly recognised and accepted, it can be channelled into very positive developments in the community. Existing organisations responsible for youth development are themselves caught up in the process of alienating youth.

One has only to look at the amount of financial resources in such organisations given over to administration, seminars, services, trips to Lourdes, etc, while very little is spent on Youth Action Projects, where young people themselves can

contribute and participate in their direction and development.

Already in one Dublin community, young people, including addicts and ex-addicts, have come together in designing their method of preventing a further escalation of drug abuse, through a Community Youth Action Project. In a Dublin inner city community the people have designed a "community-based therapy approach" to drug addiction.

In the North inner city, discussions are well under way for an appropriate community response to the problem in that area. It is to these groups and others like them that Dr. Woods's allocation should have gone, and not to the professionals of the Health Education Bureau, who have sat on this problem for five years, while it gets worse and worse, and in that period never came up with one single initiative that made sense either to the addicts or the community in which they lived.

BARRY CULLEN is a social worker working in Dublin's south inner city.

Schemes

Over a period of 20 weeks from this month twelve young people from Dublin's north inner city will be trained in the practice and theory of sports. Under a scheme to be run by the North Central Community Action Project and funded through AnCO, the trainees will kick balls around and get fit, but also study sports as business and as religion.

Next month, the fruits of another NCCAP temporary-jobs-scheme-with-a-difference will be seen in the Inner City Looking On Festival. A drama group, which includes housewives in their 30s as well as young unemployed, will present a theatrical picture of the development and decline of the city centre. For the six months these 14 people have been researching and rehearsing the play, they have been paid as trainees under a Department of Education youth employment scheme.

In Dublin's inner city the usual regulations and restrictions governing short-term jobs schemes have been bent and broken. But there is no guarantee that this example of more imaginative application of funds will be followed elsewhere. There is every reason to fear the opposite. The inner city is regarded as special, rather than a sign of things to come for all urban and suburban areas.

The Youth Employment Agency which

by next year will be supervising the allocation of £90 million to such projects promises to become a bureaucratic chess board on which the vested interests of several departments and agencies simply check each other. The vast bulk of the money will be channelled through existing institutions.

The YEA will always be at several removes from the young people to whom the increased resources are supposedly directed. Four months after the YEA was formally established it has produced nothing but platitudes. It does not even have a clear statistical or sociological picture of the target it is aiming at.

Both Coalition and Fianna Fáil governments have held out the YEA as a means to cut into the spiral of unemployment, truancy, delinquency and crime. But the regulation which requires that young people must have been six months unemployed to qualify for schemes funded by the YEA may also be the guarantee that tens of thousands enter the spiral before the net catches them.

Not one of the projects submitted to the YEA addresses itself directly to young people "at risk". The agency does not have a mechanism to connect directly with the schools, nor does it provide for a follow-through to keep in contact with

young people who have completed schemes.

The trainee rates which prevail on such schemes are no alternative to the earnings which might be made bouncing cheques or pushing drugs. (Here, too, some inner city projects have bent the rules to ensure that trainees get something close to the wages paid in the world of "real" jobs.) The rates for instructors are well below those paid to craft workers generally, and appear designed to encourage the notion of temporary or voluntary work in this area. Agencies and governments still have difficulty accepting that working in youth services can be a full-time professional activity.

The Youth Encounter Projects run under the auspices of the Department of Education do appear to have had some genuine success in providing a wider range of choices for those who have been mitching constantly and got into trouble with the law. The Finglas scheme, for instance, provides food, schooling and some social facilities for just 20 boys between 10 and 15 — a drop in a vast ocean. Attendance is 90% and court appearances have dropped by 80%. Half of the "graduates" are in jobs or further education/training, just two are in St. Patrick's Juvenile Prison.

There are just four of these scheme nationally, ostensibly being tested over three years before being applied elsewhere. Not all of the others can claim the success the Finglas project claims. But it took the very peculiar circumstances of the Haughey/Gregory deal to win a commitment for the establishment of three more YEPs in the north inner city.

The decision reflected at its most arbitrary and opportunistic the way in which the tap is turned on or off. In Fatima Mansions, the south city centre flats complex which has been the focus of much public hand-wringing, schemes have been chopped and changed, youth workers have come and gone. Over the last six months, two new youth workers have been trying to attract the "unattached" who, as they see it, are "doing nothing with their lives."

So advanced is the disintegration, that the youth workers are as likely to face opposition from working class people in the community as they are to find support. In an area where half of the 350 flats have had break-ins the tolerance of "do-gooders" is very limited. The fact that one of the youth workers was recruited locally changes little.

The right to live free of the threat of break-ins, or worse, can hardly be denied. But how is it to be protected? The gut response at virtually all levels of society is to say: lock up the offenders, get more police onto the streets. Yet all the evidence is that imprisonment provides



only a temporary respite and gives the prisoners training in even more serious crime.

The experience of social workers is that young prisoners are not at all attracted by the offer of places on temporary jobs schemes. In their plans to give released prisoners an alternative, through socially meaningful work, the Prisoners' Rights Organisation is deliberately steering around the state agencies. AnCO has had to recognise that its community workshops in the inner city are at too great a distance from the people they are supposed to cater for. Now, AnCO is offering management of three of these workshops to local organisations.

The Gardai have made a small gesture in the direction of specialist youth work, but the Juvenile Liaison Officers, who aim to head off first-time offenders from a career of crime, are hopelessly under-strength and isolated. The recent increase from a national total of 45 to 69 hardly changes the picture. Although the new posts attracted more competition from within the ranks than ever before, the JLOs complain openly that they are not accepted by other Gardai, or even obstructed by them. Most of them work extensive unpaid overtime, thus entering the ranks of voluntary youth workers.

The lingering commitment to "volunteerism" lies at the root of the inability to make clear-headed decisions on youth services. It was responsible, for instance, for the disbanding of a team of youth workers who were operating in the city centre in the early 1970s.

But the experience with the mainly parish-based youth clubs is worse than that of state-funded, professionally-run projects. Many city clubs have been the scene of bitter, sometimes violent, battles over who is "in" and who is "out". Even where it has not come to that, the strains of working voluntarily or ambitions to

control committees have undone some praiseworthy initiatives.

In Inchicore, a purpose-built youth club, which at the time of its construction in 1977 was the first of its kind, was closed for a long time as a result of rows about its management. It had also become a battleground for gangs who sometimes fought with hatchets outside the premises. In its first phase it had been run from outside the area through St Vincent's de Paul volunteers. Now, the management is being re-organised on the basis of equal representation from each of the definable areas within the parish.

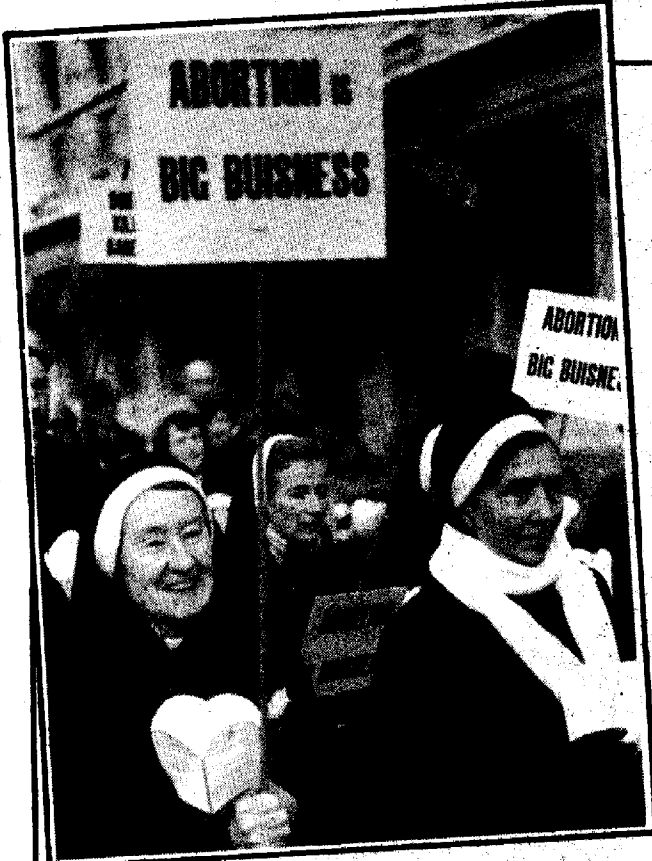
One of the priests involved now accepts that to make any kind of impression on an established pattern of delinquency the club needs a full-time professional worker. Otherwise, it just acts as an additional facility for those who already have others.

That is the core of the difficulty about most of these projects, schemes, services — they do not in fact cater for those who might benefit most and they impose objectives and methods, however subtly or unconsciously, rather than starting with what the young people themselves want, or the skills they already have. In a couple of British cities, joy-riders have been trained in mechanics and given "hot rods" and the space to drive them around.

The Dublin inner city sports and drama projects, and a couple of others show rare imagination in relating to the young people. They are aimed at boosting their self-confidence rather than providing them solely with narrow job skills which may be useless in a shrinking job market. They are in part the result of a new kind of expertise developing — an expertise in drawing up projects for official approval. But the expertise has been developed precisely to make the least use of the funds available.

Unless there are organisations and individuals on the ground who can do that the Youth Employment Agency will turn out to be one more massive deception, producing a generation of dependent, "scheme-hopping" bids. It is poor reflection on the trade union movement that it accepted, without a murmur, that workers should pay the 1% youth employment levy without asking any questions about the kind of schemes the money would be used to support.

A couple of years ago, an EEC-funded study showed that the jobs schemes operating at that time were narrow, shallow, sexist, unco-ordinated and, in at least once case, had been used to do work strikers were refusing to do. There are not many signs to show that the lessons have been learned.



THE ANTI-ABORTION AMENDMENT

THE BACKLASH HAS ARRIVED

GORETTI HORGAN

Woman's Right To Choose Group

The Woman's Right To Choose Group was set up in February 1980. Its aims were to campaign for free, legal and safe contraception and abortion on demand and an end to all social and economic discrimination against pregnant women, mothers and children. Four months later, in June, the British-based Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child sent two speakers to Dublin and Irish SPUC was launched.

In April 1981, scarcely a year since the first Right to Choose meeting, a campaign was launched to insert an anti-abortion Amendment into the Constitution. The Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC) stated that such an amendment was necessary "Because the right to life of the unborn child, which has been denied in many countries, is now being challenged in Ireland."

At this stage, the Right to Choose Group was the only group in the country speaking out in favour of abortion rights. It was then a small, Dublin-centred women's group whose resources were stretched to the limit in keeping the Irish Pregnancy Counselling Centre in operation, providing speakers for women's groups, and issuing educational material. Yet the very existence of this just-getting-on-its-feet group caused the mobilisation of high powered anti-abortion forces which are well funded and organised and can conduct a campaign which appears much stronger than their actual numbers.

When the Amendment Campaign was launched, it was proposed that the amendment be "The State recognises the absolute right to life of every unborn child from conception and accordingly

guarantees to respect and protect such right by law" (*Sunday Tribune*, 3 May 1981). This wording was rapidly dropped as it was pointed out that there are no "absolute rights" in the Constitution. It was further indicated that such an Amendment would mean that even the two cases of abortion allowed by the Catholic Church — when the pregnancy is ectopic (outside the uterus) and when the woman has cancer of the uterus — would be outlawed and the woman, who doesn't have an "absolute right to life" would have to be allowed to die in order to ensure the foetus' "absolute" right. So the PLAC lawyers had to return to the drawing board. They have now come up with a new wording, but are not making it public until they know whether the Attorney-General will give it the go-ahead.

In just a year, SPUC and the PLAC with their McCarthy-like terrorist tactics have amply demonstrated the institutional power still wielded in this country by the Roman Catholic Church. The three Workers' Party TDs and Jim Kemmy are the only elected politicians who have had the courage to stand up and openly condemn the Amendment. Other liberal politicians are known to privately oppose the move and have publicly expressed reservations, but their cowardice in the face of the hysterical anti-abortionists and their unwillingness to challenge the authority of the Catholic Church puts them in a position of *de facto* support for the Amendment.

Perhaps the principal failure of the

PLAC has been its inability to get across a "caring" image. Despite the anti-abortion propaganda, feminists and others in favour of the right to choose are very much seen as those who care about the realities of living, of bringing up children with inadequate housing and childcare facilities, of living on paltry Social Welfare allowances, of facing social disapproval. It is the pro-choice lobby which has consistently worked for a realistic alternative to abortion, which gets involved in the campaigns struggling to bring about the necessary changes.

The PLAC have lately started to revise its image and are now stressing that they hope the debate provoked by the referendum would focus attention on the need to provide "the fully caring, compassionate and supportive environment needed by women in difficulty". "The fact must be faced that there still exist communities and families within this country to which a pregnant girl cannot turn in time of difficulty for that caring and non-judgemental support which we all acknowledge, in theory, should characterise a truly Christian society. Anyone who, while opposing abortion, still supports such attitudes, does not serve the cause of this campaign" (Dr. Julia Vaughan, *Irish Times*, 28 April 1982). If the sentiments behind this statement sound familiar, it is because this is what the pro-choice lobby has been saying (though not in quite those words!) for over two years.

However, experience in Britain and the Six Counties has indicated that the anti-abortion lobby, whatever their public statements and despite cosmetic steps, show great regard for life before birth but

quickly lose interest once the baby has been born. The British organisation, LIFE, which recently opened an office in Dublin, has played a major part in the UK drive to show anti-abortion interest in helping pregnant women. However, criticisms of the convent-like nature of their mother-and-child hostels and regular press scandals reporting evictions of pregnant women or women with young children from the hostels have somewhat tarnished LIFE's "caring" image.

A further aspect of the desire of the PLAC to change its image is their recent careful dissociation of themselves from the SPUC campaign of horror in the schools. This approach to schoolchildren has been widely condemned, even by conservative organisations like the Council for the Status of Women and Ally. Unlike SPUC they will not be distributing gory colour photographs or "confronting anyone with material about which they may feel squeamish or which may offend their sensibilities" (Julia Vaughan). They have realised that the gut instinct of ordinary people is to reject SPUC's emotive use of shock-horror paraphernalia. The PLAC is certainly trying to distance itself from SPUC's extremist position and are probably aware of the harm which SPUC's arch-Catholic image has already done to their cause.

Many people who are personally against abortion do not support the Amendment and are worried about the possible implications of its success. There has also been much discussion among progressive individuals and groups about the purpose of this Constitutional Amendment Campaign. Of one thing there is little doubt — this Amendment Campaign is about more than just abortion. It represents a reactionary and anti-democratic movement to counter the progressive liberalisation of opinion within Irish society.

Concern for the rights of women and minorities has, over the past ten years or so, led many Irish people to question the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and the State in the area of private morality. Anti-abortionists' statements

The fight starts here

The Woman's Right to Choose Campaign was set up by the decision of a Conference called by the Woman's Right to Choose Group in December 1981. This national campaign, which is open to both women and men, has as its aims:

1. Free, legal and safe contraception and abortion on demand.
2. An end to all social and economic discrimination against pregnant women and mothers.

Group affiliations and individual memberships are being sought on a national basis. The immediate objective of the campaign is to oppose and defeat the proposed amendment to the Constitution.

The Woman's Right to Choose Campaign supports and is affiliated to the broad-based Anti-Amendment Campaign. This campaign is attempting to have the amendment referendum stopped. If the referendum goes ahead however, it will oppose the amendment on the following grounds:

1. The proposed amendment would do nothing to solve the problem of unwanted pregnancies;
2. It would allow for no exceptions even in cases where pregnancy severely threatens a woman's health or is the result of rape or incest;
3. It would be sectarian;
4. It would impede further discussion and possible legislation on abortion;
5. It is an irresponsible waste of public funds.

THE WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE CAMPAIGN can be contacted at P.O. Box 1076, Dublin 1. Phone: 965491.

THE ANTI—AMENDMENT CAMPAIGN can be contacted by phoning 308636.

have always made it clear that the main opposition to abortion is not concern for the foetus, but fear of women's independence and fear of female sexuality. Opposition to abortion is part of a larger opposition to changes in family relations, sexual mores, and the status of women. This is manifest in the failure of the PLAC to call for better sex education and contraceptive facilities which might help reduce the number of women needing abortions.

Many would see similarities in the tactics used here by the PLAC and the activities of the "Movimento per la vita" in Italy and the Human Life Amendment Campaign in the U.S. In Italy, the referenda on divorce and abortion were made into a crusade against communism, sexual immorality and the destruction of family values. The target for attack was not so much divorce or abortion, but the growing popularity of the Italian Left.

In the U.S. the Amendment Campaign, which is almost identical in its intent to the one being carried out in Ireland, was first mooted in the late '70s

but has had little success. It was the brainchild of the New Right which, while seeing a halt on abortion as the priority, is fighting on a number of political and cultural fronts to counter the liberal social policies of the 60s. Their harshly reactionary and evangelical vision for the USA involves the defence of the male-dominated family, an aggressive foreign policy, support for capitalist free enterprise and imposition of a puritanical sexuality at the expense of the working class, women, blacks, gays and lesbians, and children.

While in Italy and the US there

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**Anti-Amendment Campaign
Public Meeting**
**"The Case against the
Abortion Referendum"**
Auditorium, Liberty Hall, Dublin.
Wednesday, June 9th. 8 p.m.

movements were seeking to invalidate existing liberal laws, abortion is already totally illegal in Ireland. Under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act anyone procuring an abortion, or helping someone to procure an abortion, is liable to a sentence of life imprisonment. Holding a referendum on abortion now, when debate of the issue has hardly begun, is, as pointed out in the *Irish Times* letters page, 6 May 1982, "a vote of no confidence in the future". And this is precisely how the anti-abortion lobby themselves see it. "Dublin pro-life activist John O'Reilly told the seminar . . . he believed the Pro-life Amendment to the Constitution was the answer to the abortion problem in Ireland. It must be won while the vast majority of the Irish people were still opposed to abortion, and while abortion was not too politically divisive" (*Irish Catholic*, 1 April 1982), reporting on seminar organised by the Knock Family Life and Prayer Centre.)

It is less than a decade since the special position of the Catholic Church was removed from the Constitution. Since

then, the position of the Church on contraception has been rejected by the majority of the population and the divorce issue appears to be going in the same direction. With a young population and an increasing number of women who have had abortions in England, pressure for the liberalisation of the law on abortion is inevitable over the next few years. However, at the moment Ireland, where most people are still practicing Catholics, is probably the only country in the world where a referendum calling for a continued prohibition of abortion in all circumstances could still be won.

Ireland is to be the field for a last pitched battle by the Catholic Church against the secularisation of society. With the promise of the enshrinement in the Constitution of the Catholic teaching on abortion (with the only exceptions being precisely the two allowed by the Catholic Church), "Ireland is on the verge of creating a new missionary vitality in a pagan era by leading the Catholic countries back to the values which give to human life precedence over any economic or social priorities" (Editorial, *Irish Catholic*, 1 April 1982, welcoming Mr.

Haughey's promise to hold a referendum).

What then, if the Amendment is passed? SPUC and the PLAC speak vaguely of "enabling legislation". Certainly any such Amendment will include a guarantee to "protect by law" the right of the fertilised ovum, embryo, foetus, over that of the pregnant woman. The first batch of legislation would almost certainly close those non-directive pregnancy counselling centres, such as the I.P.C.C. and Well Woman Centre, which refer women who choose abortion to safe and inexpensive clinics in Britain. Next on the list would probably be the outlawing of certain methods of contraception which anti-abortionists define as abortifacient — the IUD, the low dose and progesterone only Pill.

The campaign against the Amendment will, therefore, be the most important fight of '82. Opposition to the Amendment must come, not just from those who support abortion rights, but from all who want to see a pluralist society in Ireland.

Women's rights in Europe

Brian Trench

The Catholic Church is becoming increasingly despairing in its efforts to hold on to the powers and influence it has traditionally had in most Western European countries. The plans to shunt Pope John Paul II around Portugal, Britain and Spain within a few months — plans which have been upset by political crises — reflect the despair.

It is not that all religion is going through a decline. The Protestant churches have been experiencing a revival in both parts of Germany as vehicles of the peace movement. More exotic cults are flourishing. But even in its most firmly established centres of strength the Catholic Church is in ragged retreat.

Having seen its decisive role in education undermined, having had to learn to live with vastly changed views of the sacredness of marriage, with legal divorce and contraception, the Catholic bishops are making a last determined stand over abortion.

To do so, they have broken the vows of political chastity which they appeared to have taken in many countries during the 1960s. At that time, the links between Christian Democratic parties and the hierarchy became less and less direct. In the more developed parliamentary democracies — even those where a clear majority of the population is Catholic — bishops stopped giving direct advice to voters.

In a recent book, Queen's University lecturer John H Whyte assembles information from a dozen countries to show the changing forms of Catholic political action. He also details the very general decline in Catholic religious observance. In Austria, Belgium, West Germany and Holland, the proportion of Catholics practising regularly fell from 40%, or more, to 30% or less, between the 1960s and the 1970s.

The church as attempted to recapture some of its audience by widening its political brief from almost exclusive concern with the position of the church, with education and morality, to take in issues such as pollution and poverty. The trend — like all others in this area — was late to hit Ireland. This is the only country Whyte examined which did not show this decline in religious practice during the economic expansion of the 1960s and early 1970s.

During these years, too, as Vatican II worked its way slowly through the system and the "marxist/christian dialogue" opened up, left-wing parties became less openly anti-clerical and individual Catholics took up public positions as advocates of socialism. The missionaries' experience in the political and social upheavals of less developed countries fed back into the metropolitan church and had a radicalising effect.

The price paid for this unorthodox

strategy was high. In country after country, the bishops lost political battles. When they tried to intervene too directly, it backfired. In 1972, two years after abortion legislation had been introduced by a social democrat/liberal coalition in West Germany, there was a general election at which the hierarchy called for votes for the Christian Democrats. But in both Protestant and Catholic areas, the centre-left coalition's vote went up.

In Holland — which like Germany has about 40% Catholics, but a politically more active church — the Labour opposition brought in a bill to decriminalise abortion, also in 1970. The Catholic-dominated government responded with another bill permitting abortion only in certain very narrowly defined circumstances.

The debate was, in a sense, academic. Abortion was already widely practised and Holland was one of the preferred places for women from other countries to seek abortion. But the debate continued for several years, sometimes as a central feature in the bargaining which precedes the formation of Dutch coalition governments.

Because of anticipated opposition, the

Catholic Justice Minister had been unable to carry out a declared intention in the mid-1970s to close down clinics where late abortions were done. Finally, abortion was legalised last year — but on terms which the women's movement rejected as altogether too restrictive.

Holland was one of several countries where, in the recessionary atmosphere of the late 1970s, the Christian Democrats experienced a revival. In neighbouring Belgium where 75% of the population is Catholic, contraceptive facilities became less easily available. The church-dominated Christian Democrats and the more right-wing Liberals have blocked the debate on legalising abortion. Clinics which had been providing abortion services openly have been raided and prosecuted. There have been charges, too, under that part of the law which makes it an offence to pass on information about abortion services. In the same process, new social welfare laws have reduced benefits for women.

In Britain, where conservatives draw on different ideological sources, the Thatcher government has followed the same practice. The family has been going through a major political revival. The social democratic Prime Minister of West Germany, Helmut Schmidt, has found a new enthusiasm for the happiness of child-rearing.

At a recent European conference on the changing concept of the family, a French historian, Michele Perrot, remarked that "in totalitarian regimes . . . the state addresses itself directly to families with the aim of harnessing them . . . a new right may emerge which purports to be for the family but which is at heart deeply fascist."

But there is a base-line, at least within member states of the EEC, below which some of the gains made by women in expanding their choices outside the housewife's role cannot go. The Community's anti-discrimination laws represent the highest common factor of European bourgeois thinking, having been introduced at a time when social democrats dominated the EEC.

The Christian Democrats and other conservatives have been far from united in their determination to turn the clock back. It was a Dutch Christian Democrat, Johanna Maij Weggen, who produced last year's European Parliament report on women's rights which caused the Irish MEP's such offence. And it was an Italian Christian Democrat, Cassanmagna Ceretti, who responded with a draft resolution on the family. Its preamble stated that a family policy was needed because the birth rate is falling below the level required to maintain the population.

It is in the Catholic-dominated countries in the southern half of Europe that the church's efforts are

concentrated. Their achievements have not been many, as an examination of four countries in that group makes clear.

FRANCE: The election of the Mitterand government last year ran against the rightwards tide to the north and east. The socialists have accelerated changes opening out more options for women. In spite of church-influenced resistance from within the political system and, even more strongly, from within the medical profession — where a battle for influence and power is going on — abortion is to be made available through the state health services from September.

Priests and nuns were prominent in a mid-May demonstration protesting against the government's stand. Among the estimated 10,000/15,000 were "many old people from the deep provinces" according to the daily paper, *Le Monde*. Far-right and Catholic organisations joined in the protest. The stewards wore leather shirts.

Conservative doctors had undermined the 1974 law, refusing abortions in one third of legitimate cases. And the family planning law which came into effect at the same time had not been followed through with the required education and information campaign. The Minister for Women's Rights, Yvette Roudy, wrote recently that the abortion law, as it stood, favoured the rich and encouraged doctors to engage in financial speculation. The question of paying the costs of an abortion on social security was, she said, "a question of human dignity and social justice."

The response of the Catholic church, to which over four-fifths of the French population have nominal allegiance, is restricted by its own internal divisions. Whereas the hierarchy in countries to the south is influenced to some degree by the extremely conservative sect, Opus Dei, French bishops have been associated with the equally secretive and male-exclusive, but generally liberal-democratic, Freemasons. Even after the Pope's reiteration of the Vatican ban on masons the Archbishop of Paris recently justified the church's officiating at a leading mason's funeral by saying that the excommunication order applied only to organisations "acting against the church". The masons are strongly represented in the socialist government.

Their promises to expand the state school system have provoked a response from the private schools, most of them run by Catholic organisations. In France, the secular, rational tradition in the middle class is even stronger than in the other Catholic-dominated countries — where it was still able to survive through several decades of state concordats with the Vatican and of dictatorship. The campaign for the extension of the state school system is being led by the National Committee for Law Action.

ITALY: Two separate attempts by the Christian Democrats, in close co-operation with the church, to undo reforms by means of a referendum have failed. Although over 90% of Italians are Catholics, the voters rejected by clear majorities the pleas to throw out the 1970 divorce law in 1974. And they confirmed the 1978 abortion law, with its restrictions, against repressive opposition from the church and liberation opposition from the Radical Party in another referendum last year.

The Christian Democrats have held power more often than not through the many changes of government, but they have lost the initiative in family and moral matters. The feminist movement, launched in 1968, has influenced the left-wing parties. And the more far-seeing of the middle class have recognised the need for a break with the firmly patriarchal past.

Divorce was introduced against the vehement opposition of the Christian Democrats. The latter referendum was turned into a battle about communism, decline of morals, decay of the family. Also in 1970, the constitutional court declared the ban on sale of contraceptives to be unconstitutional. Illegitimacy was abolished in 1972 in a family law which also established equal rights and responsibilities for men and women in marriage. Three years later, family planning centres were set up around the country.

While the "Pro-Life Movement" has not been successful in reversing the gains made in the 1978 abortion law, they have been able to persuade many doctors not to perform abortions on grounds of conscience, as the law allows. But the 1981 referendum showed more clearly than ever before the Italians' independence of the hierarchy. In the campaign, Catholic intellectuals opposed the intervention of the hierarchy and the pro-lifers, arguing that the state should not interfere with personal convictions. Some claimed that legalising abortion



was the only way to prevent the devastating physical and psychological effects of illegal abortion.

SPAIN: A Communist Party Bill aimed at legalising abortion has been temporarily withdrawn from the Spanish Parliament, having already stirred up protest demonstrations from far-right and Catholic groups. The Bill had been introduced last year just as the campaign of support for the 11 Bilbao people charged with abortion offences had reached a new peak. When the case was eventually heard, after many delays, in March, the nine women who had had abortions were acquitted, the abortionist was sentenced lightly and recommended for a pardon, and a man was given a suspended sentence. The judge justified the unprecedented decision by reference to the 1978 constitution.

A week later, however, a woman was sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment for having an abortion; the abortionist was given 4 years and 2 months. In Galicia, the most totally Catholic-dominated region of Spain, the judges interpret the basic law differently.

The two-year battle over the constitution which followed General Franco's death took place in circumstances favourable to the Left, which has a strong secular, even anti-clerical tradition. The constitution removed the church from its privileged position in the state structure, made general commitments to women's equality, and a specific commitment to legislate for divorce. This issue had been the focus of the earliest feminist campaigns, when the repressive conditions had obliged the organisations to seek refuge with those liberal-democratic organisations which are tolerated.

After several false starts and massive internal upheavals in the ruling conservative party, UCD (in effect, a coalition of at least three distinct groups), divorce was legalised last year. In a law passed weeks earlier, equal rights had been granted to all children, whether born inside or outside marriage. In spite of the constitutional commitment on divorce, the hierarchy fought the government proposal aggressively — but only succeeded in provoking an even more hostile response. The UCD politicians who were seen to take their

orders directly from the bishops (generally those associated with the secret Opus Dei organisation) were isolated. Several have since left the party, while the liberal Justice Minister who steered the divorce bill through the party and parliament has set up his own "Party for Democratic Action".

The more conservative UCD leaders fear that the remaining progressives in the party might still vote for the Communist Party abortion bill when it is presented again "in more tranquil times". The socialists are likely to support it, with amendment. So, this will become the principal battleground in the church's attempt to claw back influence. The church and the religious orders are also having to fight a rearguard action to maintain their very considerable role in schools, colleges and hospitals.

PORTUGAL: The Pope's visit in May was a welcome boost to those trying to push people back to more traditional, though now "modernised", conceptions of family and society. The conservative coalition in power has been promoting these efforts, but not completely coherently. The only survivor of several changes of personnel in the government since January 1980 has been the Secretary of State for the Family, A Christian Democrat of a profoundly reactionary kind. But she was first appointed by a prime minister who was separated from his wife and openly living with another woman. The current premier has been divorced.

The Secretary of State for the Family has waged an individual campaign around the country in support of "family organisations", natural family planning, legislation to protect the family, and revision of the constitution to re-establish the family in its central role. The 1976 constitution, which is due to be revised this year, abolished the concept of illegitimacy, gave a number of guarantees about women's equality, obliged the state to promote "wider knowledge of family planning methods" and projected social advance in terms of class rather than family.

Recent governments have been gradually undoing the constitution even before it has been formally amended. They ignored it in deciding to grant the Catholic hierarchy direct access to the third TV channel. However, the church

would need to borrow in order to exercise these rights eventually. Were it not for Fatima's place as an international pilgrimage centre, the church would be very poor. In 90% Catholic Portugal, the church has its poorest diocese in Europe. Religious observance differs from one region to another. And the particularly reactionary character of the church has bred a strong, though narrowly based, secular current — and a progressive opposition within the church.

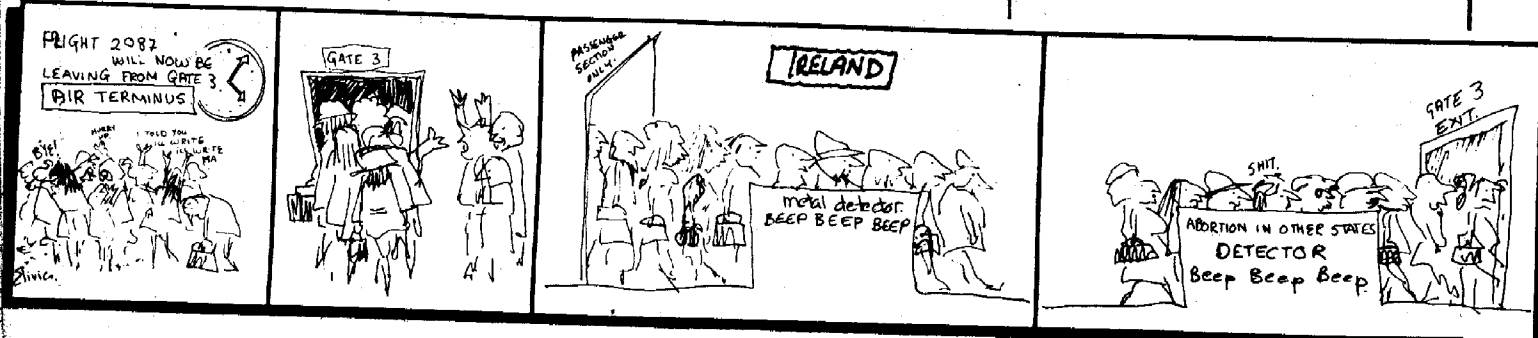
The concordat with the Vatican was revoked in 1975, opening the way for civil divorce. The following year, the Secretary of State for Health issued an order for the setting up of family planning centres. But the real impact of the measure has been limited greatly by the recalcitrance of many conservative doctors. The voluntary Family Planning Association and the poorly funded Commission for the Status of Women has had to carry the burden of the information and education campaign.

By strange contrast, the punitive 19th century abortion laws are hardly implemented and abortion is widely practised as a form of birth control — including in those regions where the church's influence is strongest. There are reckoned to be as many illegal abortions as there are births. Most of the small number of abortion prosecutions have been the focus of public campaigns.

After many hesitations, the Communist Party has introduced a parliamentary bill to decriminalise abortion, improve family planning services and establish formal sex education in schools. In an earlier campaign, over 2,000 people signed a statement admitting to having had an abortion.

In none of the traditionally Catholic countries are the reforms which have been mentioned totally secure, but each successive battle and each change has hardened yet more people against any attempt by the church to dictate attitudes in matters of personal choice.

On the eve of Pope John Paul II's visit to Portugal, a Lisbon weekly published a survey of religious attitudes. 90% of those polled said they were Catholics. But only 56% of those believed in the immaculate conception. More than 50% didn't know what country the Pope comes from.



Written by a Dublin Community Worker

HOW TO WORK THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

THE social welfare system is cumbersome, confusing, and in many ways illogical. It's like some ancient castle, to which various generations have added on bits, giving it a quaint, rambling character without any seeming order.

Successive Governments have attached bits and pieces to the social welfare scheme without any real thought as to the overall picture. We have thus ended up with a scheme that is clearly in need of a complete overhaul. Not only is it confusing, but it also manages to discriminate against various sections of the community in a quite unacceptable way.

For example, unmarried mothers can only receive a means-tested allowance, no matter how many contributions the woman has made over the years. Deserted wives and widows can get a non-means tested benefit if they have sufficient contributions. There is no social welfare payment for a father bringing up children alone, either as a widower or a deserted father. Married women are still treated as dependents, and this is not the subject of a High Court action.

For one important benefit, treatment benefit for dental or optical care, — when it suits the Department, the married woman suddenly becomes a non-dependent person, unable to rely on her husband's contributions to get such treatment.

The Appeals System

The appeals system is fundamental to any welfare scheme. There has to be a proper review procedure which is fair and independently examines the decisions of Department officials. Our present appeals procedure came into being in 1952 — and has continued since, unaltered.

It falls down in a number of ways. Firstly, it gives the claimant no adequate notice of why s/he has been denied a social welfare benefit. Secondly, the Department of Social Welfare is usually not represented at the appeal so that the claimant is given no opportunity to question the Department.

The Appeals Officer is an independent person — appointed by the Minister from the ranks of the Department of Social Welfare! While some appeals officers are better than others it is without doubt an unsatisfactory means of appointment. Justice must be seen to be done as well as being done.

The Best Approach

If you are refused a benefit, first ask the Department for information. And ask in writing before an appeal hearing.

For example, if you are disqualified from unemployment benefit because the Department says you



Derek Speths (Report)

left your job, ask for the information on which they base that opinion. Often you will find an employer has told lies to the Department to protect himself.

If you have been disqualified from disability benefit because you are said to be fit for work, ask for copies of the medical referee reports before you appeal, which you can show to your own doctor for comment. If the Department refuses to give information that has been reasonably requested, it could well be open to court action.

When you appeal, always ask for an oral hearing. The appeals officer doesn't have to give you an oral hearing, he can decide the appeal on the basis of the file he has, but you have a better chance if you actually get to speak to him. If you ask for an oral hearing and are refused, again there is a definite possibility of court action.

Don't overestimate your case. You may well be right that the Department's refusal of benefit is unjust, illogical, and unfair, but as things now stand the onus is on the claimant to prove his/her case.

Remember, no one will be at the hearing from the Department, it will usually be between you and the appeals officer, and the appeals officer needs convincing. So, convince him, if you have been turned down for unemployment benefit because you are allegedly unavailable for work, as many married women are. Get as many letters from employers stating that you have applied for a job as possible. Write out a list of the jobs you have looked for. Come armed with your lists and letters and don't take anything for granted.

Finally, don't be afraid to appeal. One thing that can be said about our appeals system is that it is informal — if anything too informal. But you are sitting talking to an appeals officer on the other side of a table; it is a discussion rather than a detailed court-type examination

of the evidence. If you are going to a disability benefit appeal, bring as many letters from doctors and hospitals as possible.

The Assessors

For unemployment benefit appeals, there are two assessors present (or more truthfully, sometimes present). These two people advise the appeals officer on the case, but the appeals officer still has the final word.

One assessor is drawn from a panel put forward by the employers, and the other from one put forward by the unions. It can be useful to have the union assessor present if s/he is prepared to back you up. You have the right also to have both assessors present. If either or both are not present, you can have the appeal adjourned. Unless you sign that you consent to the appeal going ahead with one or both assessors absent it cannot go ahead.

Often, just before your hearing you will be asked to sign a paper and not told that you are in fact signing away your right to have assessors present. Check what you are signing, and if you want assessors present — particularly the union assessor — don't sign the paper. Very often you will have waited so long for the appeal to be heard that you won't want to have it put off until another day — but think about it — if it is a difficult appeal it may well be to your advantage to have a union assessor present.

One final word of advice: you can bring someone along with you to support or represent you. The appeals officer also has the power to give expenses for your representation or witness. So if you need help — write to the chief appeals officer before the hearing and ask him to agree to cover the expenses of the representative/witness you require. This could be particularly useful if you were appealing a refusal of disability benefit — and you needed a medical witness.



Disability Benefit

Disability benefit appeals can be very difficult to win. Before you get to the appeal stage, you will have been examined by two or three medical referees — doctors appointed by the Department — to decide if you are fit for work.

Their evidence will be given a lot of weight by the Appeals Officer, who has no medical training himself. The fact that you have a letter, for example, from your doctor may be largely outweighed by the medical referee reports.

There is a useful, and little known section of the Disability Benefit regulations which may help you with such an appeal. Very often the real question is: Are you fit for any work? The appeals officer may accept that you are not fit to return to the job you were in but he will insist that you are available for other employment, for example, that doesn't involve lifting heavy loads or long periods of standing.

It is very difficult to argue against this in some cases. But help may be found in the regulations (s.i. 1953/7 Section 6). This states that even though a person is not totally incapable of work s/he will be said to be incapable of work when s/he is "under medical care in respect of a disease or disablement and it is certified by a registered medical practitioner that by reason of such disease or disablement he should abstain from work and he does not work".

Therefore, if your doctor certifies that you should abstain from your work because of your disease/disablement, the Department must regard you as being incapable of work. It can be argued that the Department have no choice but to do this as the Regulations say the person *shall* be regarded as being incapable for work — a similar provision in the United

Kingdom Regulations was changed to *may* and this was done to give the U.K. Department some choice in the matter. Our Regulations have not been altered.

The Contributions you pay

One of the most confusing aspects of benefits such as disability and unemployment, particularly for young people, is the question of contributions. There is a gap between when you pay the contribution and when it is of use to you. The system works on "benefit years" and "contribution years". The benefit year is from each January to December, and the Contribution year runs from April to April.

Suppose you claim unemployment benefit in June 1982, you will be claiming in the benefit year January 1982 to December 1982. In order to qualify for benefit there are two conditions as far as contributions are concerned. You have at least 26 contributions paid some time during your working life. And you must have at least 26 (more if you are to get full benefit) contributions in the last complete contribution year before the start of the benefit year in which you claim.

These contributions can be either paid or credited. Credited contributions are given each week you sign on or send in a medical certificate. So in our example of someone claiming benefit in June 1982 (benefit year January 1982—December 1982) the last complete contributions year before the start of the benefit year will be April 1980 to April 1981.

It is in *this* year that you must have at least 26 contributions paid or credited to get some benefit — 48 paid/credited to get full benefit. Also, if you are to get pay-related benefit in addition to your unemployment/disability benefit your income during the year April 1980 to April 1981 will decide if you get any

pay-related and what amount. Thus, if you weren't working much during this year you will get little or no pay-related.

The 85% rule causes a great deal of confusion for those claiming unemployment benefit and pay-related. This rule stops a person getting more than 85% of his/her previous earnings through unemployment benefit and pay-related. For example, if you are unemployed and earned £100 per week before you became unemployed, then your benefit plus pay-related cannot be more than £85. If your entitlement comes to more, then your pay-related benefit will be reduced.

The Department cannot reduce your unemployment benefit under this rule, only your pay-related. This rule is rarely mentioned by those who rant and rave about "social welfare spongers" getting more on the dole than if they were working. But there has been a call recently that it should be extended to cover disability benefit also.

This should be opposed, as it is an extremely vicious rule in its application. It takes no account of family size or needs, applying equally to single people as well as those who have dependents. A single person is likely to get his/her full entitlement as his/her unemployment benefit will be lower, therefore there is a greater margin for getting pay-related before the operation of the 85% rule.

The person with dependents will be getting higher unemployment benefit and therefore is far more likely to find his/her pay-related cut to little or nothing in order to keep them within the 85% rule. In a number of cases, claimants with dependents got no benefit from recent unemployment benefit increases, simply because as their ordinary benefit went up their pay-related was reduced in order to maintain them at 85% of their previous earnings.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

The supplementary welfare allowance replaced the Home Assistance Scheme in 1977 and is operated by the Health Boards. It is intended to provide a basic means of support below which a person's income should not fall. It also provides for additional payments on either a weekly basis or a once-off grant. These are discretionary payments.

Grants can be claimed to cover ESB bills, clothing needs, or exceptional payments for which the person could not be expected to cover with his/her normal income.

The scheme also allows for the payment of a rent addition, of up to £5 per week to help meet rent or mortgage repayments. (Larger amounts than £5 can be paid only with special approval.)

A husband, wife and two children, receiving unemployment assistance, will be getting £59.20 per week. As the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate for husband, wife and two children is £57.95 per week, the family are above the Supplementary Welfare Allowance level, and therefore will not be entitled to a weekly amount of Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

However, if they were renting privately or repaying a mortgage, they should look for an addition to be paid on a weekly basis to help them with their housing costs. As stated, the amount will normally be a maximum of £5 per week, but depending on the actual level of payments the family could indeed look for a higher payment.

One of the difficulties with the scheme is that if you are turned down by the local officer (called the "Community Welfare Officer") there is no formal appeals procedure, but you should write to the Programme Manager for the Health Board in whose district you are, setting out the facts fully, your income and expenses and asking for a weekly rent addition.

The family in our example could also seek once-off payments under the scheme to help with other bills. Here again, if refused, the thing to do would be to appeal in writing to the Programme Manager.

The Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme can also be used to get money while waiting for a social welfare benefit claim to be processed.

The scheme further provides for payments to strikers to cover the needs of their dependents — although strikers without dependents with urgent needs, for example rent payments, could also receive some payments under the scheme.



Useful addresses:
National Social Service Board,
 71 Leeson Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 682422.
Coolock Community Law Centre,
 Northside Shopping Centre,
 Coolock, Dublin 5. Tel: 313174.
FLAC Resource Centre,
 c/o FLAC, 3 North Earl Street,
 Dublin 1. Tel: 726464.
Tallaght Welfare Society,
 1 Main Street, Tallaght,
 Co. Dublin. Tel: 515911.

Left: Social welfare officer hands out benefits by the roadside in Connemara. Previous pages: Dublin dole queues.

INTERVIEW

Jim Kemmy and Michael Conaghan of the new Democratic Socialist Party talked to Gralton

Gralton: Firstly, where did the DSP come from and what were the policies on which it was founded?

Kemmy: Well, Socialists Against Nationalism was an umbrella group which was opposed to the climate of nationalism. Nationalism and socialism are not necessarily complementary. Nationalism had grown at the expense of socialism and we felt we should combat the vile nationalism in our society. A lot of left wing groups were giving what they call critical support to republicanism and we felt that this wasn't the role for socialists — and felt that nationalism had led the whole socialist movement into a cul-de-sac, a dead end, over the last fifty or sixty years and it was time for a break with nationalism.

SAN was made up of some people who weren't in any group — and also the Socialist Party, the Limerick Socialist Organisation and the British and Irish Communist Organisation.

G: Have all of these groups come together in the DSP? Were there differences that had to be ironed out?

K: The three groups had evolved in their separate ways but they had one thing in common — their attitude to the national question. We didn't take it beyond that point at that stage — it evolved. But we have more members in the DSP now than were in those three groups combined. People who were not affiliated joined up when it snowballed.

The Limerick Socialist Organisation has disbanded, so has the Socialist Party. The B&ICO has a different composition in so far as it was organised outside of Ireland, in Britain as well as Belfast. And so far as we know most of the members of that have joined, in Dublin and Cork, where they were mainly based.

G: What about B&ICO members in the North?

K: We will not organise at all in the North. Our party will not have any branches involved in the politics of Northern Ireland, we believe that is not our function.

Conaghan: Talking about the composition of the party — I think one of the most hopeful signs is the number of people who weren't affiliated to any party, but who were political, for example myself, a very substantial minority of people who were just waiting for a development like ours, who have become very active. They brought a lot of idealism, a

lot of ideas, with them.

G: What difference would the DSP have with the Workers' Party? On nationalism, for instance, and on other issues, you seem to have a lot in common.

K: Some people, taking a cursory look at SFWP might be forgiven for drawing that conclusion about nationalism. But are they anti-nationalist? Because, they didn't join with us in Socialists Against Nationalism . . .

C: They were invited . . .

K: . . . they didn't join up with us then, and the three members they have in the Dail are all self proclaimed nationalists and will say so every time they get a chance — they're in favour of what they call a 32 county socialist republic. But what does that mean? It means the old nationalism dressed up again in some sort of a socialist fig

They appear to have two different types of policies — one policy in Dublin, in the leadership, and the other policy down the country in Cork and Kerry and Waterford. Sometimes there's a difference in what they say and what they do. It's an experiment — it will be interesting to see the outcome — to graft an open democratic socialist movement onto a militaristic conspiracy. If that can be done it will be a useful experiment in democracy and socialism. But there are some doubts about that.

G: To what extent will the DSP concentrate on parliament and to what extent will you be organising outside the Dail — for instance on trade union issues?

K: The big thing with the party has been an attempt to educate people to look at Irish history in a different way than the conventional left way — and to a large extent it has been a success. And if the party can influence the left and people generally to look at other issues, besides the history, the economic issues, in a different way — and, yes, the trade unions will be a prime area.

We will try to influence ordinary rank and file members and the ICTU to take a more serious and consistent view of the economy and to use the potential strength of the labour movement in a different way, rather than the pragmatic way they used it in the past.

The trade union movement must have a policy that is coherent and radical and that can change the balance of power in our society. The movement can't just go on marching, it must develop a political consciousness — and we would see our role as endeavouring to influence the thinking, consciousness and awareness of working people to take a sustained and determined attitude to shift the balance of power in our society. This will manifest itself in parliament and in the trade unions taking up a different kind of role.

G: Would it entail calling for direct industrial action on any of these issues, like PAYE, for instance, or unemployment? Would it mean support for workers, whether or not they had official backing, if they take industrial action on these issues?

K: We'd like action to be taken not on a piecemeal basis — a one day stoppage will achieve nothing unless it is allied to an overall strategy. Unfortunately it has happened all too often in the past that militancy was misdirected and had no overall coherent thrust.

We would see a rising awareness amongst the workers and the trade union leaders as well. Not just short term gains but a long term strategy to shift the balance of power in our society. And in that situation if there was industrial action to be called we would support that action as long as it was directed towards those ends and not just narrow sectional interests.

But we wouldn't impose those views on the trade union movement. We will cooperate with the movement in a democratic way, because we are democrats, but we will endeavour to influence them in that direction.

C: Apart from the trade unions — our members are also involved in social and environmental issues, like land,

housing. Increasingly our members will be getting involved in what might be local issues, but local issues with a national aspect to them.

At branch level we will be involved with the problems of youth, of drugs, violence, vandalism. We'll be putting forward intelligent, clear cut, firm but compassionate ideas about the way these things should be dealt with.

G: Would it be fair to say that you see the trade unions' role as one of sitting down with government and employers to work out policies, something like a National Understanding, with the role of the party being to use the Dail to encourage acceptance of that?

K: Not towards narrow sectional interests, but to approach a planned economy. The trade unions would have to push into areas that traditionally have been the prerogative of capitalists — areas like economic policy, health, education. Those areas are usually left to the government, apart from submitting the odd paper. We would see the trade unions movement moving into these areas in the interests of the people of our society.

G: Is there not a danger in such a centralised strategy that the ICTU, or the DSP in fact, might — having made such an arrangement — end up policing workers who take part in what you call piecemeal actions — as the ICTU has done with National Wage Agreements and National Understandings?

K: Having influence and powers means you must have responsibility as well. Sometimes these stopgap — those unofficial strikes and so on — are actions against the inequalities in those agreements, against the fact that the agreement was not thoroughgoing enough and didn't take into account some of the things we've been talking about.

It would be very hard to have a magic panacea which would cover all eventualities but what we can say is this: lower paid people have suffered a good deal and there's no point in paying lip service to that point. You have to take some action, and perhaps in many cases it was lower paid people who did react. In other cases it wasn't lower paid people — it was people who were concerned with differentials and preserving traditions.

G: You've talked about how the trade unions can bring about reforms. But how do you see the DSP's role in

bringing about a socialist society? Is it a case of more and more reforms or is there a point where revolutionary action has to be taken to bring about a new society? How do you see socialism being brought about?

K: Well, there's no easy answer to that one. We're well aware of all the promises made by left wing groups in the past, starting off as we are now, and which didn't last the pace. We're determined to avoid some of those pitfalls.

We understand we are starting off from a very low level of political consciousness and awareness about socialism in Irish society. We want to build up consciousness. I can't look too far ahead. If there was a development of socialist consciousness here and it looked like there was going to be a socialist government here, what would happen in that situation? There are examples, Chile is an obvious one. There would be a reaction against that type of development. In that situation we would see ourselves as justified in defending our socialist gains.

As of now that scenario is a long, long way off. We have five socialists in the Dail, out of 166. I don't think that scenario is impinging too immediately on our awareness. I don't think we should devote too much attention to what is going to happen in what looks like the long term, given the slow development of socialism here.

G: Will the DSP be actively opposing the anti-abortion constitutional amendment?

K: We will be actively opposing the amendment. We don't see the amendment as being relevant, we see it largely as a non-issue, we see the government giving in to a noisy, narrow minority in our society who are putting forward this amendment as if it was urgent or essential.

The decision of the court in making the rights of private property superior to the rights of the individual is something that should be highlighted. The implications of the Rent Restrictions Act being found unconstitutional are very large — that's an obvious issue that should be tackled, a far more urgent matter.

G: Will you be encouraging you members to become active in outside bodies, apart from the Dail, on issues such as this?

K: We would be willing to take part in a broad front

C: We have been involved in local areas on issues such as and creches, getting in at a realistic level, not just talking about it, to try and make cities civilised places for men and women.

G: Earlier we talked about your attitude to nationalism in the 26 counties. But what is DSP policy on the question of the North itself?

K: Our attitude to the North is basically, we're in favour of the deletion of Articles 2 and 3 of our constitution here, we're in favour of the majority to opt for the state of its own choosing, and we're in favour of full civil and human rights for the minority in Northern Ireland as a minority in the British state. We feel that reunification should not be a priority in our society at all.

G: Again you're referring to the 26 counties — but does the DSP have any policies on what's happening within the 6 counties, or do your politics stop at the border?

K: We see the matter of the internal politics of Northern Ireland as being primarily a matter for the people who live there. It could be considered presumptuous of us to tell the people of Northern Ireland what to do in a given situation. It's not for us in the middle of an economic crisis to start laying down a blueprint for the North.

G: How does the DSP see itself placed within the broad current of socialism — it's hard to see where it fits in with other broad socialist and democratic movements.

K: About the type of socialist links we have abroad — all I can say is that we're in favour of the expansion of human freedoms, the freedoms we have won under capitalism, which were achieved through bitter struggle. We don't want to throw them away under any system. Under capitalism some of the freedoms are academic — if you haven't the money you aren't free to eat. Nevertheless we believe in expanding those freedoms. We haven't yet fleshed out our attitudes to the Soviet Union or to Poland — we have no policy as yet on that. We're in the middle of an economic crisis ourselves, our people are crying for jobs and housing and food — it would be crazy for us to start talking about Eastern Europe.

C: As the cliché puts it — the blows for freedom abroad are generally struck at home.

DIPLOCKING THEM UP

The supergrasses — reformed para-militaries willing to shop their former comrades — have given the Diplock courts new business. A special correspondent surveys ten years of these non-jury courts.

According to a recent study, 40% of the 170 cases coming before the Diplock Courts in the first three months of last year should have been heard elsewhere. 20% of those interrogated under the emergency laws did not appear to be suspected of any particular offences. This is all part of what the report calls "the Diplock process" — now the norm in Northern Ireland.

The Diplock Courts derive their name from the British judge whose report on Northern Ireland's judicial system led to their introduction. They hear charges of scheduled offences such as murder, manslaughter, riot, arson, possession of firearms or explosives, membership of illegal organisations and collecting of information likely to be of use to terrorists.

The H-Blocks prisoners, who are continuing a limited protest, although some of their demands were met, have always maintained that the courts system under which they were imprisoned is extraordinary in every way.

The level of convictions — put at 94% — is high, something the Director of Public Prosecutions' office puts down to better preparation of cases rather than the acceptance of weak evidence. But the statistics only reveal part of the reality.

On bail, the Diplock Commission stated that it "should not be granted except by the High Court and then only if stringent requirements are met." The onus has been shifted to the defendant to convince the court that he/she will turn up for trial, and that he/she will not commit further offences or intimidate witnesses.

Says Belfast solicitor, Eilish Kelly: "Convincing a jury that you will turn up is particularly difficult for the average Catholic youth who appears before these courts, since the ties to the community in terms of a good job or owning a house usually don't apply."

If one of the charges is membership of the IRA or INLA, it is a continuing offence and therefore bail will be turned

down on the basis that further offences will be committed. At least 80% of bail applications are turned down by the High Court, says Ms Kelly. Those who are released tend to be very young or to be charged with offences for which they will not receive a sentence of imprisonment.

A 1979 survey showed that out of a total of 230 cases, 42 defendants who were eventually to receive a sentence other than imprisonment were refused bail and a further 38 were granted bail only after a long period in custody. It may take the police some time to prepare a file for presentation in court (16 weeks is the average from the first appearance). The difficulty involved in processing a High Court application is a further discouragement to younger and less experienced defendants.

Belfast councillor John McAnulty was held on remand for six months in 1977 on a charge of possessing incriminating documents likely to be of use to terrorists (among them, a city map). "The worst thing about my case," he says, "was that the police never at any time produced any evidence against me. I was released just before coming to trial so that they would not have to try to present evidence in court."

"There was no likelihood of my absconding. Indeed, half way through the six month period I was released for a relative's funeral. I can only see this as another form of internment."

Apart altogether from the number of charges which do not lead to convictions, as many as 70% of arrests do not lead to charges being brought. "This is a method of screening and harassment of the Catholic community," says Sean McCann of the Association of Legal Justice.

On admitting confessions as evidence, the Diplock Commission stated that "a confession made by the accused should be admissible as evidence in cases involving the scheduled offences unless it was

obtained by torture or inhuman or degrading treatment." Under jury systems a confession or written statement will be ruled out unless it is seen to be totally voluntary. There should be no physical violence, inducement or pressure.

Normally, an offer to drop heavier charges in exchange for a confession to having committed other offences would make the confession inadmissible (if challenged on those grounds) in other courts. In the Diplock courts, a prisoner must present a *prima facie* case of torture or degrading or inhuman treatment in order to have a statement ruled out.

The Diplock courts have occasionally rejected confessions on such grounds — unlike the Special Criminal Court. But Justice McGonigal declared in one case before the Diplock courts that for treatment to come within article 38 of the European Convention of Human Rights (i.e. torture or degrading or inhuman treatment) it must be "treatment of a gross nature . . . a degree of physical violence which could never be tolerated by the courts under the common law test." The judge concluded that "a moderate degree of physical maltreatment" seemed to be permitted under the Diplock recommendations.

The 1979 survey referred to earlier concluded that at least three quarters of the cases before the Diplock courts depended almost solely on a confession. In only one third of all cases did there appear to be strong independent evidence such as fingerprints. However, there has more recently been a decided decline in the allegations of physical ill-treatment.

In Michael Culbert's case — where the defendant admitted having committed a murder — six separate recommendations contained in the Bennett Report on treatment of people in custody were breached. Culbert was, for instance, made to stand for 52 hours during the first 72 hours in custody without seeing a solicitor, he was interviewed by more than two policemen

at a time, and he was denied adequate sleep.

Justice John McDermott acknowledged that these breaches had taken place, but considered that the report laid out guidelines only, and should not be elevated to the standing of law. On the basis of his own statement, Michael Culbert was given life imprisonment.

Belfast lawyers have drawn attention to the practice of "dropping a verbal". This refers to cases in which the accused refused to sign a statement but the policeman will say that in the course of an interview the accused made a remark such as "OK, I did it, but you'll have to prove it." According to P.J. McRory, "it is as if the Bennet report closed one door to getting confessions, but another backdoor has been opened."

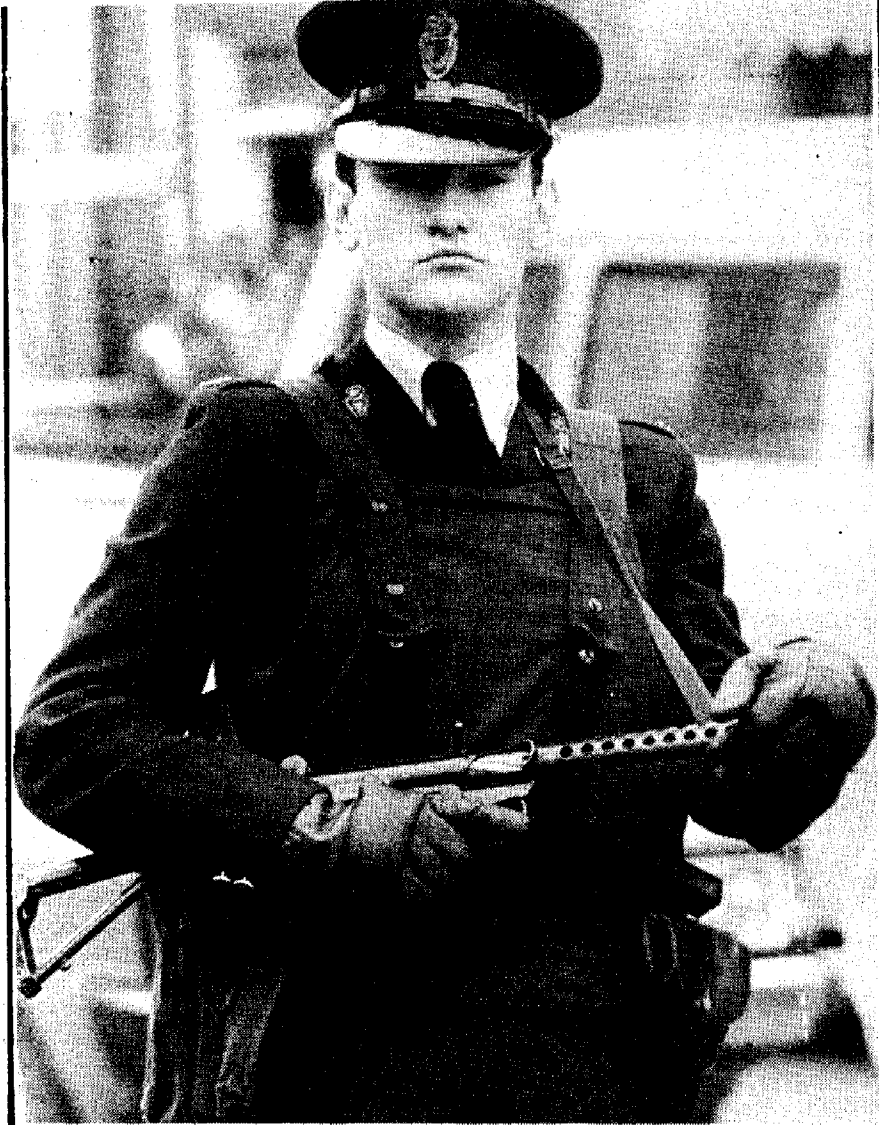
He recalls a case in which the accused was given life imprisonment, with a recommendation never to be released, purely on this kind of verbal evidence from three RUC officers.

On *firearms possession*, the Diplock report also shifted the onus of proof on to the accused to show "on the balance of probabilities that he did not know and had no reason to suspect that arms or explosives were where they were found." Contrary to the practice in jury courts, where the accused could only be found guilty of possession if he or she knew the weapon was there, accepted its being there and has some control over it, in Diplock cases it can be enough to be in the same house or car in which a firearm is discovered.

P.J. McRory recalls the case of a client who was acquitted in a British court after being found in a house where two pistols were discovered. His plea had been that he was "just with the guys for the night". In Diplock court, he would probably have been convicted. Bobby Sands was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment after he and three others had been stopped in a car in which a pistol was found. Sands pleaded unsuccessfully that it was not his car and that he had no knowledge that the weapon was there.

In this way, a hitch hiker could be liable for a weapon found in the car in which he or she gets a lift. But last year, leaders of the Ulster Defence Association were released after questioning when a raid on the UDA headquarters revealed a cache of arms. No charges were brought. Last month, UDA leaders were given bail after charging in similar circumstances — and in conditions where republicans would have been unlikely (at best) to have been given bail.

While *identification* is increasingly under challenge in jury courts, the "trained eye" of a policeman has secured convictions in Diplock courts. Off-duty UDR men testified that John Pickering shot a man on the Lisburn Road while



Derek Speirs (Report)

they watched from the other side. The judge said that even if they only had a fleeting glance it would have "rivetted to memory". On that evidence alone, Pickering received a life sentence.

Intimidation of witnesses was cited as the main reason for establishing these special courts, but most cases before them rely on statements rather than witnesses' evidence. And most of the witnesses who do appear are members of the security forces and less likely to be intimidated.

The Diplock courts, ostensibly set up to deal with terrorism and re-establish trust in law and order, have, according to P.J. McRory, "created a generation of Catholics who will mistrust the legal system because of its apparent bias and sternness to Catholic offenders."

In detection, trial and punishment, the bias shows. The almost exclusively Protestant police force, prison staff and judiciary (there is only one Catholic High Court judge, and he never presides over "republican cases") leads to an unavoidable harmony of interests.

Statements by judges praising the "patriotism" of loyalist para-militaries or suggesting to a pregnant Catholic

woman who was being refused bail that the baby, once it was born, could apply for bail, have reinforced the picture of bias. The H-Blocks protest grew to a large extent out of the antagonism between loyalist-dominated prison officers and republican prisoners. The alleged purpose of rehabilitating convicts can never be realised in such circumstances.

The prison population reflects the way in which the net is cast more widely in the Catholic population. There are far more Catholics in prison on relatively light offences. Life sentences are proportionately higher among Protestants, many of whom are jailed for multiple murders.

Over 50% of the prisoners are under 21, a total of three quarters under 25. And according to Sean McCann, of the Association of Legal Justice, most had never been in any trouble before their first contact with the Diplock courts. In other words, their first experience of the system of law and order is already extraordinary.

Belfast solicitor, Oliver Kelly, says that the courts represent a pretence of maintaining law in a totally abnormal situation. "They are part of a war machine and should be viewed as such. They are there to defeat terrorism and not to administer justice."

SECURING LATIN AMERICA FOR UNCLE SAM

PEADER KIRBY

Of all the continents of the world, Latin America seems synonymous with revolution. In the early fifties it was Bolivia and Guatemala who tried to restructure society for the benefit of the impoverished masses; in the sixties it was Cuba and later Peru with its highly ambiguous 'military socialism'; in the seventies it was Chile and in the eighties Central America. The Western media can hardly be accused of neglecting these social experiments. Whether out of an attempt to sympathetically understand them or to discredit and malign them, the efforts to introduce progressive change in Latin America received their fair share of publicity.

But since the early sixties a far more successful and thorough-going revolution has been going on in Latin America which has not yet even been recognised by the Western media, much less given publicity. For the military coup in Brazil in 1964 ushered in a new phase of military rule which, by the time of the Chilean coup in September 1973, had taken over in almost every country of the continent. Responding to heightened tensions as a result of the takeover of important sectors of the Latin America economy by multinational capital after the second World War with the consequent impoverishment of the masses and the growing revolutionary ferment among them, this wave of military coups sought to restructure the state in a way more amenable to transnational capitalism.

Though the most obvious signs of this have been the sophisticated methods of repression used throughout the continent and the suppression of independent trade union movements and political parties, more important by far is the ideology underlying these states and the model of society these military rulers are seeking, with no little success, to implement. For, no matter how much Latin America political traditions and economic conditions particularly suit its application, there can be little doubt that it is simply acting as a laboratory in preparation for the introduction of this model into more developed capitalist countries.

THE IDEOLOGY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

In its more popular and propagandistic forms this ideology can appear at times comical. I remember watching endless repetitions of a crude propaganda film on television during a coup in Bolivia. This showed a town where everybody was happy and going about their daily work in a friendly way. Then in a far-away country

characterised by buildings with cupolas on them, a big bear called in one of his henchmen and with whispered instructions sent him off to this happy country. The henchmen arrived to a warm, red-carpet welcome but he soon set up a printing press and began showering these happy people with leaflets which immediately made them turn against each other and begin fighting. Some even began to plant bombs. However, these people were led to see the folly of their ways and they all turned on the bear's henchman accusingly and threw him out. They lived happily ever after.

This homely little tale, the political analysis of which I'm sure President Reagan would find himself in full agreement, had been made not in Bolivia but in Argentina and it could have been shown in almost any country of Latin America. But though crude when seen in its popularised form, it has been elaborated into a sophisticated doctrine which provides the theoretical underpinning for the military and economic élites which run most Latin American countries.

The two leading exponents of the ideology of national security are General Golbery do Couto e Silva of Brazil and General Augusto Pinochet of Chile. Golbery was, until last August, the 'eminence grise' of the Brazilian military government who had, since the 1964 coup, been the effective power behind the throne. His sudden and unexpected 'retirement' last year sent shock waves through the Brazilian establishment but paradoxically strengthened the Right within that establishment since Golbery had begun to see the need to co-opt wider support for the national security model if it was to survive at all. Pinochet of Chile, from his relative obscurity as a professor of geopolitics in the military academy, had developed the doctrine for Chilean conditions before achieving world-wide fame for his highly successful attempts to put his ideas into practice after September 1973.

The doctrine elaborated by these two theoreticians bases itself on the 'science' or geopolitics, the interaction of geography and political science. Though purporting to be a legitimate science, in the words of Fr. Jose Comblin, one of the leading critics of the ideology of national security in Latin America, "it has never been anything other than the legitimisation of certain political



The aftermath of the murdered Archbishop Romero's funeral in El Salvador in March 1980, when right wingers opened fire on the crowd of mourners.

programmes by useful geographical data." Historically it was first developed in the Geopolitics Institute of Munich from 1923 to 1933 and draws a lot on the pan-germanist writers of the 19th century. As Golbery has written, geopolitics is a synthesis "of Herder's organism, Hegel's idealism, Fichte's statism, and List's economic nationalism." As such it comes from the same theoretical stable as Nazism.

It came to Latin America via the United States however. Sir Halford Mackinder applied the ideas as a justification for the British Empire whilst US admiral, Thayer Mahan, provided the justification for the US imperialism being created by President Roosevelt. The expansion of US involvement, particularly in Latin America, after the second World War required the further development of the doctrine and its export to the military élites all over Latin America. It has been the United States' success in exporting the doctrine, and thus enabling local élites to secure its strategic and economic interests which has allowed for far less overt US intervention in the post-War period as opposed to the numerous cases of military intervention by the US in such countries as Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic in the early decades.

BASIC IDEAS

For the ideologues of national security the state is the primary entity which defines the rest of politics. The people, defined *en masse* as the nation, are identified with the state which then takes on a life of its own. General Pinochet has written in his definitive work "Geopolitica" that "geopolitics defines the state as a supra-individual organism and as such is alive, and involved in constant struggle for survival." He sees three elements which go to make up the state: a territory, a population and sovereignty. The first two of these he sees as static and the third as dynamic, struggling to maintain itself. In order to defend that sovereignty the state uses power over the other two essential elements of its make-up to ensure that both territory and population are used to defend the sovereignty of the state.

If the state is the primary entity to be defended, that defence has to be constant since it is in a permanent state of war. The ideologues of national security have taken the traditional definitions of military strategists and broadened them to the notion of a total war abolishing

the distinction between 'military' and 'civil' and between neutral and combatant countries. If the two world was established that non-military establishments were a legitimate target for attack and that any part of the globe could potentially be used by one or other side if necessary, the ideology of national security abolishes the last distinction still left to military strategies, namely that between war and peace. This doctrine maintains that the world is in a constant state of war in which not only military strategies are being used but also political, economic and even psychological ones. These are seeking to undermine the sovereignty of the nation state which must be defended at all costs.

The enemy in this constant war is marxism. Thus it isn't, as in a traditional war situation, just defence against an outside enemy but against one within the borders of the state among the people themselves. Therefore everybody is a potential subversive and strict surveillance must be maintained to ensure that the enemy is identified and eliminated. But if there are enemies within most social groups, who can be entrusted with the task of defending the state in this war? The answer of course is the military. They are the only élite who have undergone extensive training to prepare themselves for a war situation and as a cohesive unit can more easily ensure internal surveillance to identify and eliminate any manifestations of the enemy within.

It was General Golbery who most clearly described the importance of Latin America in this world-wide marxist threat. The world today, he wrote, is divided into two antagonistic power blocs: the Christian democratic West and the Communist materialistic East. The West, he said, does not realise the deadly threat that is levelled against it particularly from what he called "the vital rear-guard of the entire Western world" — South America and Atlantic Africa.

The Communist threat is using the weaker and less developed parts of the Western world to gain a foothold. But it is not South Africa itself it is interested in. "What imperils us, today as yesterday, is a threat that it levelled, not against us, but through us against the United States," Golbery wrote. Therefore South America is simply a distinct front in the third World War which has already begun.

For Golbery this very real threat doesn't allow for any 'third positions' by Third World countries distancing themselves from the two superpowers. Instead it demands a firm alliance with the United States with which it now has an identity of interests. He sees that this alliance "could provide us with the resources needed for insuring South America's security and defending the Brazilian zones so exposed to extracontinental threats. These zones must be defended against an attack that would outflank the North American land mass, coming via Dakar-Brazil-the Antilles. An alliance that would make manifest the real stature of Brazil in this part of Atlantic Ocean.

Seeing the world and all of political and economic life therefore in terms of this threat the military regard it as a *duty* to take power since under civilian rule the state leaves itself open to subversion. it is a view which

automatically justifies the gross abuses of human rights which have become the norm after such military take-overs.

This was most clearly brought home to me when I met a very kindly and friendly senior army general in Brazil. I took the opportunity to put to him my difficulties with the more abhorrent aspects of the national security state but his answers disarmed me completely. There was no doubt but he firmly believed them himself.

Brazil was on the brink of communism when the army took over in 1964, he said. "We have saved her from that but she still has very grave problems and we are doing our best to surmount them." When I asked him about torture he replied: "We all know that it goes on in every country. I've been to Germany and it goes on there. In every country you will have a small few who will maybe go too far in these things. But it's not the wish of the government that this happens." When I pressed him on this, he went on: "International Communism has agents everywhere. The media is full of them. They use these few incidents and completely exaggerate them." And he ended by reminding me of the importance of the state in the ideology of national security, when he said: "And I want you to remember my last words: Brazil is a great country with a great people, plenty of space and huge potential. We are formidable."

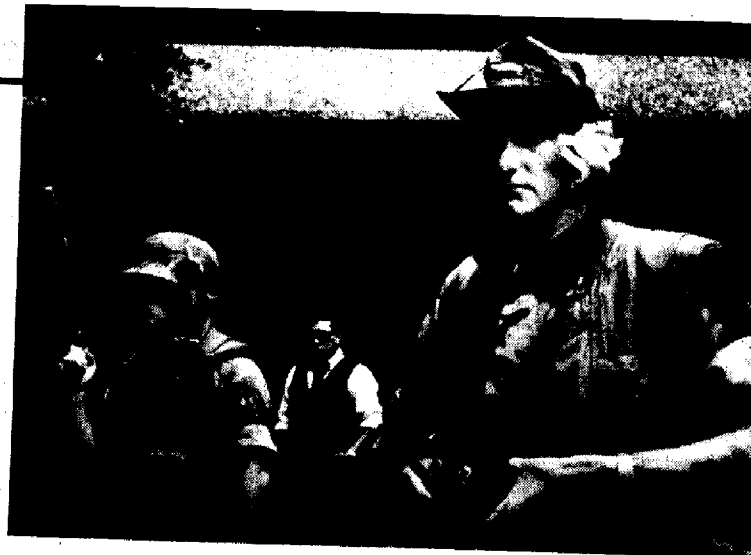
Therefore, though it seems crude to us, this doctrine has deeply impregnated the mentality of the military and civil élites in Latin America. Not only does it justify the take-over of power and gross abuses of human rights in order to "eliminate" the marxist threat but it provides the permanent legitimization for the perpetuation of that rule — once perceived the Communist threat can always be used to justify 'exceptional' measures.

One of the clearest examples of that for me was President Pinochet's speech last August when he celebrated the eight anniversary of his appointment as commander in chief of the army by the late Dr Salvador Allende. "Today we are again faced with marxist aggression which has grown," he said. "To stamp out this marxist aggression in the first place we must dismiss the possibility of political parties until the country is tranquil. Neither can we accept political activity because that would be vulnerable to marxist aggression. The so-called democratic system includes the struggle for power and that therefore opens the flanks to marxist aggression. That can not be allowed."

UNITED STATES EXPORT

If these ideas seem familiar to our ears since the Reagan Administration took over in Washington that is simply because it is articulating in a more coherent way than has happened since the second World War the ideology that has for long underpinned US relations with Latin America. Far from the truth being that Washington has at last come around to seeing Latin America as the local élites see it, the real truth is that Washington itself is now expressing the worldview it exported to the Latin American élites.

It was only after the second World War that the United States replaced Britain as the dominant economic power in South America. Alongside this penetration by the multinationals, the organs to legitimate and secure this penetration were being built-up back home. In 1947 two



A US "adviser" in El Salvador.

institutions were founded which were to have an enormous impact on Latin America and to be copied by many governments in the region: the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency. With these the balance of power over foreign policy shifted from Congress to the President who began to reserve for himself more say in foreign issues. In 1948 Washington's National War College was founded to teach the new security ideology to military chiefs. It also runs an annual course for 100-125 invited people from the professions and two-week long Seminars of National Security in cities throughout the United States.

Almost immediately the security links with Latin America began to be strengthened. In 1947 the Rio Treaty was signed bringing Latin America into military alliance with the United States in case of attack by an extra-continental power (and the US was not thinking of an attack by Britain!). In 1949 the Organisation of American States (OAS) was founded and as one of its founding aims it declared that "an attack on one member is an attack on all." It wasn't until the OAS Caracas Declaration in 1954 that the threat being feared was spelt out in detail: "The domination or control of the political institutions of any American state by the international Communist movement, could constitute a threat to the sovereignty and political independence of the American states, endangering the peace of America and would call for a meeting of consultation to consider the adoption of appropriate action in accordance with existing treaties."

This action was taken that same year in Guatemala when the CIA organised the overthrow of the progressive and democratically elected government of Jacobo Arbenz replacing it with an ultra Right-wing dictatorship, even though the US ambassador in Guatemala City at the time said that "Arbenz thought like a Communist and talked like a Communist and if not actually one would do until one came along." When another similar non-Communist progressive did take power in Cuba in 1959 the US drove him into the arms of Moscow through its attempts to overthrow him.

The success of Fidel Castro in establishing a socialist state just 90 miles off Miami spurred the US into greater efforts to ensure that the local élites in the Latin American states would not allow this happen again. In 1961 the College of the Americas was set up in the

Panama Canal zone where the leading officers of all the armies of Latin America are trained. Of the 35,000 who have passed through this college 170 have risen to become presidents, chiefs of staff, government ministers or heads of security in their respective countries. Alongside this 71,000 Latin American troops have been trained in the US itself in the same period.

The greatest success of this policy has been that since US troops intervened in the Dominican Republic in 1965 to overthrow the moderate reformer, Juan Bosch, the US has been able to rely on local groups doing its job for it. The overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile is but the most striking example of this success. As two US historians summed up this period of US-Latin American relations: "As a result of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, successive American administrations have been determined to check the advance of communism in the hemisphere. The defence of US economic interests and of capitalism has fused into a single goal, which the United States has consistently pursued although its tactics have changed to meet the varying conditions of each successive stage of the postwar period." (Benjamin Keen and Mark Wasserman, *A Short History of Latin America*.)

It is no accident therefore that the wave of Right-wing military coups led by that of Brazil in 1964 all sought to implant the doctrine of national security in their respective countries. The most obvious sign of this was the foundation of the two national security institutions in almost every country in Latin America. All the military dictatorships have their equivalent of the CIA for internal surveillance and their equivalent of the National Security Council. The only difference was that in the Latin American countries these institutions were not limited by a democratically elected legislature as in the United States. Therefore they become the sole and absolute power controlled by the armed forces and making every aspect of state policy subservient to the needs of national security.

NEW STAGES OF CAPITALISM

While concentrating on the ideology, the real reason behind this security network of theory and practice lies in the growing US economic interests in the region. One of the clauses in the founding charter of OAS said as much when it referred to providing "facilities for United States investors wishing to exploit the resources of Latin America." The verb proved apt, for the exploitation of the natural resources and the labour force of Latin America in the post-War period has reached enormous proportions. Investment has grown from 3 billion dollars in 1946 to 19 billion in 1974; it is being concentrated in the hands of fewer companies — from over 2,000 in 1950 down to 168 in the 1960s, and local economies remain dependent for the bulk of their export earnings on one export crop. Meanwhile vast profits are being made and exported to the US, local living standards are continuing to fall dramatically and social benefits eroded to almost nothing.

While the economic facts may be broadly familiar what

is rarely recognised is that the political model which in Latin America has been developed to a greater extent than almost anywhere else in the world (with the exception of South Africa, South Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan) is the necessary corollary of this new phase of multinational capitalism. As such it is not too fanciful to suggest that Latin America is simply the laboratory in which the national security state is being developed. Under the impact of the transnationalisation of capital the social welfare state is increasingly unable to maintain itself due to the wholesale transfer of production to Third World countries where return is greater.

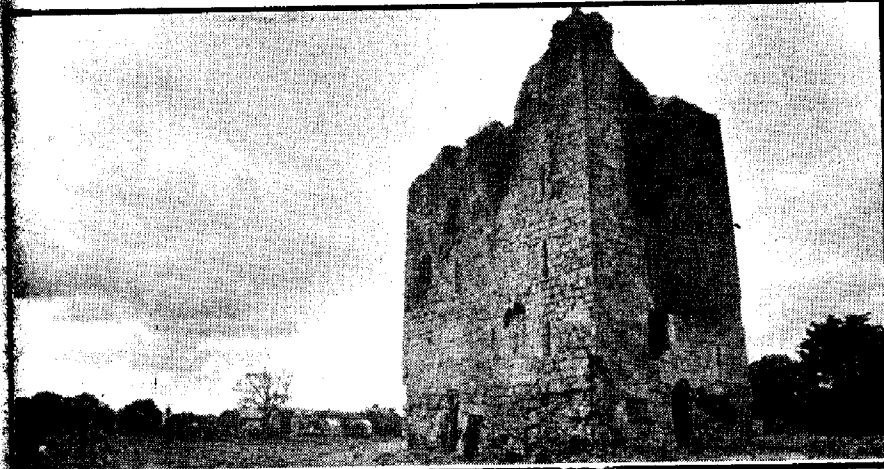
The capitalist state is therefore moving into a whole new phase both in its ideology and its structure. This was clearly stated in a recent interview with Joe Holland who works in the church-based Centre for Concern in Washington DC. He first of all stressed the new economic phase capitalism is entering: "Economic life will be marked by structural unemployment and the disintegration of the management-labour alliance in effect since World War II. Now class conflicts will be felt throughout society. The upward mobility trend will shift to one of downward mobility for the majority."

He then went on to the political changes: "But it is in the political system that one sees some of the most frightening changes, as social welfare consideration yield to national security imperatives. The state is now charged with streamlining the whole national production system for efficient transnational competition. This streamlining entails restraining wages, curtailing social services, and increasing governmental authority to use coercive methods to achieve its goals. Culturally, such themes as 'the new austerity', 'lowered expectations,' and 'discipline' will replace the earlier focus on the unlimited promises of the future. Now 'security' (but security for the few and security to preserve profitable investments) is becoming the hallmark of society."

Of all the countries in the so-called 'developed world' Ireland is going to be hit in a particularly severe way as this phase develops. Whatever place this country might be granted in the new international division of labour, what is certain is that it will continue to reduce employment levels, the living standards of the majority and the poorly developed social welfare system. Increasingly also we will see the slow erosion of civil liberties as the national security state is developed.

The Irish Left has not taken seriously the profound nature of the changes taking place in capitalism and by and large rests whatever vague strategy it has on increasingly unfounded assumptions about the nature of the capitalist state. While, at least since the second World War up to now, it was realistic to hope that capitalism could be reformed and its worst aspects modified through taking power in the capitalist state, this strategy is fast becoming impossible as the national state loses more and more power.

If we are fast returning to a phase of struggle far closer to that of the labour movement in the latter part of the last century and the early part of this, it is going to call for resources of analysis and action little evident in the labour movement and radical politics in recent times. Though it is far too early to be hoping for any clear idea of what these might be we are foolhardy indeed if we refuse to face the clear signals of what is coming.



RALAHINE

Brave old world

DAVE LEE

Bob Hobby

A visitor to the County Clare townland of Ralahine (situated two miles from Newmarket-on-Fergus along the Newmarket-Sixmilebridge road) will find a typical rural scene with its farm houses, outbuildings and cattle. The local castle is like scores of its kind in the Mid-West region, a modest tower house standing alone amidst tranquil pasture land. There is nothing there now to suggest that 150 years ago there took place at Ralahine an exciting and dramatic experiment in workers' democracy when Ireland's first successful co-operative was founded. An experiment which, although lasting only two years, has stirred the imagination of social reformers and revolutionaries such as AE Russell, Countess Markievicz and James Connolly.

In 1831 the large Ralahine estate was owned by John Scott Vandeleur, a liberal minded landlord interested in the radical ideas of Robert Owen who advocated the setting up of socialist communes as a means of transforming society. Since 1823 Vandeleur had toyed with the idea of founding an Owenite community at Ralahine but it was not until a brutal murder occurred on his estate that he was finally spurred to put theory into practice. On April 23rd 1831 Daniel Hastings, the manager at Ralahine, was shot through the head by a gunman belonging to a peasant secret society called the Terry Alts. Hastings had been assassinated because of his harsh treatment of the farm labourers; it was the Ralahine workers who planned the execution and selected the assassin.

At that time County Clare (like other parts of Ireland) was convulsed by a savage land war. The peasantry, organised in illegal organisations, were waging a guerrilla struggle against landlords and big farmers. The secret societies employed physical force tactics to stop evictions, obtain rent reductions and gain wage increases. To achieve these

objectives the underground organisations sent threatening letters, mutilated livestock, burnt property and assaulted managers. If these warnings were not heeded then the guerrillas were prepared to kill estate stewards or landlords.

Army and police units were drafted into Clare in an attempt to suppress the agrarian unrest. The bloodiest clash between the peasantry and Crown forces occurred on Easter Monday 1831 when a five man armed police detachment was massacred at Toomaghara (four miles from Lisdoonvarna) by 100 local people.

The ferocity of the hand to hand combat can be judged by the injuries sustained by two of the constables. Andrew Joyce's left thigh bone was shattered by a musket ball, his left hand almost severed and he was stabbed twice in the chest. Constable Thomas Duffy had two bayonet wounds in the throat, a bullet smashed the right jaw bone and his head was battered to such an extent that his brains were literally knocked out of the skull. During the battle one civilian was shot dead and several others wounded, one received a bayonet wound in the groin.

In the aftermath of the massacre John O'Grady, an innocent man, was framed for the murders and he was hung on a roadside tree near Kilfenora. Five men from Toomaghara went on the run, escaped on a ship bound for Australia and were never heard of again.

The murder of his manager convinced John Vandeleur that something had to be done to curb the rebellious spirit of his labourers. At best they were indifferent workers and at worst they were assassins. Their insubordinate attitude was affecting the prosperity of the estate; resentful of all authority the farm hands did as little work as possible. Lacking pride in their jobs the workers were careless with Vandeleur's property and made no effort to improve productivity. The landlord's solution to this acute labour relations problem was to introduce a co-operative scheme to Ralahine.

Having no practical experience of co-operative farming, Vandeleur persuaded

Edward Craig, who lived in Manchester and was active in the English movement there, to come to Ireland to organise the project. When Craig arrived the labourers thought that he was a police agent sent to find out who had killed Hastings, and the Englishman was subjected to a harrowing campaign of intimidation to make him leave Ralahine. However, he persevered and gradually overcame the peasants' understandable suspicions.

In November 1831 the Ralahine Co-operative was launched with a membership of 52 men, women and children. An Agreement between Vandeleur and the Co-op fixed an annual rent of £700 on the 618 acres let to the commune. Also an interest charge of £200 a year was placed on the livestock and equipment that the landlord gave to the community. This interest had to be paid until the commune could afford to buy the livestock and implements. However, ownership of the land would always remain in Vandeleur's hands. In spite of his advanced views, the Ralahine landlord had no intention of losing out financially on the co-operative experiment. And he also continued to draw rent from his tenants, who were not involved in the co-operative.

Success attended the Co-operative; this was due to a sophisticated system of worker participation and profit sharing which brought about an identification of interest between landlord and workers.

A nine person management committee, of which Vandeleur was the self-appointed President, ran the farm. The President had the right to select the committee's Secretary and Treasurer — Craig was appointed Secretary. The other six members of the management board were elected by the workers, and the committee had to be re-elected every six months. A weekly general meeting of all members maintained democratic control over the committee and the books and accounts of the society were open to inspection by the workers. This structure gave the rank and file considerable influence over the decision making process.

Each evening the management board met to discuss and arrange the commune's business. They decided what work had to be done the following day.

This article is an edited version of a pamphlet on the Ralahine commune, written by Dave Lee and published by the Limerick magazine, Bottom Dog, at 109, O'Malley Park, Southill, Limerick.

and allotted the various tasks to the workers. An interesting feature of the Co-op was that no one was to act as manager, everyone was expected to take part in productive labour.

A profit sharing scheme was implemented whereby wage increases were financed out of the net profits. Under the co-operative system there was a significant change in the workers' attitude to work. Given the chance to participate in management and control their own work environment they took a constructive interest in the Co-op's affairs. Encouraged to use their initiative, the uneducated labourers responded in a positive manner and carried out their tasks quickly and efficiently. Due to the high level of morale at Ralahine, productivity increased by leaps and bounds.

Women workers at Ralahine experienced a substantial improvement in their status and were fully integrated into the workforce. A communal catering service was provided with a man and a woman preparing the community's food; meals were served in the public dining room. Clothes were washed in the collective's laundry and a crèche and infant pre-school were established. These arrangements freed the women from the drudgery of housework and enabled them to participate fully in the commune's activities and they made a valuable contribution to the Co-op's success.

Food prices were fixed because as a self-sufficient unit the Co-operative controlled the production and distribution of food. A sick fund was set up based on deductions from wages and anyone falling ill was guaranteed their full wages. It is interesting to note that while the experiment lasted no one went sick and absenteeism was not a problem. Although labour saving machinery was purchased no one was made redundant, in fact more people had to be recruited. At Ralahine machinery became the servant of the workers and not their masters.

Ralahine was not Utopia but the living conditions of the members compared very favourably with the lot of the vast majority of Irish peasants in Pre-Famine Ireland.

Drama was as much part and parcel of life at the commune as were the routine committee meetings. According to Rule 31 of the Co-op's Constitution alcohol, tobacco and snuff were banned from the community! It is not clear how seriously the workers viewed this puritanical measure but Edward Craig claimed that they did not mind being deprived of these 'vices'.

However the dangers of excessive drinking was brought home to the

members when the Ralahine blacksmith, his assistant and another worker attended a nearby wake. Unfortunately they drank too much and got involved in a drunken brawl during which a man was fatally injured. The blacksmith was charged in court with the murder and transported to Australia for seven years. The people of Ralahine, for their part, sacked the blacksmith's assistant.

During 1832 a deadly cholera epidemic swept through Ireland and neither Limerick City nor County Clare escaped the ravages of the disease. In Limerick alone 1,043 cholera deaths were recorded for the City in the period May-September. Hundreds died in Clare and villages close to Ralahine were affected. Newmarket-on-Fergus, which is only two miles from Ralahine, had 68 cholera cases resulting in 30 deaths. Despite the presence of cholera in the district not one person at Ralahine fell ill with the disease, this was due to the very strict preventive measures taken to safeguard the community's health.

An incident that occurred in the winter of 1832 illustrates the pride that the people had in their co-operative. The local gentry were holding a fox hunt and a fox ran across the boundary of the

"While the experiment lasted no one went sick and absenteeism was not a problem.

Although labour-saving machinery was purchased no one was made redundant, in fact more people had to be recruited."

Vandeleur estate. Several labourers working in the Ralahine farmyard saw the huntsmen riding hard for the farm's gate and realised that unless something was done quickly the pounding hooves of the horses would soon be trampling down a 70 acre field of winter wheat. The workers slammed the farmyard gate, which was eight feet high and made of solid timber, in the faces of their 'social superiors'. To avoid being dashed against the gate the riders had to immediately pull up their galloping mounts.

This put an end to the day's sport and the huntsmen cursed the uppity peasants. Before the Co-operative was established the labourers would not have cared less what damage the hunt caused Vandeleur's property.

While the social conditions under which the workers and children lived seem ideal there was one fatal flaw in the system. Although the workers had considerable powers of control over the commune's management, the actual land was not collectively owned by them but by the landlord who received a handsome rent. The society was dependent upon Vandeleur's paternal goodwill for its existence. Should that goodwill falter, or

if Vandeleur departed from the scene for some reason then the co-op would collapse. The landlord's propertied relations were hostile to the Owenite enterprise from the very beginning and they would certainly close down the Co-op given half a chance.

So while the commune's structure was sound it was nevertheless built on privately owned shifting sands. In actual fact it was the reckless and irresponsible behaviour of Vandeleur that caused the Co-operative's downfall.

To amuse himself during his ample leisure hours the Clare landlord gambled at his exclusive club in Dublin. He managed to gamble away the rent that the Ralahine workers had paid him and he got hopelessly into debt. Realising that he could not possibly repay the creditors Vandeleur deserted his wife and family and fled from Ireland in the Autumn of 1833.

The disappearance of the Co-operative's landlord spelt disaster. A Limerick banker, related to the Vandeleurs, obtained a bankruptcy order against John Scott Vandeleur in his capacity as President of the Co-op. This legal move placed the burden of the debts upon the commune and protected the financial interests of the Vandeleur family. The Ralahine Co-operative was forced to close down in November 1833 and Edward Craig had to return to England.

Craig wrote a book (published 1893) about the Co-operative and it was read with great interest by Irish reformers and revolutionaries. Countess Markievicz was so enthralled by Craig's account that in 1909 she decided to set up a similar venture, with the aid of the Fianna Éireann boys, at Belcamp Park, Raheny. However the project fell through after a few short months. AE Russell published an edited version of Craig's book in 1919.

James Connolly devoted a chapter of his book *Labour in Irish History* to Ralahine and he thought that the structures of the Co-op would provide an excellent model for an Irish Socialist Republic provided that private ownership was excluded. Connolly wrote that:

"Had all the land and buildings belonged to the people, had all other estates in Ireland been conducted on the same principles, and the industries of the country also so organised, had each of them appointed delegates to confer on the business of the country at some common centre as Dublin, the framework and basis of a free Ireland would have been realised. And when Ireland does emerge into complete control of her own destinies she must seek the happiness of her people in the extension on a national basis of the social arrangements of Ralahine".

Arts: for the people, or by the people?

TOM O'CONNOR

The arts in Ireland are under attack. Between massive cuts in finance and political intrigue, the art world is in crisis. If this was happening to hospitals or schools, socialists and trade unionists would be up in arms. But arts! ... should we really care?

Over the past few months the art world has taken a hammering. Team Theatre Company and the Contemporary Dance Company may have to put their workers on the dole for a period. The Moving Theatre Company and the Douglas Hyde Gallery may have to close altogether. Members of Equity, the actors union, have marched in protest at the closure of Ardmore Film Studios and the Irish Theatre Company. Even the mighty Abbey Theatre is threatening to close its doors — at least for a few weeks.

The government seems to be using the arts as a testing ground for a policy of Thatcher-like cuts that will eventually hit health and education. The Arts Council, which administers most of the £4 million state aid to the arts, received an increase of only 2½% in its budget for 1982. With inflation running at around 23%, this represents a massive cutback.

But is this of concern to socialists? Let's first of all look at what we mean when we talk about the "arts" in Ireland.

Most of us probably have an image of art that consists of oil paintings, opera and chamber music. The people involved are perhaps seen as "toffee-nosed West Brits" dressed in "evening" or "casual" clothes — either of which cost a mint. It all takes place in galleries, studios and theatres — places where most of the working class have never set foot. This general image is what is usually referred to as "high brow" art or culture.

But art also includes such everyday things as rock music, paperback novels and TV. In other words 'low-brow', or mass culture. This is the kind of stuff we are meant to despise, because it is mass-produced, cheap, easily accessible and ordinary. It often deals with the oppressive nature of the everyday life of its consumers, the working class. Even so it is no less conservative than 'high-brow' art because by the constant, repetitive, reminders of life in a capitalist society, we

are made to feel that things can't be changed.

Because mass-culture is the main form of art with which the working class is familiar, it tends to be of interest to socialists. But we should not just ignore 'high-brow' art, even if we are not interested in it. 'High-brow' art is part of the way capitalism oppresses us. We are made to feel that it is important and essential to a proper way of life. Yet if we don't understand it — as is the case with most people — we are made to feel ignorant and stupid.

'High-brow' art often seems to be in something of an unassailable position. Just look at the out-cry any time someone attacks "the arts", look at the papers in recent weeks. Why so? This article takes a look at "high-brow" art (art for short); asks should socialists be concerned if it gets the chop and tentatively suggests a basis for a socialist view of art.

Why has 'high-brow' art attained such an exclusive position in society? Is it really something pure and mystical, something that perhaps touches the true meaning of life? Does reading good literature and visiting art galleries and theatres greatly improve one's life? And are we missing out on some type of salvation by our ignorance of the arts?

Bullshit. The supporters of 'high-brow' art would like us to believe that the answers to these questions are 'yes'. But the fact of the matter is that art is an exclusive form of entertainment for the rich. It serves their financial needs and lends ideological aid to keeping the rich in their exalted position.

Undoubtedly *some* books, plays and works of art are good and enjoyable. But 'high-brow' art as a whole by no means deserves to be placed on the pedestal it has been given. The irony is that if working class people did get-into 'high-brow' art in a big way, the 'high-brows' themselves would probably pour scorn on the art and take themselves off to some other form of entertainment.

The rich would like us to believe that the inflated prices that some works of art reach in auctions somehow reflects the mystical goodness of the piece. In fact, the piece has value for the same reason that gold has value: because it is scarce.

The rich use art to store their wealth in an inflation-proofed form. If the value actually reflected a mystical goodness, then good copies would also warrant the same value. But this is not the case. Art collectors only express an interest in the originals, because the laws of supply and demand push up the price, whereas mass-produced copies would reduce the price.

There is a general air of mystique surrounding fine art, literature and the performing arts. Working class people are discouraged from taking an interest in the arts. Theatre tickets are generally pricey and to look at the typical theatre audience one would think that you had to have "evening dress and tails" to get it. Opera uses foreign language to make it inaccessible. Some performances even require exclusive membership of a club — such as the Irish Film Theatre. John Berger's book, *Ways of Seeing*, quotes a survey which asked working class people what art galleries reminded them of. The majority answered "a church". This mystique is part of the main established philosophy of art. It is known as "art-for-art's sake".

This is the idea that art is justified by its very existence. A picture or a poem doesn't have to mean anything, it is sufficient that it is there. The piece of art is not considered to have been created by man (rarely are women mentioned) for other people, but is created for its own good. It is a rare gem that floats out of nature into the pen or eye of the equally rare and gifted individual. It is almost priceless (at least until it gets to the market place), a crystal creation in a vulgar and stupid world ... Yuck.

The philosophy admirably suits capitalist society. It is ridden with class snobbery and chauvinism. It glorifies the individual and authority and therefore degrades collective effort. It implies that the world is impossible to understand — therefore impossible to change. And so political action is of no use.

The people involved in producing "high-brow" art are drawn almost exclusively from the upper classes. The selection process starts early. Not many kids from Ballymun go to ballet lessons, whereas art education is seen as an



IRISH THEATRE COMPANY

Derek Speirs (Report)

essential element in the upbringing of the upper classes. The Irish education system places very little emphasis on the arts, yet the National College of Art and Design is almost treated as a finishing school for the upper classes.

Despite the ideological benefits that art gives the system, the artists themselves frequently suffer from the cruelties of capitalism. The performing artists often find work difficult to come by. Their product is subject to the whims of the economic system under recession. Reliance on State finance is no solution, as the litany of crisis mentioned at the beginning of this article shows only too well.

Artists in the field of the visual arts are even more exposed to the madness of the system. High prices are often only paid for a work after the artist is dead. A small minority might reap high rewards but the majority work for months on end not even knowing if their work will sell at all at the end of the day.

So, after all that, should socialists be bothered if "high brow" art is wilting in the teeth of the recession? It is very tempting to say, "If the rich want their élitist entertainment, then let them go and pay for it." Why should the State use worker's taxes to subsidise a product largely used by the upper classes? Why indeed?

To tackle this question, socialists need a socialist theory of art. We need to know what we consider to be "good art". What is worth supporting and what isn't. Maybe someone will write on this complex issue for a future issue of GRALTON. I will finish this article merely by suggesting a few criteria by which socialists might approach the issue.

The most important criterion for judging art is not "what is art?", but rather "who does art?". Socialists should say that art is for everyone — both as consumers and as producers. We should find out what can be organised to make it possible for working class people to produce their own art. We should criticise the élitist and individualistic way that art is produced at present and support and promote efforts to produce art in a collective manner. Community theatre groups are a good example here.

Hand in hand with a more collective approach to the production of art, goes efforts to improve access to art and efforts to increase audience participation. As long as theatre tickets remain nearly twice the price of cinema tickets the working class are not going to see many plays.

The participation of the audience doesn't only refer to efforts to get a theatre audience off their backs and involved in the play — such efforts are good but rare — but also to making a connection between the everyday life of the audience and the performance of work of art. This can be done by staging performances and exhibitions in a working class locality — such as the Dublin Inner City Festival which takes place in July.

The art-for-art's-sake theory would like us to believe that an artistic or acting skill is a rare gift few are born with. Socialists should counter this by saying that, like all skills, artistic ability is mainly learned. Some people may be born with a better potential for art than others, but this potential can only be realised if training in art is open to all. That means that socialists should support calls for

more education in the arts in schools.

Indeed a particularly attractive feature of art classes in primary school is the generally collective way in which it is taught. All the children in one or more classes are encouraged to produce wall-murals or plays or just simply to decorate the classroom. It is a sad pity that this approach to art is lost when the child grows older, especially in secondary and vocational schools. At this level school seems to be only concerned with preparing students for working and not for living.

Finally, for socialists good art is art which expresses and spotlights the contradictions and craziness of capitalist society. Photography is an excellent medium for contrasting the poverty and wealth which exist side-by-side in this society. Pictures of picket lines, of workers working, of capitalists grazing can have a powerful effect, if reproduced at the right time, in the right place.

Radical theatre too — either in its propagandistic agit-prop form or in a more subtle way — can express the contradictions in this life, opposition to them and perhaps alternative solutions.

All forms of art have a tendency to reflect the capitalist system in which they exist. Various factors — financial, social and philosophical as mentioned earlier in this article — go towards keeping these reflections safe for capitalism. It is up to socialists to help make art dangerous for capitalism.

By encouraging artists and actors to explore the contradictions in the system, and by promoting a more collective means of producing art, socialists can help art add its little bit to the process of breaking the hold capitalism has on the ideas of the working class.

Books

Solidarity forever

Polish August. Neal Ascherson. Penguin. £2.95 (UK).

Book of Lech Walesa. Penguin. £2.50 (UK).

Solidarity. Denis MacShane. Spokesman. £3.50 (UK).

Solidarnosc. Colin Barker and Kara Weber. International Socialism. £1.95 (UK).

Dr. Lubczynski, fraternal delegate from the Polish United Workers' Party, told the CPI Congress in May that, five months after the imposition of martial law, his party was still "counting on the maturity of the working class" to help achieve "the normalisation of the economic and political situation in Poland."

It's funny, I have been counting on exactly the same thing — but to achieve the exact opposite. The pro-Solidarity demonstrations of early May seem to me an expression of a "maturing" working class intent on de-establishing the military regime. To Dr. Lubczynski they must have seemed "childish". Or maybe it was "anti-socialist elements" stirring things up again. We speak a different language in more ways than one.

One thing is for sure, the four books under review here — the most accessible of a spate of literature on Poland recently published — don't speak the language of Dr. Lubczynski either. All begin and end in a pro-Solidarity, pro-working class position. All describe in detail a situation where, at least since the mid-Seventies, the vast majority of the working class has considered itself to be in *fundamental* opposition to the regime which claims to rule in its name. And that's a situation that can never be "normalised".

Neal Ascherson's book is probably the "best buy". Its strength lies in the author's breadth of knowledge and understanding of

Polish society. The coverage of events after Christmas 1980 is actually very skimpy — the military coup is dealt with in a postscript. But this is more than made up for by the historical analysis going back to the end of the Second World War.

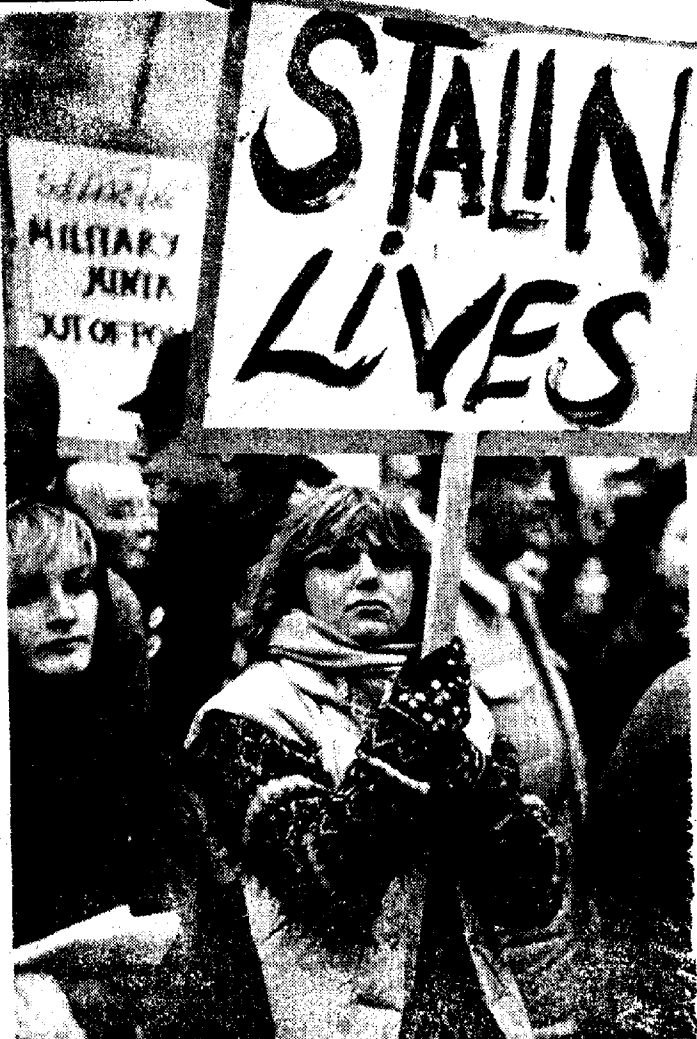
Ascherson emphasises the continuity of workers' struggle against the regime. Despite the attempts of the regime to reform itself to accommodate the workers' demands, each attempt — 1956, 1971, 1980 — ended in failure. December 1982 is surely the final curtain on any chance of reform. Yet Ascherson in no way foresaw the military coup. He — along with the Solidarity leadership — thought a "historic compromise" to be possible.

Ascherson is very "good" on the question of nationalism, the church and the intellectuals and their role *vis-a-vis* Solidarity. His emphasis on how deep-rooted these forces are in Poland is obviously correct. But they side-tracked him as they did Solidarity. As Jaruzelski prepared the military, he is wondering whether the intellectuals can supplant the party as the new ruling class.

Judging from the *Book of Lech Walesa*, it's a good job they didn't if this is a representative sample of their "analysis". Walesa, from an early stage, gathered around him a coterie of professors and "experts" all of whom urged accommodation with the regime. He took their advice and in this book they repay him the compliment with supposedly "critical" studies written at the height of his media fame.

They range from the "sensible chap if a bit strong willed" sort of thing to explanations of his "charisma" through wondering if the fact that he is an electrician by trade could account for him "sensing currents and mastering forces". Enough said. A disappointing and dispensable book.

Denis MacShane is a left-wing trade union official and he has, by and large, written a left-wing trade union official's book. Based on first hand discussions with many Solidarity activists, it is by far the best account here of just how this massive union organised itself in struggle. Here we get arguments very pertinent to unions everywhere — accountability, regional v. industrial structure, self-manage-



ment etc. — being resolved in practice. Valuable lessons are to be learned.

But Denis resolutely refuses to treat with Solidarity as anything other than a "trade union". He suspects it isn't, he just limits himself to what he knows. Fair enough as far as it goes. His account finishes with the Bydgoszcz incident in March 1981 — perhaps it's just as well. But this book is a very good trade union study.

The last book *Solidarnosc*, written by two members of the British Socialist Workers' Party, is a peculiar animal. It has the undoubted advantage of being written after the military coup but it is really little more than an extended essay. It does not deal (unlike Ascherson) with historical analysis, nationalism, the church etc. in any real sense at all "breadth" is thus lost.

But what it does do — and does very well — is get to the heart of the problem that faced Solidarity and, in my opinion, come up with essentially the correct answer. The problem was, and is, can you have in Kuron's term a "self-limiting revolution"? Can Solidarity share power with the regime? The answer must be no. The military coup surely proves this. Ultimately workers must take control of the Polish state as any other, or they will be controlled.

Only time will tell if Solidarity has finally learnt this lesson. In the meantime, Irish socialists could well spend a few profitable hours studying Ascherson and *Solidarnosc*. Our own "pre-revolutionary" situation would seem to be a little way off.

John Cane

Books

Toxic tales

Toxic Ireland. Alliance For Safety and Health. 70p.

The strength of *Toxic Ireland* is that it attempts to cover in a single pamphlet all aspects of the so-called "toxic cycle". This starts with the exposure of workers to chemicals in a wide range of industrial processes, from plastics manufacture to food processing. These industries also generate toxic waste.

This creates further hazards as it is released into rivers or transported around the countryside or deposited in legal (or illegal) toxic dumps. In addition, many manufacturing products themselves have toxic effects — pesticides pollute the countryside, food additives can cause ill-health and lead in petrol damages children's health.

As the authors point out, the problems of the toxic cycle are a part of modern industrial development. The hazards have multiplied with the proliferation of new industries in Ireland in the last twenty years. Campaigning for controls is therefore harder than fighting against a single industry such as nuclear power. The hazards are widespread and appear in our everyday lives — in agriculture, in supermarket foods and in the water we drink as well as where we work.

One of the most interesting parts of *Toxic Ireland* traces the arrival of hazardous industries in Ireland to (ironically) the successes of worker and consumer campaigns in the USA and Europe. As these governments responded to pressure for the introduction of increasingly more stringent regulations to stop pollution and guarantee consumer protection, it became cheaper for multinational companies to open factories elsewhere rather than adapt plant to meet the new standards.

Ireland was an attractive choice. Tax concessions were good, regulations were lax and there was little organised opposition from trade unions or community groups.

So far, so good, in that *Toxic*

Ireland makes many important connections and tells some valuable stories. It presents useful information on toxins in Ireland too — in maps of polluted areas and the location of hazardous industries. But how much better it could have been! A publication of this kind, involving as it does a lot of hard work by committed individuals and cooperation between groups, deserves to be better presented.

The cause is surely best served by literature that is carefully argued, painstakingly researched and well written. This is not to say that it should be over-academic or non-controversial. It is to stress the value of a style which is easy to read, free of jargon and which lays out the evidence clearly, avoiding generalisations and unsubstantiated claims.

Unfortunately, much of *Toxic Ireland* falls short of this ideal. Some relatively simple improvements could have vastly improved both the readability and credibility of the finished product.

That aside, *Toxic Ireland* is an important publication as it raises a number of pertinent and uncomfortable questions about the consequences of industrial development for health and the environment in Ireland. The problems are real and immediate, and have been ignored for too long by many socialists. The issues need urgent debate in all kinds of political groups and trade unions and *Toxic Ireland* will undoubtedly help to spread the necessary information about the extent of the problems.

Whether it will help us to find solutions is less sure. The authors do not seem to be clear whether they oppose industrial development per se or just its ill-effects. Should we aim for more legislation, better enforcement, community controls, a stop to industrial growth, or what? And would chemical production and pesticide usage necessarily be any different in a socialist society?

These are important questions too, though this does not distract from the fact that this pamphlet is a useful initiative from the Alliance for Safety and Health.

Jenny Beale

Michael Cronin

Poems for proles

Atlantic Blues. Michael O'Loughlin. Raven Arts. £1.75.

Michael O'Loughlin's second collection of poetry opens with *A rusted hatchet town*; an exploration of the improbability and possibility of an event — the Limerick Soviet of 1919 — resurfacing the context of an urban Ireland where "the suburbs are swelling with children." In a literature which has too often made a cult of the tribal metaphor, *Déclassé Memory* considers the agony of class identity; the rise from upper working class into lower middle — the new inheritance.

Poland and Barcelona provide the scenarios for a sense of loss in *Cinema Poland* and *A letter from Barcelona 1937*; the demming of the liquid flow of history by "well-dressed people" and the "huge glove puppets" of ideologies. *The Front Line* and *The end of an*

affaire are not precisely situated, describing a riot situation, hope, betrayal, hatred — the nightmare of history becomes global and leaves the parish.

Political voices in Irish poetry are rare, in the South rarer still. In this collection, political themes exist amongst others. They are treated indirectly and personally. No attempt is made to historically reconstruct the emotions of peoples, which remain for the poet unknowable if suggestive.

The unspoken history of Limerick workers, the boy stretched out on the orange lino in Finglas watching "The Fugitive", the thousands tramping down the stairs to work in Irish suburbia — all have at last found an experienced and sensitive pen to chart their movements.

Michael O'Loughlin and other poets of the Raven Arts press interrogate the idea of a tradition which, considered "native", is distinctly foreign to a generation reared in the outer urban sprawl of our cities since the war. To some extent, it is the generation that has "no films, no flags, no carefully annotated traditions." In Michael O'Loughlin, it has found an intelligent and alive chronicler.

Lastly, on poetry and pence, the reasonable price of this collection in paperback, cannot but help to make poetry somewhat more accessible in a world of overpriced, limited editions, collections which had begun to acquire the status of upmarket antiques.

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Over 300 people attended a question-and-answer session organised by GRALTON in Dublin shortly after publication of the magazine's first issue. The experimental format — in which members of the audience determined very largely what topics were taken up under the general heading of "Socialists in the Dáil" — provoked as much comment as did the contributions by the panellists.

They were Cllr. Pat Carroll, Tony Gregory, TD, and Jim Kemmy, T.D. Their opening contributions were strictly limited to 10 minutes each. The result was that far more members of the audience were able to participate than is usually the case in such meetings.

But the hope of deepening discussion on the Left about election strategies and parliamentary tactics was largely disappointed. Most of the audience used the opportunity to quiz the newly prominent TDs on their pet topics. In spite of the many cues from the panellists, the themes of political patronage and of a personalised and localised political system were not pursued.

Can socialists escape these constraints? The question wasn't asked but the comments from the panel seemed to indicate a shared belief that the answer is No.

Within these limitations, the meeting was generally judged a success, establishing clearly

GRALTON's interest in participatory, democratic and non-sectarian socialist politics. The meeting did also tease out new information on the negotiations for a left wing alliance in the Dáil and on the very different approaches to doing a "deal" with the political powers.

There were surprises, too, for some of the questioners as they saw Tony Gregory tip-toe around the issue of the Pro-Life amendment and other issues on which he claimed he had no mandate from those who elected him.

The series of GRALTON open meetings continues in June with a session on "How socialist are the socialist countries?"

Next Forum
Tuesday June 15
Liberty Hall 8pm

"How socialist are the socialist countries?"

With

Matt Merrigan
Eamonn McCann
and speakers from the
Communist Party and
the DSP

Admission 50p
(unwaged free)

Socialism ~not worth pressing?

The response of national newspapers and RTE to a veritable downpour of GRALTON press releases and letters for publication announcing the magazine's arrival and its first public forum was to ignore almost all of them. It seems that once the socialist deputies had cast their votes to elect a Taoiseach and to approve a Budget the new media interest in the Left was exhausted.

Despite all the indications that there is a vastly increased audience for the Left and a much broader interest in what the Left has to say, the launching of the magazine and the announcement of the first forum stirred little or no media

response. Copies of the first issue went to all daily and Sunday papers. Letters and press releases on the forum followed. But only the *Irish Press* published a letter.

We have to take the word of professionals in the media that an organised boycott cannot happen. What we seem to have experienced at first hand is the press's very limited appetite for ideas. When left-wingers holding the balance of parliamentary power had things to say about individual politicians, they were reported. When they or their parties, or others in the same area, speak of longer-term aims or broader approaches, the channels dry up.

Some papers and magazines did

notice GRALTON, however. *In Dublin* yawned at the prospect of further debate on feminism and marxism and raised a doubt that Jim Gralton ever existed. *Northside News* used the occasion of the forum to display its inability to understand left politics, describing them in terms of "obligatory swipes at the evils of Catholic education... fruitless slagging."

The *Leitrim Observer* had no doubt that Jim Gralton had lived. "Leitrim Deportee Inspires New Magazine" was the headline on a front page story which added to the details of Gralton's early life contained in our first issue.

The *Irish Independent* report of the forum invented quotes by

Gregory, claimed that he had quoted Tomas MacGiolla as saying that they would not get any left-wing demands passed by the Dáil. The *Irish Press* — uniquely — managed to summarise accurately the content of the forum, at least what the panellists said, mentioned the magazine and the possibility that there would be more meetings. Their implication that Bernadette McAliskey had pulled out due to some disagreement was quite wrong, however. The *Irish Times* news columns kept quiet throughout. But their listing of the day's events attributed the organisation of the forum to yet another magazine called *Grafton*.

Title: Gralton, No. 2

Date: 1982

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