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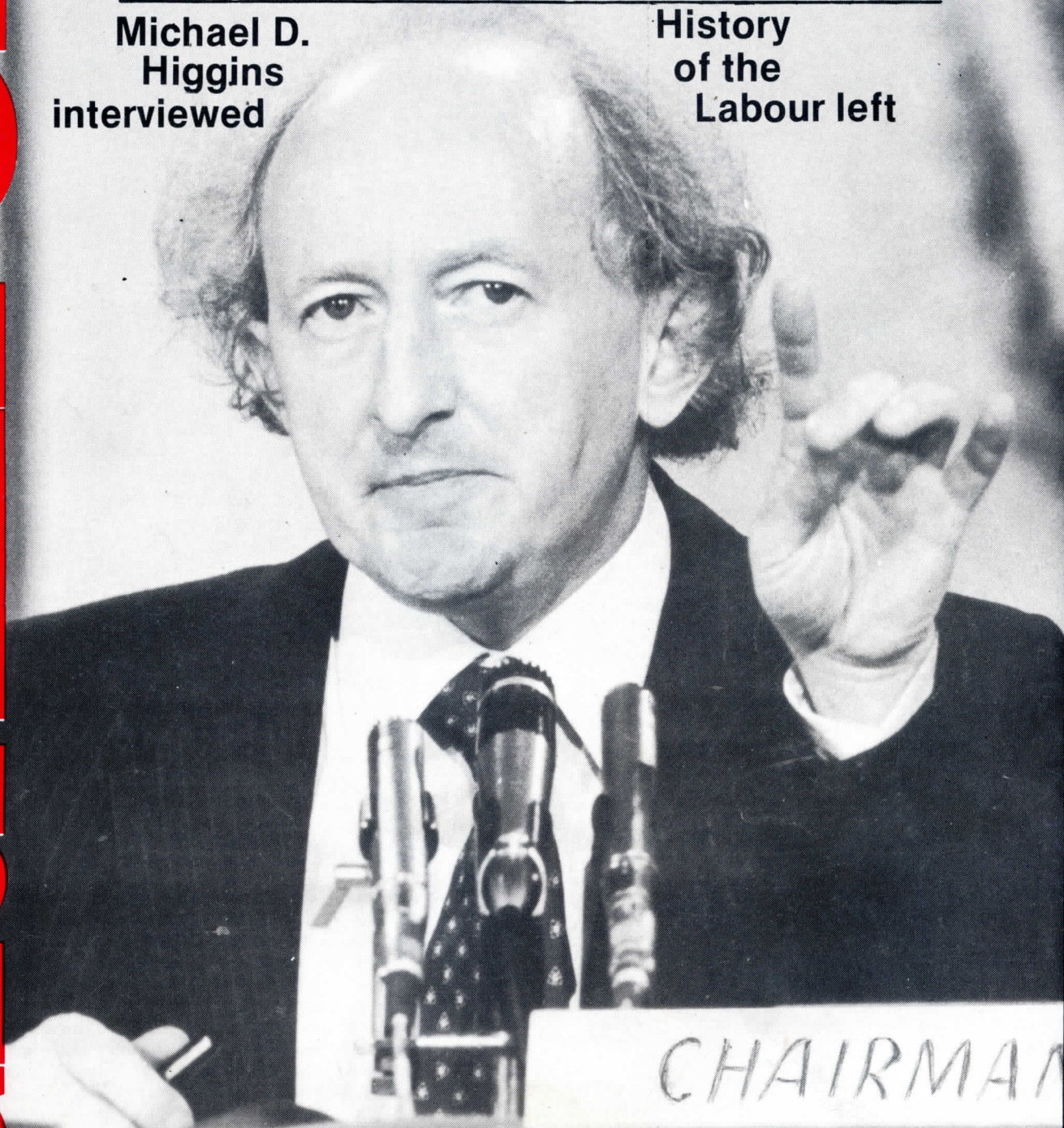
**GRATTON**

## **LABOUR**

**Still worth it after all these years?**

**Michael D.  
Higgins**  
interviewed

**History  
of the  
Labour left**



**Merrigan on pay freeze**  
**The roots of partition**  
**Radical theatre**  
**Gays in the unions**



# EDITORIAL STATEMENT

**W**hat 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.

**W**e 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

**B**ut *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.

**T**he 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.

**B**elieving 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.

**I**f *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.

## Labour: still worth it after all these years?



Derek Speirs (Report)

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# ANTI-AMENDMENT NEWS

**Opposition to the so-called "Pro-Life" Amendment Campaign is undoubtedly growing throughout the country. GLEN SPRAY reports on the activities of the Cork Anti-Amendment Group.**

Growing opposition all around the country to the proposed "pro-life" amendment to the constitution must be proving quite a headache for the pro-amendment lobby. The formation of action groups in local areas shows that a great many people are not willing to see the constitution tampered with by a small group of sectarian bigots.

One of the most active groups around the country is the one in Cork. Launched at a public meeting in July the group has been meeting on a weekly basis ever since with an average of 30 people attending.

Over 100 people were attracted to the first public meeting in Central Hall. They were addressed by Rev. George Williamson, a Methodist minister, a local solicitor, Dr. Dolores Dooley Clarke, lecturer in Philosophy at UCC, and a member of the Cork Council of Trade Unions.

Lively debate has centred around the way in which the group should be organised. Various options have been considered, and the action group structure was felt to be the most democratic.

Meetings of the group are divided into task groups to enable maximum participation and avoid a top-heavy structure where only those with the loudest voices contribute to the debate.

By providing a structure which is flexible and democratic the Cork group sees itself as not only organising a single issue campaign, but also as a vehicle to bring together groups and individuals to promote an authentic grass roots democracy.

To a great extent this is already happening: a variety of people have come together in a broad coalition of forces. Experience gained locally in struggles around issues such as women's rights, contraception, trade union demands, youth employment, gay rights and so on, has contributed to the effectiveness of the group and to an understanding of how to organise at a local level.

The need to promote public awareness of the campaign is one of the major tasks of the Cork group. Publicity has been generated in the local press and on radio. This included a recent debate on South Coast Radio between members of the group and representatives from the PLAC national executive and the local SPUC group.

Debate conducted through letters to the local paper, the *Cork Examiner*, has also reflected this interest — although this growing correspondence seems to have been brought to an abrupt stop by the editor.

The group plans a Day of Action

at the end of September with a stall, display stands, leafleting and a petition in the city centre. This will provide a great opportunity to lobby support and to assess reaction locally. A benefit social is also being held with music from Asylum, Jimmy McCarthy and Noel Shine. Later similar displays and activities will take place in the suburban estates of the city.

Getting trade union support is also seen as an essential aspect of the campaign in Cork. To this end a trade union sub-group has had several meetings. The Public Sector Pay march held in Cork was successfully leafleted. Model resolutions for local union branches have been prepared and the Trades Council is to be approached.

Mobilising support to combat an amendment which is being forced on Irish people by a small, but highly powerful and well-financed, group is not the easiest of tasks. The pro-amendment lobby has ready access to the media, educational institutions — and presumably, powerful financial and institutional interests.

Organising activities and debate against an amendment for which there is no wording or no time scale can be even more frustrating.

In many respects, however, the smug self confidence of the pro-

amendment group has backfired. The thousands of people who have endured the sexual neurosis of Irish society, the guilt-ridden fears induced in the educational system and the two-faced opportunism shown by our politicians, will not allow the tide to be turned back.

The anti-amendment campaign in Cork and in other parts of the country has generated debate, interest and sympathy. A whole tidal wave of associated issues is coming to the fore. The thousands of Irish women who have already had abortions must also be encouraged to assert themselves.

The campaign should not underestimate the strength of entrenched attitudes in this country. The formation of new anti-amendment action groups around the country must be a priority if we are to have a truly national campaign. This needs hard work and efficient organisation.

Real gains have been made however. The opening up of debate on an issue which was taboo this time last year is a vital first step if we are to create a society based on real respect for human life and not some phony 'holier-than-thou' claptrap!

*The Cork Anti-Amendment Action Group meets every Monday at 8 p.m. in Central Hall, Cork and can be contacted at PO Box 33, Cork.*

## NEW YEAR TRIP TO SOVIET UNION

- Full programme including trips to Leningrad and Moscow
- Trip from 26th December to January 4th (Departures from Dublin & Cork)
- Cost approximately IR£325 all in (including hotels & 3 meals daily)

For further information contact:  
Paul Brennan  
87 Laurel Lodge, Castleknock, Co. Dublin.

## ANTI-AMENDMENT

## CAMPAIGN

## NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

**Saturday, November 13th**

**Assemble  
2.30 p.m., Parnell Square, Dublin.**

# AAM ANTI-AMENDMENT MUSIC

## BRIAN TRENCH reports on the latest initiative in the fight back against the Amendment.

Senator Donie Cassidy is said to be organising a benefit gig for Knock Airport with the willing help of T R Dallas and Big Tom. C & W musicians rarely offer their services free, unless for a GAA fund-raising campaign. It is very unlikely that any of them will be offering their services to Anti-Amendment Music.

"Philomena Begley would be very welcome, if she wanted to offer her support," an AAM spokesperson told the press conference which launched this "new departure in rock". The tongue was fairly firmly in the cheek.

The series of concerts to raise money for the Anti-Amendment Campaign, not only tells us something about the personal views of the musicians involved but also about the political content of their music.

Along with country music — which at least in its debased Irish form is profoundly reactionary, being constructed on a minimum of musical invention, total predictability in the arrangements, and the ideological values of family and homeland — the other musical sectors which almost automatically exclude themselves are "ballads", MOR and Comhaltas Celtoirí-type traditional. They are authoritarian, anti-democratic both in their organisation and in their style of presentation.

The support for Anti-Amendment Music has come so far from

rock and folk musicians who are not essentially defined by their willingness to take stances on public issues — few enough of them are — but who take some risks with their music. The more inventive musicians and their audience are almost by definition those among the musically interested who take the most critical attitude to life. If you have never asked a question about where you have inherited your chord sequences or your riffs from, you are very unlikely to have asked questions of wider political significance.

The Baggot Inn was packed on 13 September for the first of the Anti-Amendment gigs which raised nearly £1,000 for the campaign. Paul Brady and The Blades, separately and together, turned out something special. Brady's solo spot compelled the audience's attention without forcing anything on them. The Blades are developing a soul style which leaves space in the rhythm for the audience to participate.

Brady had taken some persuasion to appear at the Anti-Amendment Music press conference. He does not express himself with ease about his music. But *Nothing But The Same Old Story*, with which he opened at the Baggot Inn, is one of the best of contemporary politically-conscious songs. It does not need to address any major issues directly; with irony and sympathy it probes and unsettles. AAM can help powerfully to probe the reasons for the amendment and unsettle its advocates.

### ANTI-AMENDMENT MUSIC, GIGS IN OCTOBER

Saturday, Oct. 9th, 8.30 p.m.  
Rhythm Kings, Baggot Inn

Friday, Oct. 29th, 8.00 p.m.  
Fredine White, Trinity College

Thursday, Oct. 14th, 8.30 p.m.  
Alternative Comedy Sportsman  
Inn

Sunday, Oct. 31st, 3.00 p.m.  
Eugene McGonagles

## BEATING THE EMBARGO

### MATT MERRIGAN gives a personal view

Why the embargo? The ostensible reason given by the Government was their inability to:

(1) Meet the cost of the 5% due now in some instances: Cost £40 m. in 1982.  
(2) Pay the Special Claims Awards this year and more to come on foot of Civil Service analogues: Cost 1982 — £100 m. plus; 1983 — £200 m plus.

(3) Budget for the 23rd Round for 1983/84 which is an unknown factor at this point.

(4) Raise any substantial amounts of revenue by way of increased taxes.

It is the general view that the special claims and pay in 1983 were the factors laying behind the Government's decision. It is in my view regrettable that at this stage the Congress Executive have expressed no formal wish to discuss pay in 1983 or even in a most tenuous way to feel out the Government on the issue, although invited to do so.

#### Public Sector and Private Sector

The size of the public sector pay bill, in the depth of a depression, must inhibit in general terms the process of free collective bargaining in the private sector. The Government would not want to allow a wage drift situation deriving from wage bargaining in the private sector to determine automatically pay levels in the public sector. In the same way the F.U.E., at least publicly, deplored the influence of the Public Sector Pay Agreement on private sector pay levels in 1982/83.

It is argued by some that Public Sector led pay talks in 1983 would not yield pay increases commensurate with the capacity of the Unions in the private sector to set a higher norm. This argument has not been borne out by any major group in the current 'free for all', and it is from the same craft-orientated Unions that failed miserably to sustain their 25% demand in any significant way in the Spring of 1982, that this line emanates.

The private sector employers since 1981 have read the economic situation as it affects pay and conditions more correctly than the Unions. The constraints of the market place now substitute for the

constraints in National Pay Agreements, without the contingent obligations on the pre-determined pay levels in these Agreements. The relative strike-free 22nd Round speaks for itself.

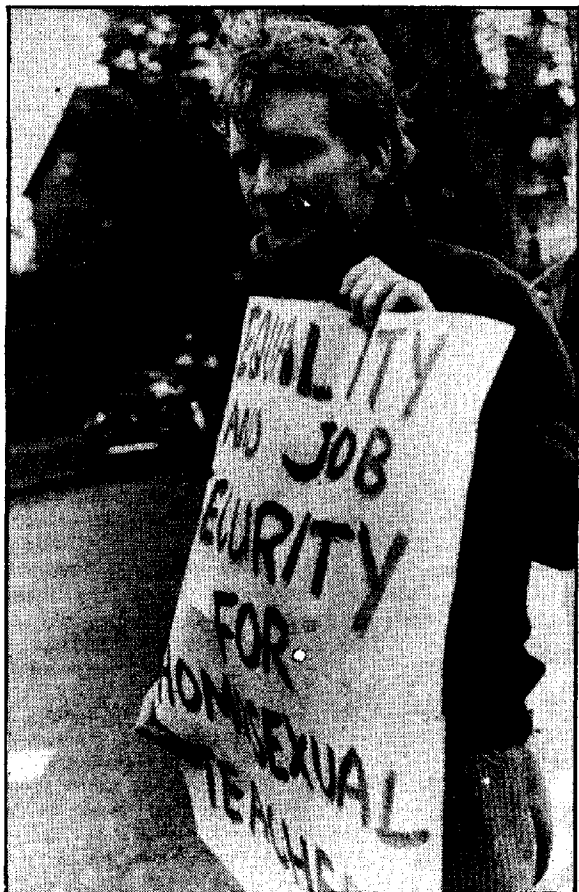
#### A special delegate conference?

It is correct that Congress should condemn the Government's dishonouring of the Public Sector Pay Agreement. It is also correct that if the Government does not retract this position that Congress should co-ordinate a campaign of protest and work stoppages to disabuse other employers from reneging on Agreements freely entered into, if they have a mind to do so.

At the time of writing, Congress has decided to meet the Taoiseach to seek "clarification" of the Government's position. It is likely in view of the spurious posturing of Fine Gael on the Embargo that the Taoiseach, if he wishes to survive politically, will make some conciliatory gesture towards the Congress and thereby removing from the Fine Gael/Labour axis a possible Coalition component in the Labour Party's debate at its October Conference.

The ensuing negotiations with the biggest single employer in the State would indicate the mind of the Government on pay in 1983 as well as its intentions in other areas of economic and social policy, including jobs and tax. Depending on the consensus on pay levels, such negotiations may also be used as a signal to the private sector employers to join in tri-partite discussions on National pay issues. At that stage the Congress Executive would be obliged to seek a mandate and a brief for such negotiations from its affiliated Unions at a Special Delegate Conference.

If the situation does not develop along the above lines, Unions will then have to revert to a catch-up procedure to seek increases of such a magnitude as will protect living standards which have been eroded quite significantly in the last 2½ years by at least 15%, and are set to erode by at least 13% up to the end of 1983.



Clodagh Boyd (Report)

# GAY RIGHTS AT WORK

**Support for gay rights at work received a welcome boost at the ICTU Conference this year but, as KIERAN ROSE and ARTHUR LEAHY of the Cork Gay Collective explain, many problems remain.**

**A** its Conference in July of this year, the ICTU overwhelmingly passed an Irish Federation of University Teachers resolution calling for the decriminalisation of consenting homosexual relationships and urging all affiliated unions to resist any attempts to discriminate against workers on the basis of their sexual orientation.

IFUT had actually adopted this resolution at a general meeting in 1981, but the Executive refused to forward it to Congress until forced to do so by their members earlier this year. In contrast, a gay rights motion put by the Cork branch to the Conference of the Local Government and Public Services Union this year, was strongly supported by the Executive (particularly President, Tom Bogue) and the vast majority of the delegates — though one of the few delegates who opposed the motion declared that, "if Cork have problems with homosexuality, then let them go away and solve them quietly without publicity." In the North, in response to a witch-hunt against gay social workers following on the Kincora "scandal", the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance have adopted a similar anti-discrimination policy.

The passing of the resolution by the ICTU is a very significant development for the gay movement in Ireland. It is the first time that such a widely-representative and influential body has come out in

favour of gay rights and represents a timely rebuke to the Catholic bishops who condemned the minor reforms in the anti-gay laws in Northern Ireland required by a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights.

For radical gays, it is particularly welcome because it shifts the focus of debate away from medicine and morals and puts the demand for gay rights in the context of the demand for workers rights where it belongs.

Getting a gay rights policy adopted by the ICTU is only a first and partial step. An active gay caucus within the trade union movement will have to be organised to make sure this policy is implemented and that cases of discrimination are fought and won. This will not be a simple task because the pressure on gays in Ireland is so severe and wide-ranging — in the family, schools, at work, through the Church etc. — that many of us find it difficult enough to maintain a sense of our own identity, let alone to fight back.

To reclaim one's sexuality from a lifetime of conditioning that says you're "queer" and then to campaign for gay rights is a difficult process. The fact that there are no well-known cases of job discrimination against gays in Ireland, reflects the weakness of our movement, where many gays do not as yet have the confidence or support to effectively challenge discrimination.

But a start has been made, and the task now is to develop the policy and to get resolutions concerned with particular aspects of gay oppression adopted by the relevant unions. It should, for example, be the policy of unions in the medical area to oppose the treatment of homosexuality as a disorder. Training courses for trade unionists should include an input on how to counter anti-gay prejudices in the workplace. In some work situations, where anti-gay prejudices are very strong or where jobs are particularly vulnerable (e.g. teaching), it may be necessary for union officials to initiate and speak on such resolutions.

Our immediate aim is to lessen the pressure on lesbians and gay men in Ireland — and job security is a vital aspect of this objective. Also important are improved social facilities, consciousness-raising groups, telephone services etc., and he established gay organisations have played a valuable role here.

But from a radical perspective, gay oppression cannot be seen in isolation from a power structure that both keeps women in subservience and ensures that one third of the population lives in poverty. True gay liberation is possible only when paternalistic and exploitative power structures are overthrown.

This returns us to the point made by Melissa Murray and Charles Kerrigan in GRALTON No. 3: the demands made by lesbians and gay men are integral to the struggle of socialism. The repression of gay sexuality is only an extreme example of how reactionary social forces wish to define and control everyone's sexuality. For example, the Pro-Amendment Campaign is an attack on women's sexuality and is meant to stymie any progress

towards an Ireland where individuals will be able to think and act for themselves in terms of morals, types of relationships etc.

This threat has been recognised and has united the disparate Left and progressive forces. The ICTU has come out in favour of gay rights and divorce and there is a strong support for the Anti-Amendment Campaign from trade unionists. There is then, an increasingly clear conflict between an Ireland where people can take control of their lives and their sexuality, and those who wish to return to a Roman Catholic hegemony where they will decide for everyone else.

Sometimes, the Pro-Amendment people let slip that they see divorce, homosexuality, contraception and abortion as linked issues undermining "their" Irish society. Jack Marigan of the Garda Representative Body sees those advocating gay rights and a "woman's right to choose" as subversive. We should examine why they make these connections and how sexuality can be used as a controlling force.

We should examine how liberating our bodies and our sexuality from the control of others is part of the socialist project. We should begin a debate on how gay rights, feminism and socialism relate in the particular Irish situation.

*A workshop on "Gay Rights At Work" is to be held later this year. It is also intended to produce a resource handbook for those working on this issue. Support is needed. For further information, contact: Cork Gay Collective, PO Box 39, Cork or Dublin Gay Collective, PO box 1076, Dublin 1.*

When Rory Gallagher's drummer, a Belfast Catholic, sported a green Radio 2 T-shirt during a recently broadcast concert from Galway, it was a symbolic shot in the arm for the National broadcasting service's beleaguered music channel.

But behind Radio 2 and RTE's current debacle with the big-time illegal stations is the most direct attack ever on the democratic concept of public service broadcasting. It's a concept that's become battered and tarnished, like its standard-bearer RTE. Real broadcasting is about a lot more than pop music we know, but radio and what we call "popular culture" are so tied together nowadays, that control of the airwaves in Ireland will be a significant non-economic factor in determining what kind of country we become. Therefore a socialist perspective is needed.

RTE Radio is obliged to work within the law, broadcasting only on frequencies allocated to it by the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. Ireland is allotted these wavelengths and assorted rules and regulations by the World Administrative Radio Conference. RTE, foolishly perhaps at this stage, sticks to the rules.

Nowadays an 'entrepreneur' with a few thousand pounds to spare can sit on a frequency, broadcast twenty four hours a day at whatever power — and staffing levels — he likes. They don't pay performing rights (RTE's bill last year was £300,000). The National Broadcasting Services are left broadcasting at considerably less power than a well known Dublin illegal station. Some of the illegals can manage a punchy news service and the fact that it's lifted from other media doesn't seem to bother the listeners.

The illegals have been allowed a phenomenal rise; they've been facilitated by the P & T and been endorsed by Government Ministers. Newspapers don't bother calling them illegal any more. Both Governments won't legislate against them. An RTE person has said: "If the Provos set up a radio station, then we'd see legislation!".

Ironically the only attempt by Republicans or radicals to have a go at broadcasting was a feeble Radio H-Block during the summer of 1981. But it relied mainly on one disc for its programme content. On the whole, illegal broadcasting is dominated by mostly apolitical and artistically redundant individuals. A few honourable exceptions are making waves in some of the so-called "community stations" around the country. In Dublin, of course, ARD had its short lived 'social' period around 1978. But in Dublin now the professional entrepreneurs have left the amateurs, music lovers and general hams in the pre-Marconi age.

# GOOD OUL RTE RADIO

## PADRAIGH De BRUN

Yet it's to these exclusively pop music stations that certain politicians have given their allegiance, notably Albert Reynolds and Michael Woods. Ray Burke declared one such station, Sunshine, during an election interview on RTE Radio (sic) to be "community radio" (he reportedly has interests in Sunshine). Fianna Fáil has come a long way from turf fires and comely maidens!

The pirates, let's face it, are a pathetic alternative. RTE since the beginning (in Radio at least), has always stood for maintaining some form of national identity even at the expense of audiences. RTE Radio hasn't yet streamlined itself fully into the cultural ghettos model adopted by the BBC in the late '60s-pop; housewife easy listening; egg head classical; serious speech (Radio 4). So the BBC's 'intellectual channel' is so 'intelligent' that its audience is tiny. RTE Radio hasn't as yet pigeonholed its audience to the same extent. However, in the late '70s RTE was forced to change somewhat. The great explosion in popular music meant Radio Éireann was left behind, so conservatism and cultural idealism were both compromised. RTE followed BBC Radio 1 and met the public demand. Radio 2 was set up.

As the BBC had said back in the '60s: "Anything the pirates can spin, we can spin better." And why shouldn't RTE have got into this increasingly popular and lucrative side of broadcasting? Yet it now looks like the Government intends to give private interests the

franchise for ever more pop music radio. As in Britain it may be called "local" radio, but this is only a technicality.

There are very good reasons against letting commercial forces onto the Irish airwaves. Firstly, is there any need for a number of music stations 'competing' with each other? In America for example, the more music stations there are, the more the range of music played narrows, and the tighter controlled the play lists become. No chances are taken with anything but a certain sound and audience ratings are the only quality control. Partly as a result, pop music in America is now only a pale plastic skeleton of the great American music of the '50s and '60s. Elvis Costello wrote a song about it "... radio is in the hands of such a lot of fools trying to anaesthetise the way that you feel ..."

There's absolutely no reason why Ireland with its population and language/cultural composition should follow the pattern of other countries in the development of radio — or television — broadcasting. The British experience (which we're most likely to follow) has been that, once a station is given a licence, like any good sausage factory they keep the format as simple as possible and keep costs down by using only the simplest ingredients. In a recent report on the future of Irish local Radio commissioned by Gael Linn, the authors point to a British report that "... shows the failure of the commercial radio system to

stimulate interest and participation in local political and community life — two of the key notions advanced for the introduction of the service in the first place."

Albert Reynolds Radio would probably be like this. As P & T Minister its almost as if he saw visions of his former ballroom empire reincarnated, this time with knobs and switches. The appropriate music is still around and the label "truly Irish" could easily be borrowed!

Patrick Cooney, a more sinister man politically, actually had a better position on the future of broadcasting. From his extremely conservative position he declared that local radio, apart from some business input, of course, should stay in public hands. Unfortunately he meant the hands would be held by Government. In reported remarks to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on State Sponsored Bodies he saw RTE failing in its duty as defender of Irish moral values.

RTE's Community Radio Plan may seem cumbersome on paper (a network of community-controlled radio on a county basis) but if implemented, it would mean that the expansion of broadcasting would not be lost to some kind of public accountability and the framework at least would be there for democratic control. It's of course more likely that under present governments there would be attempts to get loaded representation similar to the School Boards of Management. But from the socialist point of view the community local radio is the better scenario. As well as this it's safe to assume that no radical 'consortium' is likely to get a broadcasting licence if 'commercial' local radio is adopted instead.

Indeed, the future of radio broadcasting at the moment in Ireland, not to mention television, which is another story, looks particularly bleak, bland and Anglo-American. RTE Management, after grovelling to a hostile government, are still refused a licence fee increase. Rumours persist that Tony O'Reilly has now a stake in Radio Nova and its latest offshoot, Kiss.

There's a strong, gut lack of sympathy for RTE in Ireland, probably due to the pervasive influence of British television and RTE's competitive and financial dilemmas. The Broadcasting Review Committee of 1974, in a declaration of aims and objectives for broadcasting, suggested that the service should be "... essentially Irish in content and character." To this aim, it looks like we have to take our chances for the moment and back the semi-State — warts and all.



## Still worth it after all these years? Part 1



### MICHAEL D. HIGGINS INTERVIEWED

**Gralton:** *A lot of people see the Labour Party Conference in October as a crunch conference for the Party. Do you agree?*

I see it as one of the most important conferences in that its decision on electoral strategy will define the role of the Party in this crucial period of Irish history: There is an unprecedented crisis for the Irish economy, there's a crisis in education, a crisis confronting women, a crisis from the impact of new technology. There is also an entirely new audience which the big parties aren't catering for, so it's crucial that the Labour Party establish itself as a party of the left.

There are twenty-five or thirty resolutions submitted to Conference on Coalition. They put forward a number of different positions, from those which will have no truck with supporting any government to stating a willingness for coalition with Fine Gael. But the majority of the motions submitted are against Coalition. And it's not a re-run of the old arguments at Cork. Parts of the country have changed their mind since then.

Before, people assumed that there was a need to follow the deputy from the constituency. That just isn't so now. Branches and Constituency Councils are making up their minds for themselves. The system where a deputy could bring in a busload of supporters is breaking down. And also, it's not a simple question of Dublin being anti-coalition and the rural areas pro-coalition.

**Gralton:** *How is your own mind make up on electoral strategy?*

I believe that for the immediate years ahead, the need is to *identify* the Labour Party by establishing socialist policies on the economy, on women, on education and so on. In order to do that, and to take our place as the leader of the left, we need to be independent, and the Labour Party therefore should stay out of any cabinet for the immediate years ahead. We would be in a different situation if the major parties had broken up, or the Labour Party had increased its strength and had thirty or forty seats. However, under the Party Constitution we can discuss the

issue every three years, so we would not be tying our hands for ever.

If we hold the balance of power, then on the basis of our socialist programme we can negotiate with the major parties, and at the next election we can face the electorate and tell them whether our demands had been met. The important thing is that the Labour Party must build up its socialist programme, a programme of transforming society, introducing a participatory society, changing the character of the institutions. We can do no work on this programme if we're constantly having to defend our record as a minor participant in the government. The vote was close at Cork and at the Gaiety Conference. I think those of us who are against coalition are now going into Conference with a better chance than ever before.

**Gralton:** *What happens if you don't win?*

Well, it locks us up from making any progress for another three years. I don't think the Party can afford that. It won't be disastrous, it won't be the end of the Labour Party. Though I respect the other



groups on the Left, I think that the first step forward is for the Labour Party to begin attracting new members, to build up its finances, to develop its socialist policies. A decision in favour of coalition would delay all that, it would make a position within the Labour Party very difficult and I'm afraid it would drive many people away from the Party.

**Gralton: Into the arms of the Workers' Party.**

No, I don't think so. I think they would find the Workers' Party very unattractive. Its political programme is rather simplistic and narrow. Some opportunity for recruitment might be opened up for them with Labour committed to Coalition, but not to any great extent.

**Gralton: You spoke of the Labour Party leading the left**

Yes, we mustn't have the left-wing parties devouring each other. We must have a reconstituted left. It's not just a question of political parties coming together, I think we have to involve groups like the Land League, like women's organisations which are outside of the Labour Party, in some form of unity. It needs to be a much broader and more outward looking exercise than the Left Alternative was.

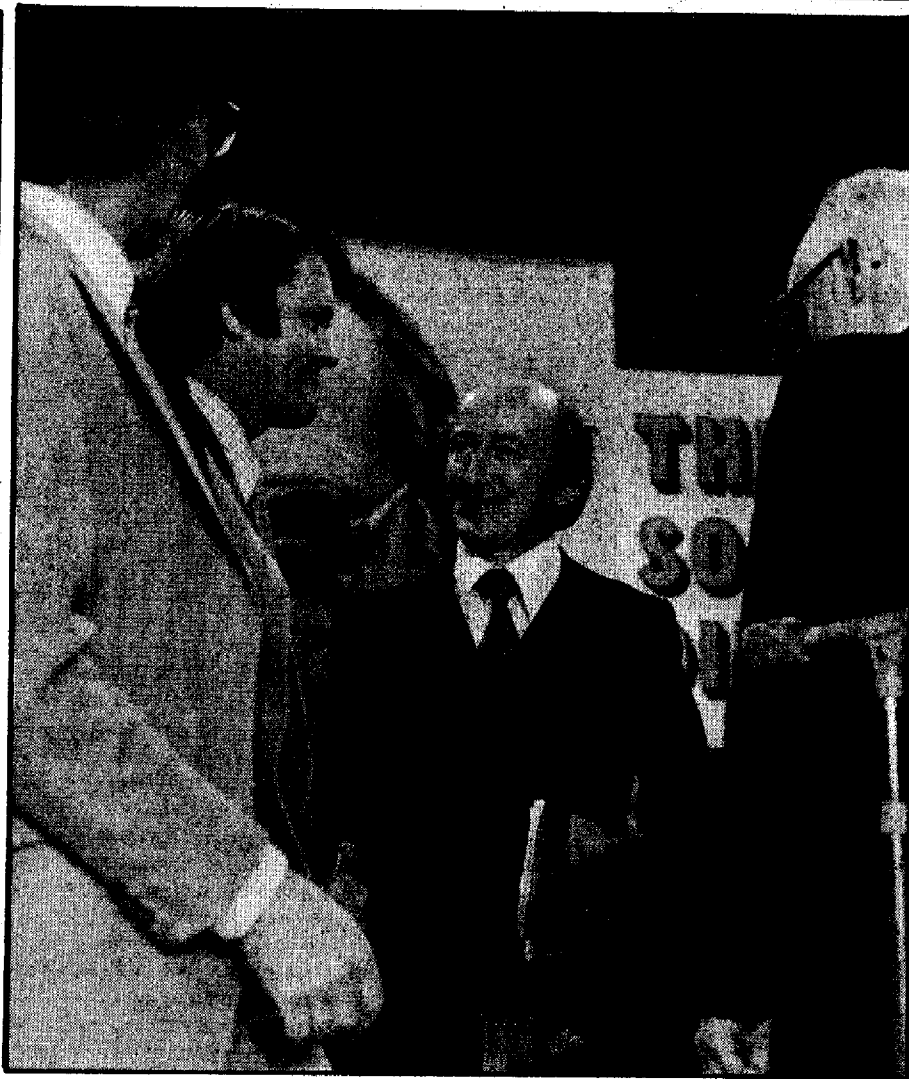
We have also got to recruit a new population to the Labour Party, building up on our affiliations from the trade union movement. We should not be trying to blow every tendency out of the water. I see a coming together first in mind, then in tactics, and only finally in structure. But Labour has a leading role to play in this process.

**Gralton: What is your attitude to people coming together to oppose the Pro-Life Amendment?**

I believe the overwhelming majority of the Labour Conference will oppose the Amendment. If you analyse the forces demanding the Amendment, it's a departure-point for taking us along a very reactionary road. Exploitation in the economic sense is not the full picture of capitalist domination, although some people like the Workers' Party seem to ignore everything else. You have got to look at repression between the sexes. That's why I agreed to be a sponsor of the Anti-amendment Campaign. It's a very important issue.

**Gralton: What do you feel about the relationship of the trade unions to the Labour Party?**

The trade unions have historic relations with labour parties. It's a potential that the Labour Party hasn't used very well, but it could do immense things. The unions which want to see the Labour Party as an independent party are the unions which participate most in Labour Party affairs. They have been convinced



of the arguments against coalition; it's not something that they are attempting to impose on the Labour Party.

**Gralton: Do you see the Labour Party having a connection with the trade unions' own struggles? Should the Party support trade unionists when they take to the streets?**

I think that there's a realisation that the notions of consensus on the economy which would co-opt the unions are falling apart. With the rise in unemployment and the fall in real wages, the idea of National Wage Agreements is fading away. The inflexibility of the Agreements created difficulties. Those who were putting forward general claims felt trapped in the structure. Trade unionists seeking better living conditions should be supported.

Yes, Labour should support protests and street marches. It's not the function of the Labour Party to defend the antiquated methods of debate in the Dáil. I believe strongly in democracy, but the existing parliamentary structure isn't the limit of that. If you look at England during the Falklands/Malvinas affair, parliamentary socialism caved in, it was intimidated by the jingoistic going-on in Parliament: they ended up welcoming the

victory of the British Navy.

**Gralton: Speaking of Britain, there are moves in the British Labour Party to expel the Militant. Are you concerned about the activities of the Irish Militant?**

No, I'm not concerned. Many people believe I'm a member or supporter of the Militant, but I'm neither. I accept that people have a right to work for different positions within the Labour Party. I don't believe in the expulsion or proscription of tendencies. I'd want to deal with them by argument. From the things I've read about the British Militant, I don't agree with the tactics they seem to have used in some constituencies.

People in different countries are asking what form of socialism will be appropriate in the twentieth century and the twenty-first century. We must have the courage to go beyond existing models. I met Trotskyists recently who said you couldn't have a socialist revolution in Nicaragua because there was no revolutionary socialist party — and I heard the same argument from an official in Russia. Socialism is a philosophy and a theory of action that must be put into effect in different historical circum-



Derek Speirs (Report)

stances. We've no right to put a limit on the forms of socialism. I'm not a vague ethical socialist, now. We have to win the economy, that's of crucial importance. But there are other things like taking action on disarmament, on ecology.

Many people will make a contribution to socialist thought after Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. The world didn't stop on one day in Mexico. I'm not speaking of course about diluting socialism, I'm not talking of some vague form of social democracy. We have to take account of the circumstances, the phenomena in any particular place. In Ireland we're operating within the European context. We're a small open economy dominated by foreign capital. We're undeveloped within that context rather than in a Third World context.

**Gralton:** *There is a strand of thought which argues that Ireland should withdraw to a more protectionist framework and that this would bring closer the achievement of socialism.*

I can't in practical terms suggest protectionism as the answer. We have to acknowledge our relationships and set about a socialist transformation of them. We certainly would be faced with technical problems with regard to the international financial institutions. Look at Mitterand's France where they've had to take action against the financial institutions. And we've seen Michael Manley overturned by the covert actions of international institutions in Jamaica. Isolation is just romantic and daft. We have to go for a broader vision, not move inwards. My own perspective is international.

**Gralton:** *Where do you stand on the neutrality issue?*

ON neutrality, the Labour Party stand

has been very good. Fine Gael have not taken a good stand although they mouth clichés about it. Fianna Fáil seem to make it conditional on the question of reunification. The Labour Party have drawn the distinction between active and passive neutrality, we're in favour of active neutrality: we should have more participation in the non-aligned conferences, we should support them at the United Nations, we should be more explicit about the erosion of Irish neutrality, the talk of common defence pacts, the use of Irish waters for reconnaissance and intelligence by both the United States and the USSR — they've been placing anti-submarine devices on the bed of the Irish Sea. I've raised the question with diplomats from the Soviet Union about the danger to us from the placing of missiles in Northern Ireland, and they wouldn't explicitly say that the South was excluded from the lists of their targets.

It's interesting that in 1948 Seán MacBride, who now is one of the foremost campaigners for neutrality, took the attitude that Ireland was not unconditionally neutral, only as long as it was divided. Fianna Fáil would be willing to play neutrality as a card now, if they could get something in exchange on Partition.

**Gralton:** *Returning to the coming Conference, there seem to be moves within the Party to dilute the Administrative Council. Would this mean less democratic control?*

I think the existing arrangement is better than the proposals that have been put forward. Making the A.C. subservient to the Parliamentary Party would be an erosion of democracy within the Party. At present, 12 members of the A.C., out of 36, are members of the

Parliamentary Party: there are 8 representatives of the Parliamentary Party, then there's the Chairman and Treasurer and two more.

We should work to eliminate the divisions between the Parliamentary Party and the rest of the movement by other means. For example, there's not enough service to deputies by the policy committees, the deputies are left on their own resources.

**Gralton:** *Looking at the track record of the left in the Labour Party, isn't the principled left becoming smaller and smaller?*

Not at all. There's been fresh blood coming in, and former members have been coming back. The folding-up of the SLP removes one of the obstacles to people coming back: they were people of undoubted principle but their leaving of the Labour Party was a bad tactic. We're now on the brink of a majority position in the Labour Party: with them in, and others, we'd be much more sure.

**Gralton:** *What about the members of the Labour Party who have become converts to the anti-coalition position as a tactic rather than as a matter of socialist principles?*

I would hope that they would come to be convinced by the socialist arguments. If we surround them then they may become contaminated (to use John Kelly's phrase) and evolve further.

**Gralton:** *If the anti-coalition line wins, will there be deputies quitting the party?*

I don't really think so. Those are just rumours.

**Gralton:** *What if the Right ignores the decision of Conference?*

The important thing is to retain the power of the Administrative Council. Its decision between the last two Dáils shows that it can restrain the Parliamentary Party. A disciplined party would be one that obeyed its Conference.

**Gralton:** *Finally, what if the Left lose at Conference? Would this make you think of giving up on the party?*

I know some people say that we are going to be defeated. It may happen. In that case, I personally wouldn't give up but perhaps change my own arena. If I found myself out of the Dáil or local politics, I would hope to have an analytical role, to make TV programmes, to write, to work in the educational system. I don't accept that you have to blow the Labour Party out of the water. If it evolved into something like the SDP in Britain and thus became an obstruction to the advance of socialism, *only* then would it be appropriate for socialists to go elsewhere.

## Still worth it after all these years? Part 2



### Labouring under illusions by Dermot Boucher

**T**he recent history of the Labour Party has been recounted so often that a further repetition must appear a depressing prospect; apart from which, one should not speak ill of the living dead. However, one aspect of the past 15 years that has received relatively little attention is the role of the Labour Left. In the interest of historical accuracy and contemporary decision making, it's time to put the record straight, explode a few familiar myths, and consign the sacred cows to the beef mountain of history.

First, the *Myth of the Sixties* which reads that, "The Left took over a moribund party in the mid-Sixties, rejected coalition, adopted a comprehensive socialist programme, and went on to win a record vote in the general election of 1969. Alas, having failed to win instant office, the Right panicked, re-captured the Party, sold out the policies, and returned to coalition thereby precipitating a 10 year electoral decline."

The truth, I'm afraid, was rather different. In the first place the Left never did win control of the Labour Party. What actually happened is that the Party Centre and some people on the Right, notably Brendan Corish, became infected by the mood of the times and forged a working alliance with the numerically weak Left, while the rest of the Right, still in the majority, swallowed its reservations and temporarily tagged along behind. This, remember, was the era of civil rights, home and abroad, of Vietnam protests, of the May '68 events, of the British Labour Government, and of the general opening up of Irish society. Not even the Irish Labour Party could remain immune to such changes. Significantly, though, when the incorrigible Right-winger Jimmy Tully retired as Party Chairman (he was never defeated) the Labour Conference chose Barry Desmond, representing the solid centre, in preference to Michael O'Leary from the erratic Left. Desmond, indeed, won by a 3 to 1 majority.

The famous policy documents of the "New Republic" were certainly radical for their times, but they were at best a patchwork quilt of paper policies with little coherence or

perspective. Few people in the Party Establishment took them seriously, even in 1968, and by the time the Party took office less than 5 years later, they were long since forgotten.

Perhaps the most notorious myth surrounds the '69 General Election. While not the disaster claimed by the Right, the results showed that support for Labour, which had grown steadily over the decade, was now definitely on the decline. Party support had peaked during the 1967/68 period, which included second place in Dublin in the '67 local elections, good by-election performances in Cork, Limerick and elsewhere, and the '68 P.R. Referendum (see Table 1). In terms of candidates put forward, the '69 results were actually worse than in '65 (see

**Table 1. Comparisons — '65 and '69 Elections**

	Labour Vote	Candidates Nominated	Votes per Candidate	Candidates Elected
1965 G.E.	192,740	44	4,384	22
1969 G.E.	223,282	98	2,273	18

Table 2) and much of the Labour "advance" was due to (a) the acquisition of 'personality' candidates — Browne, McQuillan, Dunne, O'Connell, O'Leary in '65, Thornley, Keating and O'Brien in '69, and (b) the replacement or absorption of clientilist independent TDs. It could be added that the '69 campaign was bitterly divisive, with vicious infighting, red smears inflicted by one Labour candidate on another, and a

**Table 2. Comparisons — By-election & General Election**

	Labour Vote	Labour Share
By-election (7) 1965/69	43,013	19.7%
'69 G.E. (same constituencies)	36,989	16.0%



chronic shortage of money. When it was all over the Left was just as demoralised as the rest of the Party. Whatever else may be said about it, the era of the "New Republic" was far from being the socialist Camelot.

**T**he *Myth of the Seventies* goes as follows: "The Right have sold out, the Labour Left fought a long, bitter, and at times successful battle, but ultimately failed because they (a) put personalities before policies, (b) concentrated too much on electoralism, and (c) prematurely quit the Party."

The truth is that the Left, in its various manifestations, was frankly pathetic. For example, no attempt was made to form a 'Left Opposition' prior to the Coalition Conference in Cork of December 1970, apart from the efforts of the Young Socialist/League for a Workers Republic grouping, headed by Paddy Healy, which used the occasion to launch a breakaway movement from the Party. A major split, including a noticeable generation gap, opened up between the YS/LWR element and the supporters of Noel Browne and Matt Merrigan who were determined to "stay in and fight". Paradoxically, it was Browne who led the walk-out from the Cork Conference (he afterwards claimed that he had been misunderstood: he hadn't 'walked out' but merely 'left for an early train', whereupon 200 delegates followed him; such was the Keystone Cops character of the Labour Left).

Symbolically, the celebrated 'Liaison of the Left' was conceived in a pub on the way home from Cork, a classic example of bolting the stable door after the horse has already been converted into catfood. Liaison all but collapsed within a year of its formation, and though subsequently revived by some of the younger activists, it never became more than a small elitist grouping with a modest rank and file following. When the as yet unorganised Left pulled out of the Administrative Council in 1970 over the Stevie Coughlan affair (remember him?) only 4 of the 20 elected members resigned. While polling up to a third of the conference votes in officership contests, largely on a personality basis, Liaison never subsequently captured more than 2 seats on the A.C. All of which is not to belittle the hard work of people like Matt Merrigan and the late Brendan Scott; merely to record that they lacked the time and capacity to engage in serious political organisation; and even if they had, they would have evoked little response from the perennially demoralised rank and file.

What of the other changes against Liaison? Yes, they did descend on occasions to personalities, though some of this could be attributed to the media. But they also did more in the way of policy formation than the rest of the Party combined, e.g., Dave Neligan on health and social welfare, Pat Carroll on housing and education. It was Liaison, not Official Sinn Féin, that effectively launched the Resource Protection Campaign, while Liaison "members" (it was never, in fact, a formal membership body) made significant contributions to the Left Alternative economic policy document, "Go To Work Ireland". As for electoralism, this strategy was based on the premise that if you wished to influence events in the Labour Party you had to be where the action was, i.e., the Parliamentary Party. Certainly no one had any illusions about parliamentary democracy. The main problem, indeed, was that having decided on a strategy it was not taken seriously enough by some key personalities.

Premature departure? It must be recalled that in many cases the Left did not opt out voluntarily — they were driven out. The list of those expelled, "disqualified" or suspended included Browne, Merrigan, Scott, Paddy Healy, John Goodwillie, Jim Quinn, Des Bonass (twice), Dermot Boucher (3 times), John Carroll and many, many others. Only Carroll opted to return permanently to the fold; while Jim Kemmy was the only major figure to depart voluntarily before the final break in 1977. Furthermore, apart from expulsions, the position of the serious Left rapidly became untenable. Despite powerful debates mounted by Liaison, the November '76 Conference voted for Coalition by a 6 to 1 majority, and by June 1977 Liaison could

scarcely raise 40 supporters in the Party. By contrast, the Socialist Labour Party attracted at least 10 times that number during its first 6 months. Despite the virtual proscription of Liaison, the effective banning of Left candidates from contesting winnable seats, and the euphoria of the wildly successful Independent Labour election campaign, it is doubtful if a breakaway would have occurred had not the leadership, notably Cluskey and Halligan, insisted on the expulsion of Merrigan and Browne.

Why, then, was Liaison relatively successful? Because (a) they were the only broadly based, if ill-organised opposition tendency, providing a measure of leadership and, more important, a flow of information to the Party rank and file, (b) they had a few respected and newsworthy personalities, (c) the media delighted in publicising Labour's internal problems, and (d) the primary object of the exercise, that of destabilising the Coalitionist leadership, was relatively easy to accomplish. However, the painful fact is that once the Establishment had unanimously backed the coalition strategy in December 1970, and once the exodus of Left-wingers began shortly afterwards, the war within the Party was effectively lost. Most of the struggles of the past decade, apart from the essentially negative task of undermining the credibility of the coalition leadership, were pointless and futile. That remains the case to-day.

**T**he *Myth of the Eighties* is that "the Left has staged a dramatic come-back, coalition has been rejected, and the Party generally is poised for a sustained socialist advance."

It is true that the Left/anti-coalitionists have strengthened their position at conference, and more particularly on the A.C. — or appear to have done so. This apparent progress is due to (a) rule changes increasing the number of conference delegates and group representation on the A.C., (b) the decay of some rural party organisation, (c) the disenchantment of the unions, and (d) the "conversion" of some middle-of-the road people to an anti-coalition position. The reality of the Left is that since the departure of Liaison in 1977 there has been no organised opposition with the possible exception of Militant, whose counterproductive record over the years leads one to conclude that if they had not existed, the Leadership would have been forced to invent them. The record of Michael D. Higgins, the current champion of the Left, in translating socialist rhetoric into actual deeds, has been unimpressive, though some would consider this an unfair, or at least a premature judgement. Trade Union interest (apart, ironically, from a few Left-wingers outside the Party) in Labour is minimal. The "converts" tend to be unsuccessful careerists who, given the opportunity, would quickly revert to type.

Conference decisions are a matter of simple arithmetic. Twelve of the fifteen Labour T.D.s are broadly pro-coalition; two (Taylor and O'Sullivan) are at best sceptics; While Michael D. has yet to carry his convictions into the Leinster House voting lobbies. If the Parliamentary Party decide to pull out all the stops, as in 1970 and 1976, they can easily carry any conference vote with their phantom legions of instant, bussed-in delegates. If they decline to do so, it simply means that if and when the opportunity arises, the majority will ignore conference decisions and take Garret's coalition shilling. The defection of the "national Labour" deputies in the Forties could be a precedent for a more comprehensive exodus in the Eighties.

The reality of Labour conferences, and hence party decision making, could be summed up in one revealing episode shortly before a crucial conference. The Deputy Leader Jimmy Tully arrived in H.Q. and placed a large sheaf of delegation forms on the administrative assistant's desk. "How much do I owe you?" he inquired, whipping a cheque book from his pocket. And so Meath Constituency acquired an instant delegation, no questions asked, and subsequently, of course, it would be controlled as rigidly as a trade union block vote at a British Labour Conference. Naturally, delegates and branches with a known Left bias were closed scrutinised, and even the slightest irregularity resulted in automatic exclusion. Labour



McGiolla of SFWP, Nelligan of Labour Liaison and O'Riordan of the CPI: the short-lived Left Alternative of the mid-1970s.

Conferences resemble nothing more than the annual 'Sham Fight at Scarva' at which King Billy always emerges victorious; in a cynical elaboration, the Left is allowed to win an occasional vote, but in reality, such hollow victories mean less than nothing.

**W**hat of the argument that there is 'no salvation outside the Party'. Obviously the Workers' Party has exploded this myth by creating a credible, growing, if perhaps over-rated alternative to Labour (no W.P. candidate has ever seriously threatened, let alone replaced, sitting Labour T.D.), while Browne, Kemmy and Gregory have shown that it is possible to take on and defeat Labour at the polls even without resorting to a party label.

All of which brings us to the crucial question of coalition, and the Party's relations with the non-Labour Left. The familiar electoral case against coalition, invariably accompanied by graphs, rising in the anti-coalition Sixties, and declining in the coalitionist Seventies and Eighties, is not so conclusive on closer examination. True, Labour's 1965 breakthrough followed a celebrated 'go-it-alone' pronouncement by Brendan Corish; but four years later the same strategy cost the Party at least half a dozen seats. Standing on an explicitly anti-Fine Gael platform, Matt Merrigan lost a by-election seat in Ballyfermot in 1970, while the unfortunate Brendan O'Sullivan lost his deposit there in 1982; yet Brendan Halligan actually won a remarkable by-election victory there in the final year of the Third Coalition. The truth is that the Irish punter will vote for any party or individual who will deliver the goods, regardless of whether he is aligned to the Kremlin or the Orange Order.

The bitter reality, which Labour Left-wingers must face, is that the last two coalitions (as distinct from their policies) actually worked rather well; and far from fighting for socialist policies, Labour ministers such as O'Leary, Tully and Barry Desmond actually stood to the Right of their governments on some issues. The illogical coalition in present-day Irish politics is not that between O'Leary and FitzGerald, but that between O'Leary and Higgins. The British Labour Party is busily engaged in sorting out its contradictions, aided by the formation of the SDP; when will its Irish counterpart follow suit?

Assuming that a divorce is both desirable and inevitable (with the Right almost certainly retaining possession of the family home), what alternatives exist for the Labour Left? An extraordinary feature of the Party over the years has been its parochialism and sectarianism. On five occasions over the past eleven years serious attempts have been made to broaden the horizons of Labour members, and to involve them with like-minded comrades on the Left. None has really succeeded. The Socialist Labour Alliance, which sought to implement the 1970

Annual Conference decision to call a 'Socialist/Republican Unity Conference', was a bold, if chaotic venture, performing some useful work during the 1971/72 period, particularly in relation to the Internment Crisis. It was immediately proscribed by the Labour Leadership. They need hardly have bothered. While briefly attracting some of those leaving the Party after the Coalition Conference, it made no impression whatever on those remaining behind.

A somewhat similar fate overtook the 'Left Alternative' of 1975/76, a more ambitious alliance between Liaison, the C.P.I., and the then Official Republican Movement. Naturally, this, too, was outlawed at the 1976 Conference, the Leadership understandably concluding that public involvement with Commies and the like was hardly compatible with coalition with Liam Cosgrave, but, in fact, the Left Alternative, while stirring the imagination of the Left generally (the launch meeting packed the Mansion House) was received by Labour members with at best apathy, and occasionally even hostility. The ubiquitous Militant opposed co-operation with left-wingers **WITHIN** the Party, never mind those outside.

Even the innocuous if similarly composed Resources Protection Campaign, which was actually promoting Labour policy, failed to stir many activists beyond the blinkered confines of the National Collection (not that many lazy labourites were stirred even to that!). Despite the dramatic events surrounding the Independent Labour Campaign of 1977, fewer than 100 Labour members followed Matt Merrigan and Noel Browne into the Socialist Labour Party. The more modest 'Socialist Forum' experiment launched last year has provided platforms for a useful series of debates, but has yet to make any real impact on events. There have been occasional and unspoken alliances in the trade union movement between Labour Establishment and Workers' Party people, against the villainous "Ultra-Left", on issues such as a centralised pay bargaining, H-Blocks, and union demoncracy, but even this co-operation is declining as the Labour Party takes fright at its burgeoning rival.

If and when the crisis of Irish capitalism, predicted now by *Irish Times* and *Militant* alike, finally comes about, and when the inevitable National Government is formed, as in the Britain of 1931, there will be no shortage of Labour parliamentarians willing to play the role of McDonald, Thomas, Snowden and the rest. Who, then, will provide the working class with credible, organised, alternative Socialist leadership? When will the Labour Left realise that their future lies, not in futile tilting at Right-wing windbags at an endless series of staged-managed conferences, but rather in building this Socialist Alternative, based on fraternal and principled co-operation with their comrades on the rest of the Irish Left.

# A "WELL-BALANCED" FOREIGN POLICY?

**MANUS O'RIORDAN** responds to Austen Morgan's article, *Neutrality, Irish Style*, in **GRALTON 3**.

In the August-September issue of *Gralton*, Austen Morgan has described Haughey's policy-switch on the Falklands dispute as a "gratuitous resort to 'our traditional policy of neutrality by this political-poacher-turned-gamekeeper'". While he does point out that "the so-called tradition of neutrality is an ideological quicksand" it seems to me that Morgan has nonetheless failed to analyse the most significant political features of the present Government's foreign policy by personalising it as the product of little more than the "gratuitous" behaviour of the Fianna Fáil Taoiseach himself.

In my view it is quite incorrect to describe the Government that emerged in March of this year as a Fianna Fáil Government pure-and-simple. The precise character of that regime amounts in fact to a particular Coalition of party interests, and this Coalition can be appropriately designated as Fianna Fáil — the Workers' Party.

The fact that both wings of the Leinster House Republican Movement had arrived at a common understanding for the duration of the outgoing Dáil session was first blurted out on March 25. This was when Workers' Party T.D. Joe Sherlock went so far as to hail Fianna Fáil's reduction of capital taxation and its increase of the PAYE burden as "a well-balanced Budget". The Coalition arrangement on budgetary policy was copperfastened when the Workers' Party supported the Fianna Fáil wing in every critical Dáil vote thereafter.

What has gone unobserved by political commentators, however, is the fact that by early May Fianna Fáil and the Workers' Party had also arrived at a common understanding as to what should constitute "a well-balanced foreign policy" for the duration of their present Coalition.

It is true that a review of the foreign policy debates during the outgoing session of Dáil Éireann will show that, like everything else that is "well-balanced" about the present regime, the common approach of Fianna Fáil — the Workers' Party in respect of "Ireland's traditional neutrality" contains a mass of contradictions. Nevertheless such a common approach was in fact heralded by Haughey's volteface on the Falklands dispute so as to dove-tail with Workers' Party policy. On May 2, the Government issued a statement which reaffirmed "Ireland's traditional role of neutrality in relation to armed conflicts". Two days later, on May 4, the Government issued a further statement, declaring that it regarded the application of economic sanctions against Argentina as no longer appropriate. Haughey defended both these statements in a Dáil debate later that same evening.

On May 7, in a front-page editorial comment in the *Irish People*, the Workers' Party indicated that

Haughey had now met their foreign policy conditions for a continuation of their voting coalition. As they put it:-

*"For once the Irish Government got it right . . . Over the past four weeks Ireland's traditional neutrality has been seriously compromised by the concerted economic action of the EEC states in support of Britain over the Falklands/Malvinas islands . . . We say that having reasserted Ireland's traditional independent and non-aligned role in world affairs, nothing should allow the government to be diverted back into supporting warmongers ever again".*

In a further statement to the Dáil on May 11, Haughey reaffirmed his commitment to what Austen Morgan has correctly categorised as "effectively, the pro-Argentinian view". He argued:- *"We have also sought an end to economic sanctions against Argentina by the EEC. As a neutral country, we are not prepared to back military action"*. Once more, the Workers' Party enthused in an *Irish People* editorial on May 14 entitled "Maggie's War". (Presumably that Party did not consider the initial subjugation of the Falkland Islanders to be a warlike act on the part of the Argentinian junta.) This time the *Irish People* gave its congratulations a much more intimate and personal touch:-

*"We are not in the habit of patting Charlie Haughey on the back, but this is one occasion when he has done the right thing . . . We should take advantage of the early warning given to us by the South Atlantic conflict to re-define our neutrality policy in the present unstable and violent international environment."*

In the final Dáil debate on the Falklands on May 18, Haughey effectively apologised to his Workers' Party allies for not having dovetailed his foreign policy with theirs somewhat sooner, when he said:-

*"At the outset, the Government went along with sanctions with reluctance . . . By May 4, . . . we were faced with the prospect that sanctions would operate and be seen to operate in a situation of open war. In these circumstances and in view of our neutrality, the Government had to review our support for sanctions"*.

In the ensuing debate the Workers' Party T.D., Proinias de Rossa, graciously accepted that apology with the following words:-

*"We were dismayed initially when the Government decided to row in with other EEC countries in applying sanctions against Argentina because we felt that that was mitigating or watering down to some degree our neutrality. In our view the efforts Ireland makes in terms of foreign affairs and on the international scene should be made through the United Nations and not through the process of the EEC. We welcome the recent move by the Government to step back from applying sanctions"*



against Argentina and we look forward to a strengthening of our neutral position on the international scene".

The common "neutrality" policy of Fianna Fáil — they had accordingly sought to come to the aid of an aggressive fascist junta when that act of aggression began to experience military reversal. But this was not the only such junta to be assisted in this manner. On May 12, Proinsias de Rossa had asked the Taoiseach "if, in view of the Government's efforts at the UN Security Council to secure an immediate end to hostilities in the Falkland Islands crisis, he will avail himself of Ireland's membership of the UN Security Council to make similar efforts to bring an end to the 18 month war between Iran and Iraq?"

De Rossa was particularly concerned about what he termed "the escalation of hostilities reported between Iraq and Iran during the past week". Haughey responded by stating his appreciation of the point of view being put forward by de Rossa in respect of "the military confrontation between Iraq and Iran", to quote from the Leader's judicious choice of words.

But why this sudden demand for an end to hostilities? After all, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had launched his war of aggression, for the purpose of annexing south-western Iran, as far back as September 1980. Previously that year, the Iraqi junta had intensified its repression of all "impure" domestic forces including the Shiite religious majority, the Kurdish national minority, trade unionists, democratic socialists and communists.

Saddam Hussein denounced Iraqi Communists as "a rotten, atheistic yellow storm" and in similar Hitlerite language proclaimed that "the National Socialist revolution could go on with three million less people". Both Haughey and his Workers' Party allies are firm supporters of that particular regime. Haughey himself has visited Iraq on a number of occasions and was once more due to be Saddam Hussein's guest on the eve of his invasion of Iran. Workers' Party personnel have paid similar fraternal visits to Baghdad and have hailed Saddam Hussein as the great leader who has transfused Iraq into "the most radical and socialist of the Arab states" (*Irish People*, October 15, 1981) as well "the most progressive country in the Middle East" (*Workers' Life*, May 1982).

Fianna Fáil — the Workers' Party's sudden concern for peace is quite simple to understand. From September 1980 to May of this year, Iraq seemed quite secure in its occupation of Iranian territory. Neither Haughey nor de Rossa saw fit to indicate that they cared two hoots that at least 150,000 Iranians had been killed in the process. But then in early May the Iranians began to recover lost ground and were on the point of liberating the city of Khorramshahr from Iraqi occupation.

Now was the time for de Rossa to yell "Peace". One might as well have called on the Soviet Union to cease its "military confrontation" with Nazi Germany on the eve of the Battle of Stalingrad!

Labour T.D. Mervyn Taylor was very much to the point when he interrupted this Haughey-de Rossa duet by asking the nation's Leader "whether, in the context of his description of the conflict between Iraq and Iran as a confrontation, he would not agree that a more accurate description would be a naked and unprovoked war of



A breach of neutrality?: the post office mast in Dublin allegedly used for NATO communications.

aggression on the part of Iraq against Iran?"

Perish the thought, was Haughey's response:-  
"I think any such statement by me, or any such action by us, would be most unhelpful in present circumstances",

But Taylor persisted:-  
"Would the Taoiseach consider using his good offices to issue a request to Iraq that as a move towards peace in that area they would withdraw their forces behind their own boundaries?"

Donning his cloak of "neutrality" even more petulantly, Haughey snapped:-

"I can only repeat that any action of that sort which would appear to be a unilateral move by us on one side or the other would not be helpful".

But at least by mid-May we now appeared to have obtained a definite set of statements from Fianna Fáil — the Workers' Party as to what in their view constituted a "neutrality" policy for the 1980s. Any economic sanctions not emanating from the United Nations — irrespective of whether such sanctions might be decided upon unilaterally or at EEC level — were to be regarded as incompatible with such "neutrality", particularly if applied against one party to an actual military conflict. In addition, it was considered incompatible with such Irish "neutrality" to ever call an invasion by its proper name or to demand that an aggressor should withdraw from annexed territory. An opportunistic policy might have been arrived at, but at least it seemed consistent. Not so.

Fianna Fáil — the Workers' Party's commitment to "our traditional policy of neutrality" went by the board and other traditions were given their head which was held on June 16. In that Bloomsday debate on the Situation in the Lebanon, Citizen Haughey of Fianna Fáil, Citizens Deasy and Cooney of Fine Gael, and Citizen O'Leary of the Labour Party were breathless in their race to see who

could voice the strongest possible condemnation of the Israeli invasion. They were, however, all outpaced in this regard by Citizen de Rossa, whose Workers' Party is quite open about longing for the complete liquidation of Israel.

In introducing the debate, Haughey declared:- *"On Sunday June 6, the Israeli Army invaded Lebanon . . . As members of the European Community, we joined on June 9 in vigorously condemning the Israeli invasion . . . We called, in particular, on Israel to withdraw all its forces immediately and unconditionally from the Lebanon . . . The statement indicated that should Israel continue to refuse compliance, the Ten would examine the possibilities for future action"*.

Israel had staged an invasion pure and simple and an unconditional withdrawal was accordingly called for, reasoned Haughey. But he did not base this position on any general principles which should be applied to all invasions. On the contrary, the Middle Eastern double standards of the foreign policy pursued by Fianna Fáil — the Workers' Party were as alive and well as ever before. Invasions by "evil forces" should clearly be anathemised as such, but invasions by good friends such as Iraq should still be euphemistically described as something quite different.

In one and the same breath as he denounced the Israeli invasion, Haughey once again spoke of *"the Iran and Iraq confrontation"*. Talk about the love that dare not speak its name! The Thief of Baghdad how are ye?

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**There may be good socialist, democratic reasons for coming down on one side or the other in various international conflicts.**

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**T**he present Coalition's left-wing also found little difficulty in applying double-standards. If anyone naively thought that the Workers' Party's invocation of "neutrality" in order to denounce EEC initiatives and sanctions, had sprung from any motivation other than Brit-bashing and the desire to comfort the Argentinian junta, such illusions of consistency were to be rudely shattered by Proinsias de Rossa on June 16. He was now very keen indeed on EEC initiatives and sanctions. He demanded that:-

*"The Government must immediately take steps to exercise influence in both the UN Security Council and the EEC to isolate Israel diplomatically and economically . . . and consider actively . . . the imposition of unilateral sanctions . . . Finally, the Government should commit themselves to supporting the expulsion of Israel from the U.N."*

It was left to the Democratic Socialist Party T.D., Jim Kemmy, to suggest to the other four Parties that if a policy of neutrality were to be worthy of any serious consideration, it needed to be seen in practice.

For some strange reason, in their otherwise quite extensive coverage of the Dáil debate on June 16, the national newspapers saw fit to suppress Kemmy's contribution. He had argued the case for adopting a genuinely neutral approach based on the following principles:-

*"Many people have been unhappy at the conduct of our country's foreign affairs in recent times . . . We have*

*a cavalier, extravagant attitude taking place which is no help at all to us. We have had an example of this in relation to the Falkland Island . . . The Government's attitude in recent times has been lopsided. We have gone totally overboard and we have not interpreted our neutral and independent role in the way it should be. We are talking about a very difficult situation in the Middle East . . . We should remember when talking about it that there are three foreign armies there — the Israeli Army, the Syrian Army and the PLO. As a result of this invasion the whole of the Lebanon has been turned into a big battleground at the present time. This has completely undermined the independence of the Lebanon . . . We must say, loudly and clearly, that Lebanon has the right to exist as an independent state. The UN and the EEC must support our drive as far as possible. We must support the right of all states . . . including the state of Israel. Some attacks have been made today by the Workers' Party spokesman. I believe he is showing an imbalance in his attitude to it."*

*"The Palestinian people have been chucked around like shuttlecocks. They are not shuttlecocks; they are people and they have the same rights as anybody else. We must say that loudly and clearly as well . . . I am no supporter of Mr. Begin. He is a right-wing conservative, even hawkish, politician. I do not support him or his party . . . I disagree with the Israeli policies because I am a socialist. They have not been socialist in their attitudes, nor democratic in some ways. But that does not in any way take from their right to exist as a people, the same as we have a right to exist as Irish people. You cannot gloss over that fact, which should come across loud and clear. There are two different things here, the conduct of their internal policy and the conduct of their international policy. I totally disagree with the latter. However, the fundamental right of the Israeli people should be accepted in this Parliament today . . . I want our neutrality and independence interpreted as it should be, not having our Government on the one side, as we have seen recently . . . Let us attempt at all times to adopt a neutral, diplomatic and even-handed attitude to Lebanon and to the whole question of the Middle East"*.

**B**ut what is a socialist foreign policy? There is no a priori reason to assume that it coincides at all with neutrality, whether sham or genuine. There may be good socialist, democratic reasons for coming down on one side or the other in various international conflicts.

The socialist debate on foreign policy has in fact barely begun in this country. To proceed with it we must, however, be clear as to what characterises Irish foreign policy at present. It is not a product of *"Ireland turned in on itself"*, as Austen Morgan states in respect of the Falklands crisis.

On the contrary, far from being isolationist, it is a decidedly interventionist policy based on a programme of *"rewarding friends and punishing enemies"*, as mapped out by the Fianna Fáil — Workers' Party Coalition. The fact that Haughey's foreign policy responses have dovetailed so neatly with those of one particular socialist party should require other socialists to subject that foreign policy to even sharper analysis. The debate can accordingly proceed on the basis of a clear understanding of what it is we then wish to accept or reject as the guiding principles of an Irish foreign policy.

The conviction of Gerry Tuite in July this year for the possession of explosives in London sets an extraordinary precedent in Irish and International law. It raises the possibility that an Irish person can be tried for an offence relating to explosives committed anywhere in the world. For example, if an Irish priest assists the struggle of the people in El Salvador against the ruling junta, it would be legally possible to try him, once he has returned to Ireland, for activities in South America.

This is a rather far fetched example, but it indicates the scope of the powers given to the 26 county Government by the passing of the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act in 1976 and by the decision to try Gerry Tuite. The actual scope of the Act has proved to be far wider than that discussed in the Dáil when the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Bill was being read.

#### Extra Territorial Jurisdiction

The subheading of the act describes it as: "An Act to extend the Criminal Law of the State to certain acts done in Northern Ireland. To provide for the admission of evidence obtained by the examination of witnesses in Northern Ireland at trials for offences in respect of those acts, to enable evidence to be obtained by the examination of witnesses in the State for trials in Northern Ireland for corresponding offences under the law of Northern Ireland in respect of acts done in the State. To reform the Criminal Law in other respects and to provide for related matters".

Note that Northern Ireland is mentioned four times in this description, but the section in the Act relating to explosives leaves it open that any Irish citizen in any location outside the State who is involved with explosives (through conspiracy to cause an explosion or through possession of explosive substances) can be found guilty of an offence and be liable for up to twenty years in prison. Many of the other sections in the Act, for example escape from lawful custody, specify Northern Ireland.

Because of this provision Tuite could not be tried in the Republic for escaping from Brixton prison. By contrast the six men who escaped from Crumlin Road jail last year and who are now serving ten years in Portlaoise were charged with illegal escape, among other things. It remains to be seen whether other sections (e.g., relating to burglary and the possession of firearms) which do not specify a location can be legally applied outside the 26 counties.

However, the Act cannot be seen merely as a legal solution to a political problem. The impetus behind it was political and its implementation depends on pressure from Unionists and the British Governments to 'mop up'

## The Politics of Extradition

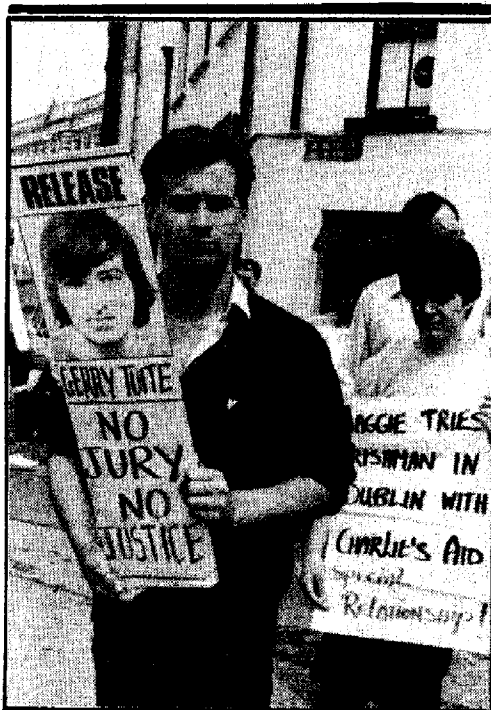
Républicans and on the internal political situation in the South. In addition the 'problem' to which the Act addresses itself, the existence of a military struggle in the North, will exist as long as the Catholic minority in the North are discriminated against, i.e., as long as Ireland is partitioned.

#### Sunningdale Remembered

"The (CLJ) Act is the only aspect of the Sunningdale Agreement that still remains", says Danny Morrison, Editor of *An Phoblacht*. "It was sold by the Southern Government in 1973 on the basis that it was an unpalatable part of the Sunningdale agreement, a *qui pro quo* for power-sharing and a Council of Ireland. Neither of these two exist but the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act not only exists but is being used against those engaged in active resistance against the Brits."

He believes that the Act sets a precedent for Governments in other EEC countries seeking to introduce repressive legislation. Once the 26 County Government takes responsibility for offences committed in other countries, for example in the EEC, this could introduce a basis for laws going beyond the boundaries of the state to reach out and grab offenders living in other jurisdictions on an EEC level. This gives an excuse to other EEC states to extend police power on a supra-national level and makes it more difficult to organise an opposition against this repression.

#### Sarah O'Hara



#### Offences Against the State Act

Experience with the Offences Against the State Act shows that a law which is initially proposed for use against one set of baddies, i.e., military republicans, is then used against other baddies, i.e., trade unionists, gays, feminists H-Block activists. In addition, the provisions of the Act, repressive though they already are, can still be abused further by the Police. Under the Act, the police can arrest you and hold you for an initial 24 hours on suspicion of having committed a scheduled offence — no evidence is required. In practice, the police arrest people who will not give any more information about themselves (such as job, name of landlord, address of parents, date of birth) than the legally required name and address. Another trick is to 'invite' people to come to the police station and, if they refuse, arrest them.

#### Ambiguities

Two specific ambiguities in the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act relate to the question of admissible evidence and the



possibility of 'double jeopardy'.

The question of admissible evidence comes up in extradition proceedings when to avoid extradition, Republicans say that they have committed political offences and that they are members of political organisations. This means admitting membership of illegal organisations like the INLA and the IRA. In law, the principle is that a statement

made in one court cannot be used in evidence in another. However, legal principles can be reinterpreted and at least one Republican I was informed of, is not prepared to make any statement in an extradition hearing that could then be used against her under the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, so there is a danger she will lose the hearing.

Thus the Coalition who passed the Act

and Fianna Fáil who opposed it and now implement it, have managed to bypass the need for extradition without making a direct attack on an internationally accepted principle — the right not to be extradited for political offences.

The possibility of double jeopardy is a question that will face Gerry Tuíte when he comes out of Portlaoise. Having served a ten year sentence in the Republic of Ireland, will he be liable for prosecution for the same offence if caught in British territory? This ambiguity arises because the Act was legally formulated and politically sold as a package of reprisals for offences committed in the 6 Counties. Thus (as Tuíte's defence council Patrick MacAntee, SC argued on the opening day of the trial) certain safeguards were built into the law in relation to Northern Ireland which did not apply anywhere else. "In particular, there was protection against double jeopardy in the legislation which protected people against being tried in two jurisdictions for the same offence. This was not specific in relation to Britain". (*Irish Times*, 14/7/82).

#### IRSP

The INLA and the IRA are the two organisations most affected by the Act, so I spoke to their representatives in the Irish Republican Socialist Party and Sinn Féin (already quoted above). Naomi Brennan, Chairperson of the IRSP, expressed their attitude. "We are in total opposition to the Act on the basis that it is collaboration between the Free State Government and the Brits. It reduces Irish sovereignty to a meaningless position when Irish laws are being made to suit a jurisdiction outside our own."

She adds that it replaces the need for extradition. "The Brits and Loyalists got what they're screaming for (the conviction of republicans), but the difference is that here they might get shorter sentences". The Act is seen as a political manoeuvre. "It has been the case that when Loyalists are calling for extradition, Republicans will be arrested."

#### Repression breeds repression

The Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act is just another addition to the body of repressive legislation in Ireland and Britain — the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Special Powers Act, the Offences Against the State Act, the Forcible Entry Act, the Payments for Debt Act — which is part of the price we have all paid for partition. These laws do not affect just Republicans involved in the military struggle in the Six Counties. Extension of the powers of the police, the army and the courts affects all those who want a change in the system that breeds poverty and discrimination.

## How the Act was made

If the procedure of trying Irish citizens for offences committed elsewhere becomes common practice, a leading expert warns that 'we will be trying in this country a lot of cases which should be tried in England and we will be paying for a lot of cases which the British Government should be paying for' (*Irish Press* 14/7/82). Seventy witnesses were brought over from Britain for the Tuíte trial; i.e., they were protected and put up in hotels at the government's expense. This is the price that both Fianna Fáil and the Coalition Government which introduced the Act are prepared to pay (along with an estimated £300 million a year for border security) for maintaining partition. Solutions to the problems of Catholic discrimination in the Six Counties are noticeable absent.

Given all this, it is ironic that the Minister for Justice, Patrick Cooney, when he was introducing the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Bill in the Dáil in November 1975 presented the Bill in terms of the 'independence' and 'sovereignty' of the 26 County Government — the two concepts which were most in doubt. 'Do we act as a responsible legislature in an independent and sovereign State' he asked 'or do we contend that, in spite of our independence and our sovereignty, we are unable to legislate in order to protect the Irish people, North and South?' He cited precedents for the assumption of extra-territorial jurisdiction, the oldest being the (British) Offences Against The Persons Act 1861 — another indication of Irish sovereignty?

A number of objections to the Bill from Fianna Fáilers and Independents were raised in the Senate: that a fair trial wasn't possible if evidence against the accused was taken in the North, that the accused had the right to cross examine witnesses and to defend him or herself in person and that the identification of the accused if not present at the taking of evidence would be in doubt. Cooney "answered" these objections. He pointed out that the accused had the right to enter into Northern Ireland custody to be present at the taking of evidence. He denied that this right would be "useless in

practice because the accused will be afraid to go to Northern Ireland to cross examine because the accused will be immune from other charges there. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt that the authorities in Northern Ireland will abide by the requirements of their legislation". If there were continuing abuses of this procedure, he said, the government would think about it again.

Jack Lynch was the main Fianna Fáil speaker on the Bill. He opposed the Bill but supported the motivation behind it. His main objections were: it will not promote reconciliation within the North and between North and South — it will do the opposite; it will violate the Constitution (which claims jurisdiction for the 26 Counties only); it will not be practical and will bring the Criminal Law into contempt; it will compromise the judicial system in the South and play into the hands of the men of violence.

His objections, like Fianna Fáil's Republicanism, were cosmetic; he was concerned with how the Act would appear to others. He gave lip service to the idea that "violence North and South is part of the price we pay for the partition of Ireland" and that "law and order do not constitute a Northern policy".

This was the era when Conor Cruise O'Brien and Fine Gael were accusing Fianna Fáil of being Provo supporters. But Lynch rightly implied that in supporting the Constitution, Fianna Fáil were upholding the laws of a partitioned Ireland. "When the Taoiseach (Cosgrave) says 'we do not bargain at the point of a gun' he is merely asserting that the Coalition are prepared to do what they are sworn to do anyhow under our Constitution", said Lynch.

One question which he asked and which Fianna Fáil are posing each time they decide to use the Act is this:

'What will be the attitude of the minority in Northern Ireland if the judges of the Republic appear to be assisting in the enforcement of the Queen's Writ in Northern Ireland and acting on the evidence of an unreformed Royal Ulster Constabulary?'

Probably the same as it has been since the early seventies.

# THE HEART OF THE BEAST

**BRENDAN MAC FHOGARTAIGH examines a much neglected but extremely important question: Why has socialism never really taken root in America?**

The proud claim that America is the land of the free is one that today rings hollow. Despite the accumulation of vast material wealth, abject poverty co-exists with a slick veneer of equality. Scratching the surface, one encounters the dismal plight of the unemployed, the non-whites and the elderly. Yet despite these glaring inequalities, the hopes of the exploited have not manifested themselves in left wing political activity. The absence of a major American socialist party clearly differentiates America from the political traditions of most of the rest of the Western World.

To grasp the uniqueness of American political culture, it is useful to study the roots of the European left and ask why these roots have found such barren ground amongst the American proletariat. One school of thought suggests that class consciousness is purely a result of a particular kind of European industrialisation. If then, socialism is a child of European socio-historical factors, which of these factors are absent in America to account for its lack of significant left wing activity?

The Mayflower passengers left for a land untouched by clerical or feudal oppression. Meanwhile, European nations approached the Industrial Revolution plagued by internal divisions such as the Church v. State feuds of the Reformation. The Industrial Revolution itself produced even starker divisions in Europe that were to profoundly influence the course of European politics.

The growing army of propertyless industrial oppressed began to seek a method of articulating their group interests against those of the capitalist class. Recognising the futility of individual action, they sought refuge in worker combinations. Organised together, the newly-industrialised peasant was no longer a helpless, unattached atom, totally incapable of self-determination: the industrial worker was born. The passive acceptance of "God's Will" was replaced by the active rejection of capitalist subjection. The tight social stratification of European society with its total lack of upward social



*Jimmy Hoffa (left) congratulates mafia thug Tony Provenzano on winning a Teamsters Union election. Years later Provenzano would be implicated in the murder of Hoffa.*

mobility, together with such factors as the denial of the vote, confirmed workers self-perception of victimisation and made them eager to participate in mass movements which sought a better quality of life.

However, when we look at America, we see that all the conflictual aspects of European political culture failed to manifest themselves. The divisions fostered by feudalism, the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution were absent. America did not even experience a democratic revolution; a liberal society existed prior to the American Revolution. Quite simply, the door was already open. The experience of building a new society on the ruins of the old was missed.

Armed with a deep belief in private property and with a vigilant eye on the potential of an advancing frontier, class consciousness was largely negated.

Yet it would be a mistake to deny the presence of potential working class consciousness in the emergent American

society. Modern Marxist writers have tended to underestimate the role of the sedimented historical experience of the working class. Marx himself held that over time historical forces would lead to a convergence of European and American class consciousness. The convergence was only delayed by passing factors such as the expanding frontier, continuous immigration, democratic agrarian ideologies and the international dominance of US capital. Marx felt that with the eventual crisis of capital, America would experience a titanic wave of class struggle.

Marx did, however, underestimate the damage that would be caused the working class by a series of defeats that would leave it disarmed in some vital respect before the next engagement with capital. The net result has been the formation of a relationship between the American proletariat and the bourgeoisie totally different to that in Europe. In Western Europe, the workers are, by and large, incorporated politically — be it a Labour Party in Britain or a Communist Party in Italy. Their relationship with capital is mediated on a multiplicity of levels by collective, self-formed units; units which, at the same time, tend to create and maintain a class consciousness. In America, on the other hand, there is no totalising agent of class consciousness relating to the business strata whilst at the same time maintaining its own autonomy and identity.

The European working class was forced to conduct long and often bitter struggles to get the vote and other civil liberties. In these struggles, the workers formed their own political identity and independence as the bourgeois elements would quite often desert them when their particular interests had been fulfilled (e.g., Daniel O'Connell). As such civil rights often already existed in America, such struggles did not arise.

In a sense, the US underwent a unique process of capitalist national liberation, attaining freedom from a dominant British capitalism. This enabled American business to draw upon exceptional class alliances, in particular

with the very large small-farmer class. The American capitalist had few fears, about sharing the vote with what appeared to be his own flesh and blood. Such confidence arose from the widely held belief of both the advantaged and the disadvantaged in private property. In addition, three further factors worked against the development of class politics: a belief in the possibility of unlimited upward social mobility; a belief in the State as an agency of social reform; a belief in American "exceptionalism". These factors are still very much in evidence.

**Y**et despite these constraints, a small but significant working class consciousness did begin to emerge. With increasing economic exploitation, the egalitarian values of American society came under strain. This exploitation acted as midwife to growing proletarian militancy. Employer resistance to the formation of early unions merely speeded up their growth. But a truly united workers movement did fail to appear. This failure was rooted in the several major divisions in the working class itself. Primarily these divisions arose from ethnic, religious, social and native/immigrant conflicts. The pattern of uneven industrial development also played its role.

The growth of "boomtown" cities like Pittsburg were marked by a lack of artisanal resistance to industrialisation. Likewise, population movements from new city to new city discouraged the "putting down" of labour roots. Allied to this problem, was the "nativist" division within the ranks of labour. The arrival of millions of Irish and German refugees from Europe in the mid-1800's led to much bitterness amongst those already established there. Initially these immigrants were refused admission to the unions. And, unfortunately, the immigrants were not above rejecting sectors of the American proletariat themselves i.e., blacks and women. Rampant racism provides a unifying theme for both the "native" and the immigrant worker.

The problem of "nativist" rejection of the immigrants was partially resolved by a common sacrifice on the battle fields of the American Civil War, though the mass movement for the abolition of slavery failed dismally to involve the most exploited section of the white working class, the Irish. It was not until the "Fenian Rebellion" of the 1860's and the "Irish Land War" of the 1870's that the formerly moribund Irish began to become more radicalised.

Meanwhile, efforts continued to consolidate the "labour movement". The radical Knights Of Labour were born during the railway strikes of the 1870's. Within a decade, this powerful vehicle of working class aspirations had reached a

membership of 700,000. But its growing radicalism caused the conservative craft unions to step in and sabotage the movement with the establishment of the American Federation Of Labour still one of the most powerful organisations in America.

The 1880's also witnessed the birth of the progressive Farmers Alliance. The "Alliance" entered politics in 1892 as the Peoples Party and pressure grew for a Labour-Farmer alliance. These hopes were dashed by the now-established American Federation of Labour. As a final blow, the bedrock of labour radicalism, the miners, split due to religious antagonisms.

The election of 1896 thus forms a profound watershed in American political life. The failure of the radicals to mount an electoral challenge, and their partial incorporation by a defeated Democratic Party, produced a striking demobilisation of labour and radical forces — at precisely the time that European workers were becoming more politically engaged. The subsequent pool of non-participant workers has continued throughout the twentieth century — the group that every "third party" movement seeks to identify with. Floundering on the rocks of apathy and internal strife rooted in nineteenth century antagonisms, the American labour movement of today continues in its established tradition of fragmentation and impotence.

**B**ut in explaining why the American labour and socialist movement is in such a sorry state, it is perhaps necessary to reflect upon the American "value system" as much as historical division and lack of European conditions. American secular and religious values have both facilitated the present triumph of capitalism and have fostered that hallmark of American society: status striving. The focus on individual opportunity is a major factor in stunting the growth of class consciousness.

The American value system places a premium on individual achievement. This is bolstered by the way in which American culture manages to apply the norms of a competitive society to everyone. The net result is a prevalent character-type who believes that "he has only himself to blame" if he fails to succeed: the necessary corollary to the self-made man is the self-unmade man. This perception is aided by the relatively loose structure of the American class system. In such a loose structure, people are more prone to compare themselves individually with others rather than collectively. The person who needs help is a "failure". Combination implies weakness.

As the word "union" automatically implies combination, it sets out with an innate psychological disadvantage.

"Class" has similar connotations. People judge their position in life to be dependant on their own efforts with little if any connection to capitalist social relations. In many respects the average American is an aspirant capitalist. Trade unions themselves are affected by this "achievement orientation". American trade unionism is one of corporate business unionism and not one of working class development. Whatever radicalism exists in the unions, is crushed by the high numbers of full-time paid officials which make conventions appear to be gatherings of business executives.

The structure of the American political system is a further constraint on Labour providing a viable alternative. The strong tendency towards a two-party system implies a high level of cooperation amongst several diverse strata in American society. However, wherever we find a two-party system, we also find an electoral system which debars from representation in government those parties that cannot win a plurality of votes in a geographical electoral district.

In addition, the peculiar device of the party primary prevents several separate political groupings from emerging. In the party primary, different factions are allowed to compete and pursue their interests within the party itself. Elsewhere these different interests would give rise to different parties. In America, via the primary system, these interests are persuaded that they have sufficient common ground to unite under one banner, be it Democrat or Republican. Thus the system encourages compromise and negates attempts by radical minorities to seek wider support.

**I** hope, through the above, to have made it clear that the absence of a major socialist party in America is not simply due to the bosses. Undoubtedly, the American business classes, often aided by willing union officials, have had their role to play. Indeed, backed by the FBI, the CIA and numerous front organisations, the ruling classes in America are certainly in possession of a formidable armoury. But the most valuable weapon of the American ruling classes is the average American citizen who fails to question his or her cultural heritage and way of life. A way of life that leads to seeing America as Liberty's Last Line Of Defence and Ronald Reagan as a potential Saviour.

Is the future then barren of hope? Not necessarily. The full and final results of the inexorable operation of the laws of capitalism have yet to be brought into play on American soil. The special course of its historical evolution and its privileged place in the imperialist age have tremendously retarded the development of radical mass movements in America upto now. But what is late in arriving and even much overdue, will not be forever absent.



# THE ROOTS OF PARTITION

## JOHN GOODWILLIE

Everyone knows that Cromwell told the Irish to go to Hell or Connaught. In fact, of course, he never did anything of the kind. He told the Irish *landlords* (or, more precisely, the Catholic landlords) to go to hell or Connaught. The ordinary people were supposed to stay where they were, in order to be tenants and labourers to Cromwell's creditors and soldiers who were to be the new landlords. Where tribal traditions were still strong, and the tenants and labourers looked on their landlord as chief of the clan, they sometimes went with him. But this was not enforced, just as many of the landlords who went to Connaught were allowed to return in the subsequent confusion.

A somewhat similar mixture of fact and fiction occurs in more recent Irish history. The notion is that the sectarian divisions which underlie Partition were consistently fostered by the British government; that these divisions were overcome in 1798 when Protestants, Catholics and Dissenters joined together in the 1798 Rising; and that Parnell was on the verge of obtaining Home Rule when a British demagogue, Lord Randolph Churchill, came over to Larne in 1886 and told his audience that "Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right," whereupon the Ulster Protestants decided to oppose Home Rule.

The purpose of this article is to suggest, on the basis of the evidence of historians, that it was all a bit more complicated. Protestants and Catholics were certainly not united in 1798: they were far more united in the early 1790s, and even back in the days of the Volunteer movement (1778 to 1783). Catholics were not allowed into the Volunteer movement officially, though in some cases a blind eye was turned. However, middle-class Catholics contributed funds, and such Catholics as had any political consciousness were sympathetic towards the movement.

In Ulster, the Volunteers were predominantly Presbyterian. This fact does not necessarily indicate hostility on the part of the Church of Ireland population. (Non-Presbyterian Dissenters were numerically insignificant: the Methodists were still inside the Church of Ireland.) Presbyterians seem to have been more numerous, and, when the landlords are left out, they were certainly more prosperous than the Church of Ireland people, who could not afford time off and nice uniforms.

The Societies of United Irishmen, which operated legally from 1791 to 1794, were, as far as the North is concerned, overwhelmingly Presbyterian. All the

prominent Northern United Irishmen were Presbyterians, apart from Thomas Russell, "the man from God knows where" (he was actually from Co. Cork), and Henry Monroe, the leader of the Down rising. They were businessmen or intellectuals in Belfast and a handful of other towns, and Belfast was at this time almost entirely Presbyterian. They were not a mass movement, though their activities were probably followed avidly by the more literate Presbyterians of the countryside.

Following the government's suppression of the United Irishmen, they went underground and began to organise a mass movement on military lines. Did some of them refuse to go underground because of cowardice? Perhaps. But the evidence suggests that there was a political division. The legal Societies of United Irishmen stood for the reform of parliament and religious equality. They never advocated separation from Great Britain, or a republic: they merely wanted to make the Irish Parliament independent of the British government. Wolfe Tone and some of his friends believed in separatism, but they deliberately did not push these views within the legal United Irishmen, preferring to build a united movement on a more limited basis. So when the United Irishmen went underground, they were extending their base geographically and socially and building some links with the Catholic agrarian movement, the Defenders; but at the same time they lost a considerable part of moderate middle-class opinion; some industrialists had long feared that a radical break with Britain would threaten their access to the British market.

So little Church of Ireland support did Wolfe Tone get that his 1796 memorandum to the French government envisaged a revolutionary Irish government comprised merely of the Catholic Committee and delegates of the Dissenters. The Orange Order has been founded in Co. Armagh in 1795 after the Battle of The Diamond. It spread rapidly in Co. Armagh and to a considerable extent elsewhere, and almost immediately the gentry took control in order to ensure that it would oppose the United Irishmen rather than the landlords. Its composition was overwhelmingly Church of Ireland. A reactionary force had appeared to rival the United Irishmen.

Peter Gibbon (all references at end) distinguishes three

theories by which historians have tried to explain the divergence between the United Irishmen and the Orangemen:

(1) The United Irishmen were Presbyterian, the Orangemen were Church of Ireland.

(2) The Orangemen appeared in areas where Catholics and Protestants were in competition for land, the United Irishmen where conflict between landlords and tenants was more important.

(3) His own theory: the United Irishmen were in areas of middle-sized tenant farmers (20 to 50 acres on long leases) and self-employed weavers with an economy of selling their produce in the market-place and a culture of independent thinking; in some cases they were threatened by competition for land from journeymen weavers (employees) who, as double-jobbers, could pay a higher rent per acre. The Orangemen were in areas where weaving had reached a technically more advanced stage: the journeymen weavers had already been successful in this competition: they were employees, but often had a farm of less than 6 acres as well: they were under the dominance of small employers and saw their landlords as protectors against the new market forces.

Since the areas of middle-sized farms correspond to a considerable extent with the Presbyterian areas and with the areas devoid of Catholics, it is not immediately obvious which theory is right, but Gibbon's does seem to correspond most closely with the facts of Orange organisation and of the United Irish rising. The only historian who appears to have covered the subject since Gibbon is L.M. Cullen, who seems to believe in all the theories simultaneously: "The United Irishmen spread in areas where Presbyterian farmers and the independent weavers were relatively numerous; on the other hand the Orange Order, which supported the establishment order in Church and State unequivocally, first emerged in Armagh, where a higher proportion of the population belonged to the Established Church and the economic independence of the weavers had already been diminished by the spread of the putting-out system . . . Presbyterians in Armagh, unlike their prosperous rural brethren in south Armagh and Co. Down who had few Catholics to contend with, did not provide membership for the United Irishmen."

The Orange Order was only one of the factors which reduced the 1798 Rising in the north to small proportions. Factories were beginning to develop, and the linen industry already depended on British markets. The Ulster Custom, which helped farmers economically, was generally accepted as a result of the agrarian struggles — the "Steelboys" — in the 1760s and 1770s. The enfranchisement of Catholics in 1793 meant that landlords need no longer choose Protestant tenants in order to get voting-fodder for the open-voice elections. Some of the legal discrimination against Presbyterians had been removed in 1780 and 1782. The French Republic, whose every statement had been greeted by liberals like the Comintern's by Communists, was now hostile to America and at the beginning of 1798 sent an army into Switzerland, where it did not receive a unanimous

welcome. France had undergone a reaction, and was no longer revolutionary. The United Irishmen outside Ulster were mainly Catholic, and even people who believed the Catholics should be emancipated could become afraid of being dominated by Catholics, and Catholic peasants at that. An evangelical revival was drawing Protestants away from liberal ideas. There was a vicious campaign of repression by General Lake's forces, many of whom were Orangemen.

Many United Irish leaders thought it rash to rise in the absence of a French landing to bring arms and a core of trained soldiers; when the French came, everyone else had surrendered and they landed in Connacht, where they were fewer United Irishmen than anywhere else. In the areas which did rise, only a fraction of those who were pledged to the cause turned out — the Newtownards commander appointed a hill as a rallying-point and waited there all night, but not one of his men turned up. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh says that the actual insurgents were largely Presbyterian "men of no property": if this be so, we can suppose that they were holding on to the political principles which they had been taught, better than their more prosperous neighbours. Apart from Antrim and Down and a handful of people in east Derry, there was not a stir from the rest of Ulster, which in the previous year had contained about half the United Irishmen of the province. After the rising in Ulster had ended, news arrived of the atrocities against Protestants in Wexford, and this helped to prevent a renewed outburst, of which the government was much afraid.

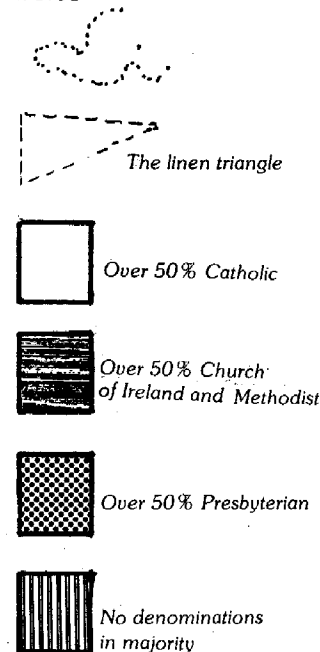
What was the attitude in all this of the Irish government? Both before and after the establishment of Grattan's Parliament in 1782 it was completely under the control of the British government. To the British governments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Ireland was in effect a colony. At this period, capitalism was in its mercantilist phase, under which colonies existed simply for the benefit of the mother country. Restrictions were placed on the Irish economy: exports of cattle and beef, exports of woollen goods, and Irish trade with America were banned.

Although the Prime Minister, William Pitt, said in 1785 that "the system had been that of debarring Ireland from the employment and use of her own resources; to make the kingdom completely subservient to the interests and opulence of this country," there does not seem to have been a deliberate effort to obstruct Irish economic development as such; rather, when any Irish industry competed successfully with British industry, the British industry insisted that the British Parliament should protect it, and Parliament duly did so. The Irish linen industry threatened no important British interests, and so was not interfered with.

At the same time, the Penal Laws were enacted against Catholics, and Presbyterians were subject to some of them also. The Penal Laws were not intended as gratuitous punishment, still less to convert the Catholics to Protestantism. Their aim was to prevent the Catholics threatening, by their superior numbers, the Protestant Ascendancy; and many of the Laws were not enforced in

## religious denominations at first census (1861)

Areas held by the United Irishmen in 1798



practice. Archbishop Hugh Boulter expressed the government's purpose by saying that a union of Dissenters and Catholics would mean "farewell to the English influence in this country."

William Pitt, concerned with the agitation for parliamentary reform, wrote that the Catholics "may indeed join at present in the cry of reform, in hopes that it may be made conducive to their real object; but for that very reason, ought it not to be our aim to separate the cause of reform from theirs, and by that means to unite the Protestant interest against them?"

During the repression of Ulster, General Knox wrote from Dungannon to his superior, General Lake: "I have arranged . . . to increase the animosity between Orangemen and the United Irish . . . Were the Orangemen disarmed or put down, or were they coalesced with the other party, the whole of Ulster would be as bad as Antrim and Down." However, the statements of a general in a critical military position do not necessarily represent the government's opinions.

In fact, Earl Fitzwilliam, who had been Viceroy in 1795 for a brief period before he was recalled for exceeding his instructions, explained why he favoured Catholic Emancipation: "We must unite all the higher orders in one common cause." And Pitt, who brought about the Act of Union in 1800, favoured Catholic Emancipation after that for similar reasons, though he spinelessly withdrew from the notion when faced with King George III's opposition.

One does not expect to hear British colonial administrators talking explicitly about how to divide a colonial people in order to rule them. It is more likely that they would express it in the terms: where can we find allies to help us preserve order and stability?

At the time of Catholic Emancipation, Sir Robert Peel doubted "whether there could be that identity of interest and feeling which would permit the practical application of the principle of perfect civil equality in the administration of Irish affairs, and whether, if the equality were nominal and not practical, there would be satisfaction and contentment on the part of the Catholics."

In 1832 the Tory leader, the Duke of Wellington, wrote to the Orange leader Lord Roden: "The Protestants of Ireland, by taking up the cause of the Union, and of the connection with Great Britain, amalgamate themselves with that country." In the same year, Viscount Melbourne wrote: "With respect to the protestants of the north, I have always felt that it is to them that the government must look for support in circumstances of difficulty." At the same time of the 1848 Rising, the government was to distribute arms to Orangemen.

Yet the same Viscount Melbourne was urging in 1833 that the Orange lodges be banned. During Earl Grey's government (1830-1834) another member of the cabinet wrote to the viceroy of Ireland: "Would the dispersal of some legal patronage in the colonies among Irish barristers, especially Catholics, would the secret consultation of some Catholic bishop, facilitate you in obtaining for the government and for English

connection, and withdrawing from O'Connell and the separationists, the co-operation of any large portion of the native and Catholic Irish?"

The Orange Order was officially banned from 1825 to 1828. After a parliamentary investigation during Melbourne's government, the imperial grand master, who was King William IV's brother, was obliged to dissolve it again in 1836. The government dismissed magistrates who were blatantly Orange, and appointed many Catholics to public office. Not till 1845 did the Grand Lodge of Ireland recommence activity (although of course local lodges continued to operate whatever the state of the law).

Sir Robert Peel's government (1841-1846) increased the grant to Maynooth and made other efforts at conciliating the Catholics in regard to land, the franchise, charitable bequests, and education. He justified his attitude: "You must break up that formidable confederacy which exists in that country against the British Government and the British connection . . . You can do more to break it up by acting in a spirit of kindness, forbearance and generosity." He wanted to detach from the movement demanding repeats of the Union "a considerable proportion of the respectables and influential Roman Catholic population."

If one looks for a pattern, one finds only two alternating views: (a) Get the Protestants' support to keep the Catholics down; (b) Unite the Protestant and Catholic upper and middle classes to keep the lower orders down. There was no overall strategy. As D.R. O'Connor Lysaght has commented, "Britain initiated its control over Ireland, and then left the conditions thereby established to work themselves out, intervening only when matters threatened to get out of hand."

In what economic framework were these ideas placed? After the Union, Northern industry prospered and Southern industry declined. In the past, the lack of capital and the ending of tariff protection under the terms of the Union were blamed for the Southern decline. However, recent historians such as L.M. Cullen, Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, and Joseph Lee do not accept this. There was no lack of capital in the South: but it was invested in land and in Britain, or rested in bank accounts. The tariffs existing before 1800 were comparatively low, and some British manufacturers were able to compete despite them.

Also, the decline in Southern industry did not occur at the point when tariffs were eliminated in 1821. Industries lingered on till the middle of the century. But the Southern market was comparatively small, and Britain was the only conceivable export market. From the arrival of steamships in the 1820s, it was more profitable to export livestock than processed agricultural goods. The collapse of Southern industry was more the result of the victory of large-scale specialised industry over provincial isolation and backwardness.

In any case, the ending of protection cannot explain why Northern industry prospered. In what way did it differ from Southern industry? Industry in the South was

often established out of nowhere by merchants or improving landlords. Industry in the North was more of a natural growth. The Protestant Planters came from an economically more advanced society where weaving was already established. They brought the linen trade with them. Many landlords deliberately founded market towns. One does not have to believe that Northern industry was established because the Northerners were Protestants. The Marxist view is that people became Protestants because they were capitalists, not capitalists because they were Protestants. But those whose fathers and grandfathers had come from a country where the Protestant work-ethic had become established, would have a culture which made them readier to seize any commercial opportunities that came their way. In any case much of Belfast's progress after the middle of the nineteenth century was organised by immigrant businessmen like Edward Harland, G.W. Wolff, and James Mackie. Belfast meant good business to them, not Protestantism.

The advance of Northern industry has been widely attributed to the Ulster custom, which allowed outgoing tenants compensation for disturbance and for improvements which they had made (buildings, fences, drainage): this compensation money could be used as capital for going into business. Modern writers claim that there is no empirical evidence that any manufacturer's capital started like this. However we do know that the linen industry, initially the North's most important industry, was carried on side by side with agriculture in its technically most advanced area (the Armagh/Dungannon/Lisburn triangle). And the comparative harmony on the land must have been an incentive to investment.

In any event, while Southern linen-weavers were collapsing under intense British competition, the Northerners had their small farms to fall back on, and when the power-loom was brought in in 1825 weaving quickly became factory-based, using the traditions of the cotton factories which were going out of business at this time. And the engineering industry got a start making machinery for them.

Also, despite Ireland's lack of iron and good coal, it was comparatively simple to get them across from Scotland to Belfast, and if necessary up the Lagan navigation, and by road to their destination. To freight them to Dublin, let alone anywhere else in the South, would be much more expensive.

The technically backward nature of weaving in most of Antrim and Down and its technically advanced nature in the Orange-dominated area illustrates how Orangeism came to be the ideology of the future and the United Irishmen, after their failure, were destined to decline, as the self-employed weavers were reduced to the status of employees. This decline had started before the 1798 Rising. So many former United Irishmen joined the Orange Order that at Killead, Co. Antrim, they were called "Orange Croppies". The main body of Presbyterians, who had elected the well-known advanced



radical and later United Irishman, the Rev. Steel Dickson, moderator in 1793, passed a loyal address to the King in August 1798.

Thomas Russell and Jemmy Hope came north to get support for Robert Emmet's 1803 Rising, and could find only a dozen followers. A large meeting in Belfast expressed "horror" at the rising. The former United Irishman Dr William Drennan (who had dropped out of politics before the 1798 Rising) helped in 1808 to start the *Belfast monthly magazine* which adopted an anti-Union position but only lasted for six years. The other leading nationalist journalist, Lawless, left Belfast about 1822. Northern liberalism had reverted to the pattern of the early 1790s. It now operated in the context of the Union, as was shown by the new liberal newspaper the *Northern Whig*. At an 1830 meeting in Belfast to demand parliamentary reform, the statement "the closer the union the greater our happiness and prosperity" was loudly cheered.

The industrialisation of Belfast caused economic prosperity to grow on the basis of the British market. It also caused considerable immigration by Catholics, who grew from 8% of the population in 1784 to 32% in 1834. Sectarian riots grew common. A Belfast manufacturer told a Parliamentary committee in 1835 that "the sectarian differences between Catholics and Protestants had kept the handloom weavers from forming a union." Religious discrimination in employment became important in the 1850s and 1860s. The growth of shipbuilding, where market influences was immediately visible, ensured a working-class constituency attuned to the needs of their industry's markets.

A theological dispute in the 1820s split the main body of Presbyterians. The element around the Rev. Henry Montgomery, who were liberal in politics and in religion, refused to accept man-made statements of belief, such as that the Pope was Anti-Christ, and were obliged to break away in 1830. It was soon clear that they were a tiny minority. Meanwhile the leader of the conservative wing, the Rev. Henry Cooke, made a speech in Hillsborough in 1834 publishing "the banns of sacred marriage" between the Presbyterians and the Church of Ireland. An evangelical revival in 1859, especially among the weavers in the old areas of United Irish influence, reinforced conservative trends.

Meanwhile O'Connell's Repeal movement, organised by a man who had associated himself so clearly with the Catholic Church, appeared as a threat to northern Protestants. His refusal to accept the "godless" Queen's Colleges showed that Catholic interests would be predominant if Repeal were granted. O'Connell was so ignorant of Northern opinion that he organised a non-violent march into the North: it was "harassed and hindered" (as Major Bunting would have put it) by Orangemen and had to be abandoned at Armagh. In a dispute over appointment of Protestants to public offices, O'Connell remarked in the House of Commons "they are foreigners to us since they are of a different religion."

The political affiliations of M.P.s elected before the 1832 Reform Act are difficult to investigate. But certainly from 1832 to 1871 no Repealer or Home Ruler even stood for election in Ulster, let alone was elected. This despite

the fact that elsewhere, 42 Repealers were elected in 1832 and 60 Home Rulers in 1874. No Home Ruler was elected within the present Northern Ireland until 1885, when constituencies had been altered, the franchise extended, and Northern Irish political geography acquired its sectarian pattern.

There was some agrarian agitation. An Ulster Tenant-right Association was formed in 1847. The Presbyterian general assembly gave its support. It united in 1850 with Southern tenant-righters to form the "League of North and South". This broke up because of the Southerners' involvement with specifically Catholic demands through an association which became known as "the Pope's Brass Band". Some Irish Conservative M.P.s supported Gladstone's 1881 Act which granted tenant right. Lord Derby said this was necessary to keep Ulster from nationalism. However, even if this were true, it would have been a *conversion to nationalism*, not a retention of it.

Through much of this period, it was only a small middle-class minority who had the right to vote, and voting was carried out by voice. However, election results changed little when the secret ballot was introduced in 1872. And it was not the case that the men of no property were more radical. At the first general election in Belfast after the urban franchise was broadened in 1832; the Whigs gave place to the Tories. In fact, it was the middle class among whom liberalism (belief in parliamentary reform and religious equality) survived, and the men of little property who voted conservative from the 1830s.

The insistence on Ulster's rights was not imported by Lord Randolph Churchill. In 1843 a petition was circulated in Belfast demanding that in the event of O'Connell's demand for repeal of the Union being granted, an area with its capital at Belfast should either be exempted or become a separate kingdom with status equal to the rest of Ireland. This demand was revived by the Orange M.P. William Johnston in the 1870s.

So, by the 1880s — indeed, by the 1830s — sectarian divisions in Ireland had reached the form in which they have continued, and which was to be the basis on which Partition was erected in 1920.

I have deliberately not used the expression "British imperialism" in this article, because there is a Marxist use of the word "imperialism" which refers to a stage of capitalism reached only in the 1880s. It can cause confusion to suggest that British influence in Ireland was necessarily of the same nature in 1900 as it was in 1800 or 1300. I intend in a further article to examine this later stage of British influence and the popular forces engaged in the actual establishment of Partition.

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# BURN DOWN THE ABBEY

## A discussion on the prospects for radical theatre in Ireland today.

Those involved: **Sean McCarthy** who worked in Britain for a number of years with 7.84 and Joint Stock and is now a director with the Peacock where he has special responsibility for encouraging new writers.

**Art O'Brian** who set up the Ballyfermot Community Workshop out of which emerged the film *Down the Corner*. He is now working as a freelance theatre director.

**Annie Kilmartin** was involved with the amateur company Strand Players for a number of years before becoming a professional actress. She is a founder member of Moving Theatre.

**David McKenna** has worked as theatre critic for *In Dublin* magazine and as actor/director with Team Educational Theatre Co.

The discussion was witnessed and recorded, if not actually chaired, by **Eamonn O'Dwyer**.

**S.McC.** I now believe that there's no such thing in a capitalist society as non-bourgeois art. I think Dario Fo is a bourgeois artist as is John McGrath, Sam Sheperd etc. That's the inevitability in our society and to talk about effecting some fundamental change by means of theatre is misleading and rather pathetic. The whole movement of political theatre which reached its height of popularity with Brecht, and which flowered particularly in America and Britain in the 60s, has become perversely elitist and introverted. That movement never happened in Ireland and heaven forbid that we should try and artificially create it. I don't think Dario Fo is a particularly good writer though the theatre he has created may be very exciting. He's not as good as J. Graham Reid, for example, or Neil Donnelly.

**A.K.** Moving Theatre isn't introverted or elitist. Our aim has been to take theatre to people who wouldn't be bothered going into one of the theatres in town and to offer live entertainment as an alternative to the pub or bingo. We're not cultural dogooders, we don't go into a community and hand down a political message. Our first production, *Legs II*, which we did in halls as part of the '79 Theatre Festival fringe dealt with the lives of women living in hardship and bad housing who take refuge in valium and bingo, and we got our ideas for that play from discussions with people like in my mammy's women's club in Whitefriar St.

Our biggest problem is money. It took us a year to get a grant of £800 to do one season, then last year we got an Arts Council grant of £25,000 which enabled 7 of us to work the full year. But this year they turned round and cut us to £14,000 which means we're now out of action. It's no good unless you can do it on a continuous basis. It takes time to build up a relationship within communities. We were just getting there. We had people ringing us up asking us to go back to the prisons and schools and halls we played in and we have to say no. It makes you sick.

**S. McC.** That is the problem. There is not enough money, nothing like enough money. People talk about the way the money is divided up, the amount of money that goes to the

Abbey in comparison to the money that goes to the Druid Theatre or Moving Theatre. But the thing is either you subsidise the Abbey or you burn it down and forget it. If you're going to subsidise it, you have to subsidise it properly which means you have two incredibly expensive theatres that one is saddled with because someone years ago decided they should be built and they're there. This is a phenomenon which is not unique to Dublin. There are theatres like it in Sheffield and Newcastle and Belfast and Munich, all over the world theatres that by virtue of their size, location and design are incredibly expensive to run.

**D.McK.** The Abbey is not a focus for discussion unless something happens there which breaks the bounds of its own possibilities. There's no point in expecting anything out of the National Theatre other than a reflection of the type of thinking of the people who put up all these national things. If something interesting happens that's fine but I think a lot of people waste too much time huffing and puffing at the Abbey walls.

**S.McC.** The awful thing is that outside of the Abbey there is so very little happening because there isn't enough money going anywhere else.

**D.McK.** There's the Druid Theatre Company in Galway, the most exciting and professional company in the country.

**A. O'B.** Druid is important; they've managed to create a relationship to a community. One of the biggest problems in Dublin is that there is a very diffuse sense of community, the whole city is the community and it's not possible to relate to it. You'll get a community of interested people, if you like, around the Focus Theatre in Dublin but that's quite different from Druid. The Focus will say: our *theatre* is our community whereas Druid will say: this *place*, this area is our community. The relationship is quite different.

I think Moving Theatre with their workshops and their frequent returning to the same communities is an attempt to create that relationship. Having to find your audience and fill the theatre is good. I mean in Holland and Germany you have massive subsidies going into lavish productions and there's perhaps five people in the audience. That's a disgrace. The onus is off them to create the relationship and they can then introvert.

**S.McC.** We've got to be very careful what we're saying here Art. What you're saying is that we want a totally laissez-faire situation like the New York situation where there are 5 or 6 thousand actors out of work, where subsidy is banned because it's gone wrong in Germany and Holland.

**D.McK.** No, because we're questioning subsidy doesn't mean we're jumping to your conclusion. Art is right and you don't have to go to Holland. There are people receiving money in Dublin and their right to it is extremely tenuous because they haven't found an audience. The Project for example.

**S.McC.** Oh, the Gate surely. The Gate gets about £200,000 and they can't even produce work.

**A.O'B.** To come back to change and it's relationship to theatre. It seems to me that the change that theatre in this



country has always been about is the change that happens to the participants, the people who are involved in the creation of that theatre. It comes down to the lack of focus that the theatre has in this society. It constantly creates certain possibilities which only go as far as the change which the people involved in the process will allow until they find (and it's certainly legitimate when the money runs out) that it's not possible to continue.

**S.McC.** Well you get older . . . you get children . . . it becomes about making a living eventually, being able to survive without going hungry. When people get that bit older they have to go into a more conventional, steady end of the business. It's also to do with the lack of theatre criticism in this country. The press are capable of killing people with the most awful vicious bogman journalism. The attacks on Jim and Peter Sheridan for example became so fucking personal, it became about them as socialist, longhaired drug addicts.

**D.McK.** But they allowed themselves to be used personally in the beginning.

**S.McC.** No, it's the way the Establishment works in this country.

**A.O'B.** It's a two-sided coin. The Project became very much the Sheridan's baby, it was the Cult of the Personality. I think what the Sheridans were doing in the earlier days was phenomenally good but it ran a kind of course, it only went as far as the individuals involved could go. It begs the question: why do people come into theatre in the first place and the answer is ego satisfaction and when the ego is not being fanned the thing runs out. For something that's supposed to be collaborative it is in fact the most selfish art and to transcend that means changing the way we live if we're really going to work together. We can't do it locked away in our little boxes, separated and connected just by a timetable of productions.

**A.K.** In ways, Moving Threatre goes beyond what you're talking about. When we were doing Legs II, we were asked by youth workers in Drimnagh to help do a play on cider-drinking. We worked with them doing improvisations on their ideas and it became a play which the kids performed in a local hall. We're able to continue doing this kind of work because it's financed by the Corporation and the grant hasn't been cut. In fact it's been increased this year from £2,500 to £5,000. So far doing these kind of workshops in communities has been incredible both on a theatrical level and in the development of peoples' ideas.

We hope to start work soon with the Whitefriars Women's Club. The goal is for them to be able to work on their own. In a couple of years we'd like to see a number of these workshops going so that people can use theatre to look at issues in their lives. I feel we're also breaking new ground in ways of working. We've developed a programme of Movement and voice

workshops, street theatre techniques, improvisation methods. Our whole way of working is exploratory.

**D.McK.** Working on skills is important. The whole question of talent, skill and work is fundamentally political. There's this attitude: oh he has the gift, isn't it marvellous and that's it. It's like the old aristocratic notion of genius.

**S.McC.** When I worked with 7.84 we were continually developing new skills. It was part of the job. We'd come in at 8 o'clock in the morning and do an hour's physical warm-up, then we'd have a half hour company meeting then we had a half hour political discussion and then we'd start rehearsal. It was a committed political theatre. The reason for doing any show was whether we as a collective thought it was the correct political intervention at that particular time. But working in that collective way is extremely exhausting on the energy and the nerves. Touring seven months a year.

When I talk about political theatre becoming introverted, I'm also talking about the whole of revolutionary politics in Western Europe. In the case of 7.84 I think we were eventually smothered in the soft underbelly of the trade union movement, absorbed by Stalinism. It became a recantation, mutual backslapping among the already converted. That was in Britain. It wouldn't necessarily be like that here.

**A.K.** Do you hear on RTE recently some factory girls were interviewed after seeing the play 'Factory Girls' in the Peacock? It was amazing. They were so sharp. The thing is people like that normally just wouldn't bother going to the theatre. Why would they? The atmosphere of the place is enough to put them off. The Project isn't any better. It's offputting in a different way, it's so arty farty.

**A.O'B.** The fact is that it is a tiny minority of people who give a fiddler's shite about theatre.

**S.McC.** That's theatre's fault.

**A.O'B.** Yes, I'll tell you there was a fleadh in Inchicore recently and in the Working Man's Club on a Friday night Eamonn MacTomais spoke about growing up in Inchicore. The place was full, there was a bar going on but the silence in that room was rapt. And that was theatre. You had a man and a chair and his ability to tell tales. People were enthralled. But if you were to ask any of those people three days later had they ever been to the theatre and if they hadn't been to the Abbey or some place they'd have to say No.

**S.Mc.** There are some extreme examples of that . . . Meatloaf in Dalymount Park . . .

**A.K.** The Pope!

**A.O'B.** But the theatre, in its usual conservative forms, seems impotent in the face of the huge changes going on in this country. We seem incapable of finding ways and means of evolving a theatre which will consciously address itself to the really important issues. Take the Ferenka closure for example; it contains the whole process of industrialisation, it's a massive and rich terrain. Now I think it would be tragic if such a project was to be put on in a theatre. It's the kind of play that needs to be taken out and moved around the country on the basis that we need to discuss the process of industrialisation, how Ferenka was set up, the assumptions behind it, the whole concept of multinationals coming into this society, the very human response of those workers to what they were being expected to do and the reasons for its closure.

It seems to be extraordinary, and I admit guilt, that this hasn't been attempted. How might it be done? One of the difficulties you'd find is that some people who are very interested in doing it simply don't have the ability as actors to handle the material, to perform it with a sense of craft because it's not just important to go out with the issue, the manner and means of communicating your concern are equally important.

**D.McK.** But the kind of actor who believes purely in the inspiration of the moment, in burying himself for four weeks in rehearsal and then coming out on a stage and exploding in front of the audience couldn't handle it either. How can an actor like that deal with the rigour of someone saying: No, you're wrong, it's not like that. How can a director find the humility to think of a brilliant piece of staging and then say: No, I can't do that, it looks brilliant but it's wrong. It not accurate.

**A.K.** I think the issues that Moving Theatre has been involved with haven't been so political in the big sense. But in the play we did on Valium we did try to show that things could be different, that people didn't have to be so isolated and we did reach people. This woman said to me that she'd been on valium for years and there was no way she was going to give it up but her daughter was just starting and she said that having seen the play she was going to try and head her off. That's political too.

**D.McK.** But isn't your work kind of limited? Aren't there two shows possible on Valium, one the show you did and the other to actually look at the pharmaceutical industry. There's very little of that kind of work going on.

**A.O'B.** Why not? Why hasn't this kind of work emerged? It's been touted for the last ten years.

**S.McC.** Well it's just got to be done, someone's got to get on with it. Again money is a problem. Hopefully we may start moving towards a situation of getting a lot more one-off grants for projects and we'll stop just trying to sustain things.

**D.McK.** But is Charlie Haughey going to give you a grant to do a really good play on the Arms Trial using all the research available? Whatever they say, I insist on seeing the Arts Council as a government body. I really do wonder whether there's any point in a theatre company which is serious about doing that kind of work expending any energy in looking for money from a government body.

**S.McC.** The money in Britain came because Jennie Lee was appointed Minister for the Arts and she was a radical and the same is true of all the European countries in fact; it was only when there were radical ministers within a left government...

**A.O'B.** We'll have to wait for Gemma Hussey!

**S.McC.** Jaysus!

**A.O'B.** The idea of one-off grants is the freshest thought of the evening. One-off projects could be defined and developed and funded and the energy let run free but at the same time a well organised group could get together to tour the country with a Rathmines and Rathgar Musical type of show and they would be demanding equal funding.

**S.McC.** Well fuck them.

**D.McK.** When the ITC grant was withdrawn how many people said. Fuck them? And the ITC is not a million miles away from the R and R, a more professional version perhaps but their relationship with their audience was both patronising and inefficient. It was set up in the first place for purely political reasons; no group of people got together and said: God, we must have a company touring around the country, let's knock on the Arts Council door. No, one day it wasn't there, the next day it was. Somebody up there decided we needed a second national theatre company. I thought the withdrawal of its grant was a very good thing yet everybody, no matter what kind of theatre they were involved in got behind the ITC banner and marched.

**S.McC.** But the issue wasn't the quality of their work, it was the way the subsidy was withdrawn. It simply isn't permissible to withdraw funds without at the very least consultation with the workers involved — in this case the actor's trade union, Equity.

**D.McK.** The Arts Council said at the time, although there hasn't been much evidence of it yet, that the money would still go into theatre. Now could they have talked to the trade union which refuses to represent the kind of people to whom the Arts Council was talking about giving money? Because Equity will refuse to represent workers in small theatre groups. It operates as a professional association rather than a trade union.

If you're working fulltime in a small theatre group, it's your livelihood, you're earning the Equity minimum rate and you go to Equity and ask them to represent you they'll say: if you're not working for a recognised management and you haven't spoken a hundred words in the Abbey or some recognised theatre, we don't want to know. This happens to children's and educational theatre groups. And it's not a question of the closed shop. When I was working in *In Dublin* and we wanted to joint a union we went to the NUJ and we were welcomed with open arms. We weren't asked if we'd worked for the *Irish Times* or had a hundred words published in the *Irish Independent*.

**S.McC.** Good point. Nevertheless the ITC weren't even given a reason. If the Arts Council didn't think they were doing a very good job then they should have said so and said why.

**A.K.** The Arts Council seems to lack a clear policy. They don't give reasons. When Moving Theatre was cut we weren't given any reason. Was it because we were the newest, because we were simply the easiest to cut? Basically they've no criterion on funding. If they do, then let's hear it.

**A.O'B.** To go back to something you said earlier, Sean. Subsidise the Abbey or burn it down. It's putting it in very stark terms. The choice is between a multi-million pound grant for a grand theatre on a European scale and nothing at all. Do you really see it like that?

**S.McC.** Yes I do, and that's after a fair amount of thought.

**A.O'B.** And having thought about it what's your view, are you dancing in the middle?

**S.McC.** Yes I suppose I am. I really don't know what should be done. Just don't burn it down when I'm stuck downstairs in my office.



# VIEWPOINT

## A FEAR OF THE PASSIONS

EMMETT O'CONNOR

**D**espite its new affection for real-politik and its well aired conviction that the battle for Socialism will be a "long, hard, struggle", the Irish left still trundles out the myth that a significant realignment in politics is being created by social and economic change and that the advent of a new political culture is at hand.

The Democratic Socialist Party and the Workers' Party offer the most elaborate expressions of this imagery with their economist/modernisation arguments that the decline of irrational forces such as religion and nationalism, together with the weakening of a clientelist politics under the impact of monopoly capitalism, will lead to the emergence of a clear cut right/left cleavage in the party system.

The Labour Party too subscribes to this notion. The Militant Tendency tell us that we are now in "a new historical period" and forecast the revolution "within the next 10 to 15 years". Of course, Militant have a rolling horizon; it's always the next 10 to 15 years. Equally, the party establishment articulates its version of the myth. Brendan Halligan and friends bemoan the illogical character of the Irish party system and look forward to the day when we step into line with the rest of Europe.

Labour has always inclined to this vision. The swing to the left in the late 1960's was stimulated less by Socialist conviction than by the pragmatic assumption that a "modern" outlook was developing among the electorate and that Labour could capitalise on this to catapult itself into the crucible of power. Significantly, the Labour dream did not so much envisage control of government as the creation of a permanent Labour wedge between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael which would ensure the party's presence in rotating coalition administrations.

**O**ne can trace this outlook right back to the origins of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Tom Johnson rationalised Labour's subsidiary position in Irish politics in the 1920's by citing economic backwardness and the extent of peasant proprietorship. With industrialization and urbanization Labour would be borne up on the rising tide of economic advancement as the passions of nationalism receded. The fact that the movement had reached its zenith during

the national struggle and was in any case largely reliant on the votes of farm labourers didn't seem to pose a challenge to this thesis.

Johnson's lasting achievement was the replacement of the irrationalist myths which nurtured Labour through its heady, adolescent years by a tamer vision of the course of Socialist history; one which held out the prospect of a sane transition to an ordered millenium once backwardness and the passions had been overcome. Labour's instinctive aversion to the national question is the product of this perspective.

It was the supreme achievement of Connolly and Larkin to apply an advanced political consciousness and a sophisticated industrial strategy to a non-industrialized working class with only a limited tradition of trade unionism. Yet despite this heritage, mainstream Irish socialism has always inclined towards rational impulses and a Johnsonian notion of progress. The failure of the trade union movement to retain the ideological independence which it built up in the years immediately after the First World War, coupled with the inability of Republican Socialism to be anything other than a left-wing nationalism, has compounded the tendency to reject the lessons of the past and the reality of the present in favour of futuristic utopias.

**T**here is also an important historical circumstance which has affected the evolution of Irish Socialist thought. The history books tell us that Labour is the oldest political party in Ireland; in many respects it is also one of the youngest. Labour in the 1920s was the residue of the radical activism of 1917-23. Most of its deputies had risen to prominence in direct action at that time and were elected on the reputation they had acquired in the service of the wages movement. As trade union membership contracted and the political climate froze over, the survivors reconstructed their electoral bases along clientelist lines.

In the process, party cohesion disintegrated and Labour seats became the fiefs of a loose grouping of semi-independent T.D.s with little interest in the problems of applying Socialism. Certainly party activists continued to deploy a radical advocacy, but the party as a whole offered no example of a Socialist body in

evolution. It was 1965-69 before Labour was reconstituted as an integrated organisation willing to give some kind of witness for Socialism.

Accordingly, for almost 40 years the development of parliamentary Socialism was arrested. This breach in tradition has left us with a vast gap in the stock of historical experience; so that, practically as well as intellectually, the catalogue of reference remains thin. In consequence, current Socialist thinking has developed a paranoia about the offending reality of Irish political culture and endeavours to conjure it out of existence with images of a "new historical period", "post national society", or the dream of a "European type political system".

**A**las, there is nothing significantly "modern" about the past two general elections. We have been fighting elections on social and economic issues since 1969. The Civil War passions have long since subsided and the vast majority of the electorate are well aware that there is little to choose between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. If Socialism is to be sustained through struggle and strife, it will have to come up with something more original and comprehensive than a simple appeal to a new rationalism. Tom Johnson had that idea and the Labour Party was lucky to survive it.

Guilt born of the threadbare history of Irish Socialism along with a fear of the passions has led Socialists of most hues to lock into current trends in the belief that the future can't be worse than the past. This has produced a 'scientific romanticism' which invents a social order capable of transformation and estimates its time of arrival at any day now.

There are two flaws in this outlook. Firstly, it offers no alternative social vision. On the contrary, it promises more of the same; more capitalism, more foreign investment, more consumerism, more secularism. Secondly, it breeds an optimism which merely complements the confidence of capitalism in Ireland. Any Socialist picture of a capitalistic future must be a pessimistic one.

Undoubtedly, the present diversity in perspectives is a reflection of the growing maturity of Irish Socialist thought, but it remains to be seen whether in setting our face to the future we are exorcising decades of failure or rejecting the enlightenment to be derived from past experience.

# RAID ON THE CITIZEN ARMY

## Auxiliary Police Make Big Seizures at Liberty Hall



### CLASS STRUGGLE DAYS

**DES DERWIN**  
reviews *The Rise Of The Irish Working Class* by Dermot Keogh. Published by Appletree Press.

Any book of socialist theory, labour history or even straight social research concerning Ireland has to be jumped at. Thankfully in recent times there are signs of irregation in the intellectual desert. Get hold of this book, without paying the £15 if you can, and read it. Read it for the information — much of it new material — and the insights. But draw your own conclusions. Dermot Keogh has several axes to grind. He says well much that needs to be said about the Irish labour movement. But many of his conclusions are certainly open to more discussion and seem to stem from his political outlook rather than from historical fact.

First, the basic data side of the book. Dermot Keogh goes behind the 'big events' and the big names to give a detailed picture of the living and working conditions in Dublin at the time, the secondary leaders

who grafted away in the fallow years, of how the strikes were conducted including the high level of direct action and violence. While we are not exactly brought among the pressing throng of the masses, as in the pages of, say, *Ten Days That Shook The World*, this book is a great exercise in debunking the 'great men' view of history.

In Dublin in 1903, 36.6 per cent of families occupied a single room. Even drapers assistants, who had to keep up the demenour of a lady or gentleman on less than the pay of "a full private in the Donegal militia", in 1908 were subject to 'living-in' conditions such as the following: "The public are not aware of the fact that a bathroom is an unknown luxury in most of the large houses (stores) in Dublin. In one of the most 'swell' houses in fashionable Grafton Street where over 100 employees are warehoused, hot water can only be obtained in the kitchen, needless to say not in quantities sufficient for a bath". Some Dublin maltsters worked a shift split three, for seven days a week — effectively a 108½ hour week.

Unfortunately, the style is often dull and quirky, making the reading a real effort at times — despite the blurb's praise for "Dermot Keogh's highly readable account".

The extraordinary level and ferocity of the class struggle in the 1913 lock-out, when Dublin became a focus of the labour movement and the establishment in both islands, has a drama of its own which is brought home to us in some detail. Our eyebrows are raised at the explicitness with which the employers set out to stem the working class advance as expressed through the ITGWU. And at the openness of the state force's co-

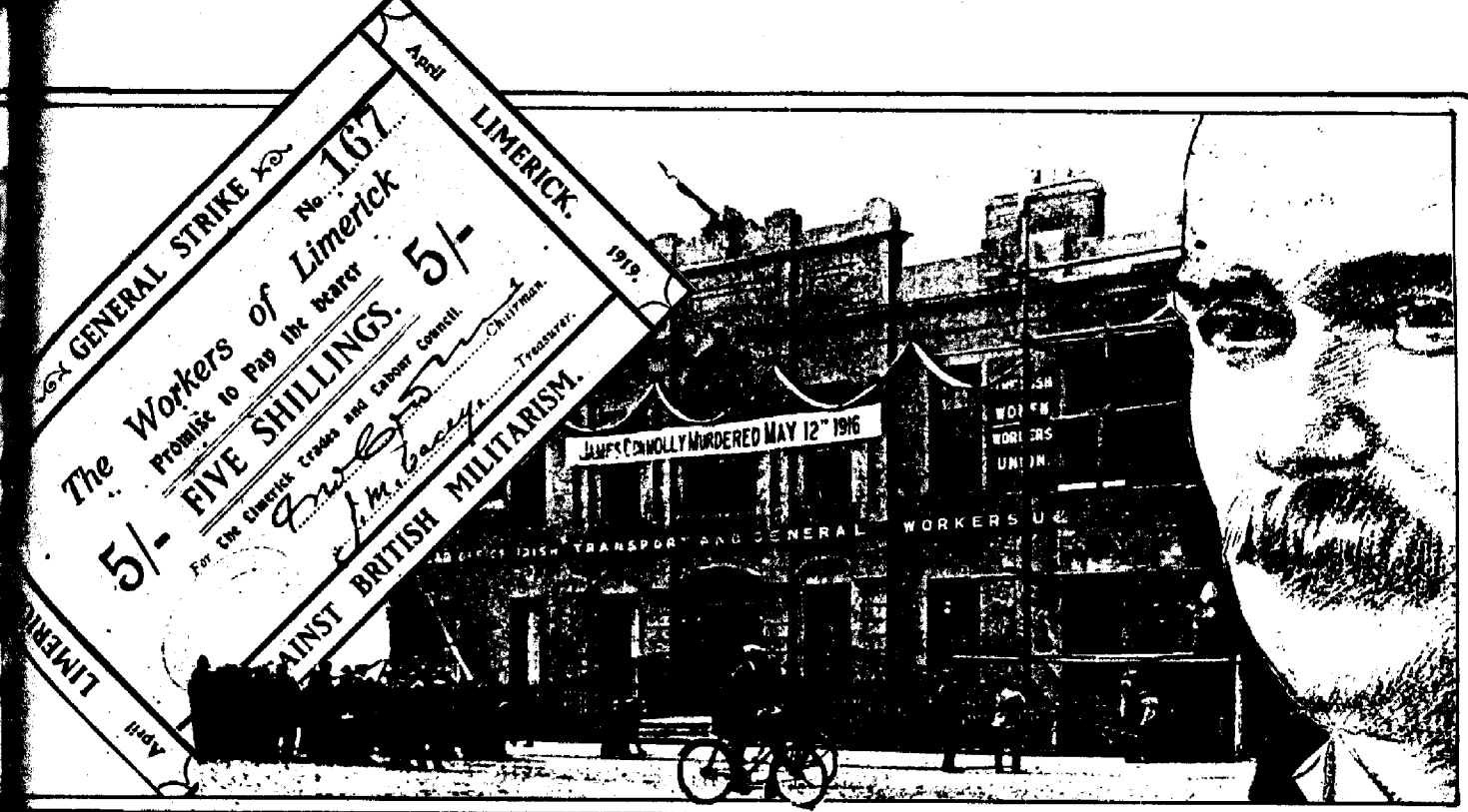
operation with their successful campaign.

Keogh sees the survival of the ITGWU as the 'singular achievement' of the 1913 events. He misses the greatest gain which came in the long term: the employers never again (so far) mounted such an offensive on trade unionism. One lesson of 1913 doesn't escape him — the "deficiencies of industrial action" alone.

What's really new is the narrative of the background build-up to the historical upheavals, and the light thrown on forgotten 'big events' and leaders. His account ably backs up one part of his thesis, that the stage was being set for Larkin and Connolly from at least 1890. He shows "the profound changes which were taking place in the city's trade union movement prior to 'Big Jim's' arrival in Ireland . . . by 1907 the economic and political world to which many craftsmen belonged was beginning to crumble or had already done so. Out of the uncertainty was emerging a general acceptance by workers of new ideas on the need for trade union, social and political reform. Moreover, the militancy of the newly-formed organisation for drapers' assistants, under the leadership of the talented Michael O'Lehane, helped greatly to accelerate this process. Larkin's arrival in Dublin coincided with, rather than caused, this development. The progressive trade union legislation of 1906 which gave protection to pickets, the growing awareness of Catholic social teaching among workers, the spread of socialist doctrine, the dissatisfaction with British institutions evoked by advanced nationalism, all combined to force a more radical approach to industrial problems."

Perhaps most significant of all was the movement of the general workers and labourers towards unionisation. Keogh presents this movement as it arose in the 'new unionism' in Britain and how the seeds of it, and the sympathetic strike, were sown in Dublin as early as 1890. He does not refer to what influence the anarcho-syndicalism of Europe or the 'industrial unionism' of the US may have had. The rise of the general worker coincided with the founding of the Irish-based union, a move already in the air quite independently of Larkin. Keogh reveals that Larkin found the idea of a national union "repugnant to his internationalism" and established the ITGWU not as a breakaway from the British movement but as a breakaway from the sell-outs and conservatism of the officialdom of the National Union of Dock Labourers.

Part of Keogh's task is to demythologise the "promethian figure of 'Big Jim' ". A necessary job, if handled properly. Dermot Keogh doesn't like Larkin. However, he doesn't like Larkin's politics either. Nowhere does he adequately distinguish between the lamentable side of Larkin's personal character and the underlying correctness of much of what he said in his harsh style. Keogh constantly recoils from Larkin's colourful and venomous attacks, even on the boss class. He certainly has no stomach for class hatred. But Larkin did not confine his overbearing manner to his dealings with the enemy. If Larkin and Connolly are among your heroes prepare to have one of them fall. Connolly wrote to William O'Brien (in the strictest confidence, to his credit): "I confess to you in confidence that



I don't think I can stand Larkin as boss much longer. He is singularly unbearable . . . (Larkin) is consumed with jealousy and hatred of anyone who will not cringe before him and beslaver him all over. He tried to bully me out of the funds due to our branch. He did not succeed . . . I told him that if he was Larkin twenty times over he would not bully me."

Although Connolly is hardly examined at all here, to my reading he comes out as far superior to Larkin both personally and politically. But then Connolly is *my* hero. For a work that rightly seeks to downgrade the role of prominent personalities in the period, Larkin strangely dominates from cover to cover. But as Keogh freely admits, "Larkin was the catalyst that galvanised the general workers into action". Keogh also attempts to partly rehabilitate William Martin Murphy and produces an apologia in the process.

In many instances, though, Keogh does help restore the balance; notably in the cases of O'Lehane (who must be spinning in his grave to see the IUDWC pass ITGWU pickets in Dublin), Rimmer and Crawford. Lindsay Crawford of the Independent Orange Order, as much as Larkin, held the Protestant and Catholic workers together in Belfast in 1909. It is also shown how the ITGWU was given crucial support from the Dublin Trades Council (which had been gradually captured by 'progressives' prior to 'Larkinsism') and the old craft unions during 1913. Although the main issue was recognition of the ITGWU, the whole trade union movement in Dublin were locked in battle with the Dublin Employers Federation. Keogh's description of the railway strikes of 1911 under the

leadership of Nathaniel Rimmer show how the great movement of the period was not confined to the ITGWU under Larkin.

Keogh often interprets Larkin's attacks on compromising trade union leaders as attacks on brothers. Although Larkin did go overboard and lash out blindly. So much so that it was syndicalist Ben Tillet that proposed the British TUC motion condemning Larkin's attacks on the British leaders. Nevertheless, I have never read a clearer account of how the British trade union leaders dealt the final crucial blow to the Dublin struggle by refusing to take industrial action in support. When Keogh examines the messy conflict between Larkin and the executive committee of the ITGWU in the aftermath of the lock-out he does say that the differences "went deeper than a conflict of personalities". Here in the defeat of 1913 we see the first beginnings of the bureaucratisation of the ITGWU and a clue to the relative isolation of Connolly from the union leadership in 1916.

A personality like Larkin's would not easily fit into any set-up in a period of defeat. But that's far from the whole story. As Keogh relates: "Moreover, a growing lobby at Liberty Hall seemed anxious to place the union on a more orthodox footing. Behind the scenes, the transport union was hoping to discard its old image of Larkinite waywardness and don a more conventional uniform. A similar path had been travelled by the 'new unions' of 1889 and the ITGWU was undergoing the same process of normalisation in 1914. William Martin Murphy could have no objection to the outcome." And Keogh gives every indication of siding with 'normal' trade

unionism against Larkin's aberrations.

The main weight of Keogh's thesis is this: "The consciousness of the labour movement was not merely an extension of that of the two most prominent leaders who were not themselves united in any common version of the path to socialism. I have argued that labour unity in 1913 was based on a highly developed trade union consciousness, but that consciousness was not a revolutionary one, and perhaps this explains the mystery of the social revolution that never was. The revolution was neither betrayed nor was it deferred; it was left-wing option never seriously contemplated by the majority of the leaders of the trade union movement. The trade union movement did not go through a revolutionary phase." His argument is directed against: "The 'betrayed' social revolution (which) has been a received theme in the left-wing press."

This opens a very large debate. Suffice it to make a few points here. I do not recall often, if ever, seeing it argued on the left that the 1907-13 period was a revolutionary period. What is often argued is that there was a betrayal in 1918, of labour's claim to lead, or take a full place in, the national revolution. But this study stops at 1914. If members of the second line leadership couldn't have betrayed the revolution because they were never revolutionaries in the first place, then they were reformists, or left reformists, all along. I accept, incidentally, that Connolly and Larkin were revolutionary leaders of a movement that was essentially trade unionist. Then as now its often left to revolutionaries to take

the lead in limited struggles for reforms. But if the link between the two leaders and the Dublin rank and file was militant trade unionism, there were heavy strains of revolutionary syndicalism (even the 'One Big Union') in that militancy which gave it much of its character and tactics. Furthermore, sections of the working class were *nearer* revolutionary consciousness than they are now, say, and were to remain so, in a scattered way, up until 1923. Revolutions can be betrayed, and so can militant, or even principled trade unionism.

The danger in Keogh's main thesis is his motives for forwarding it. His assumption appears to be that Larkin's and Connolly's revolutionary socialism, as with Larkin's militant industrial tactics, came to the top only because Dublin's reactionary employers necessitated extraordinary measures in order to "push forward the horizons of trade unionism". After that their politics were as irrelevant as they were before and as they are to-day. The counter-argument must be that things would have been different if the workers had *won* and gone forward in 1913 and/or if Connolly and Larkin had had the time, opportunity, consciousness and temperment (in the case of Larkin) to build a political movement on the militancy.

With a final recommendation to read it, some final criticisms. The treatment of nationalism is simplistic and prejudiced throughout. The constant use of the word 'men' for a movement that obviously included women is just not good enough. There are many phrasing and editing errors, the worst being the running of the year 1910 into 1911 making the narrative impossible to follow.

# Books

## UNION WOMEN

**GETTING IT TOGETHER.** Jenny Beale. Pluto Press. £2.50 (UK).

"The point is, when people say 'How can you strike and leave patients at risk?', we must reply: 'How can he (the Minister for Health) close nurseries, day centres for old people, family planning clinics and whole hospitals up and down the country . . . putting hundreds of lives at risk, many on the dole, and making more work for the women who end up looking after the young, the old and the sick — unpaid?' " Sharon Campbell, COHSE shop steward, quoted in *Getting It Together*.

The battle against Thatcher's economic policies in Britain is being led by the health workers, the majority of whom are women. These workers, engaged in traditionally-female caring and servicing roles, are now chaining themselves to railings, pelting Ministers with eggs and linking arms with miners who are supporting them. They are throwing down a challenge not only to Thatcher but also to the TUC leaders, who are faced with the dilemma of whether or not to follow their lead and fight this one to the end.

The fact that these women are in the lead today in Britain is a reflection, not only of how undervalued and low-paid the health workers have always been, but also of how women have begun to take their rightful place in the trade union movement. This makes Jenny Beale's book — the first in a new, "popular" *Arguments for Socialism* series being brought out by Pluto Press — a particularly timely and useful manual, albeit in a British context.

The author covers all aspects of women as trade unionists, including the fact that "dinners to bake and clothes to make" make trade unionism a difficult practice for most women to undertake. She divides workers into three categories:

1. Those who look after the needs of others.

2. Those who see to their own needs.

3. Those who have someone to see to their needs.

Obviously, the first group have the least amount of time for union activity, whilst those in the third group have a time-a-plenty for meetings, attending conferences and a jar afterwards etc. The fact that women predominate in the first group and men in the third group, explains a multitude about the distribution of the sexes within trade union structures.

Jenny describes, with some detail in reference to the British scene, the many chicken-and-egg situations that women trade unionists find themselves in; women are more exploited but less organised than men; they have less time for union activity but need to be involved more to ensure that unions are responsive to their needs; they are seen as caring creatures and given jobs in that line but are thus grossly underpaid because such jobs are undervalued in our society; they wash shirts for the men who tell them that women's issues are not important. And so on . . . and on.

But the book is not just a litany of complaints about the trade union movement, it describes how women can and do confront these problems and are changing the unions in the process. The whole image of trade unionists — the burly, male, dungaree-clad, manual worker supporting a family on his wage alone — is being challenged regularly at meetings and in disputes by women attacking the male style, language and values of the movement.

The book contains portraits of women involved in this process of change, which will bring smiles to the lips of every woman who has ever tried grappling with male dominance in her union. I particularly enjoyed a description of executive meetings of the National Union of Journalists by a woman who had been on the executive for two years: "I spoke very little at meetings. I'd intervene only if I had a new, specific point to make, but I think that was probably interpreted as being rather feeble. Everyone else seemed obliged to intervene in every debate even if somebody had already said the same thing . . . and sometimes, the president would congratulate us all on the fine debate we'd had while I'd simply be annoyed at the self-indulgence and the amount of time we'd taken over

a decision."

*Getting It Together* is written in simple, accessible language and is as readable as a novel. It has a slight tendency to repetition, perhaps inevitable when covering a topic so thoroughly. One thing of which the author leaves us in no doubt: "that an advance for women is rarely given gladly. Women have to fight for it. The battle is usually hard and long and sometimes bitter." This is a message which, with the "Pro-Life" Amendment Campaign, cuts in the health services, education and pay, is as valid for Ireland today as it is for Britain.

Molly O'Duffy

## SEX AND KIDS

**WHERE DID I COME FROM** Evelyn Conlon. Ard-Búí Publications. IR£1.50.

"When I was fourteen years old, my mother handed me a 'Facts of Life' book for girls during mass one Sunday. She never discussed it with me or even referred to the fact that she had ever given it to me. I know that was not an unusual reaction for many parents of her generation to the subject of sex education. I'm sure that many of us that were victims of such attitudes could wish that we had been born in more enlightened times.

My own children, now aged 10 and 7 years, have read various sex education books and now find the subject a bit boring — or so they claim. However, Evelyn Conlon's book was read avidly by both of them. The younger one was impressed by the drawings which are realistic and simple. The previous "best" sex education book that they had read had terribly unreal drawings — to the extent that the baby was smiling and waving as it emerged from the womb! The older one liked the references to the different possible living situations that a child might find itself in later on. Also the references to contraception. (She also wanted to know why there was an ad for the Magic Bus at the end

of the book).

As a parent, I liked the book for a number of reasons. It answers all the questions that young children ask. It suggests that there are many options open to people as to the types of relationship they choose to live in and that all are equally valid. It presents a very positive image of women, with the woman on top when the couple are making love and generally in control throughout the story. It covers two issues nearly always left out in these books, menstruation and contraception.

All in all, it is, in the estimation of my two daughters and myself, a delightful book and a very effective sex education aid. I hope it is on sale widely. I would certainly recommend it to the parents and friends of young children.

Patricia McCarthy

## HERE WE GO AGAIN

**ELECTION '82.** Ed. Vincent Browne. Magill Publications. £8.00 (IR).

Well, they've made it. The second electoral opus from Magill is finally out . . . and ahead of Ted Nealon. In 224 well-designed pages, *Election '82* will tell you all you need to know about the last election. Detailed results for all constituencies, profiles of TDs, national analysis of trends, short pieces on the Labour Party, Workers' Party and representatives salaries plus snippets of historical data. All invaluable stuff for the student of Irish electoral politics.

But at £8, I wonder if all this glossy detail is really needed, especially following on so closely after Magill's first opus, *The Magill Book Of Irish Politics*. That really is an essential book because, as well as providing the same info as the new book on the 1981 election, it also provided detailed results on all elections since 1923 plus loads of historical profiles of constituencies and TDs. This makes it a mine of information for socialists. Who remembers the Saor Eire-Republican



Labour Party-Vanguard-Clann na Poblachta-Independent career of Captain Peadar Cowan, for instance? Not me, but it looks fascinating.

In comparison, *Election '82* seems less important. Maybe *Magill* should have just bashed out a quick up-date of the actual results for a couple of quid and forgot about the glossy background, much of which is already in the first book. That way maybe even poor socialists could keep up with all these bloody elections and *Magill* could spend more time on... uh... *improving their magazine. Just a thought.*

John Cane

## GET YER LEFTY DIARY

Autumn comes but once a year... and with it, as sure as falling leaves, comes yer falling Diaries. Oblivious to the ever-more increasing likelihood that maybe there won't be another year to record, they seem to get published earlier and earlier as if there was no tomorrow (*Something wrong here, surely. Ed.*). Halfway through September and we already got news of *three*. Lefty ones that is. Was a time when all you could get was the Women's Diary... now we've got a Woman's Diary and a Socialist Diary from Ireland and a Gay Men's Diary from Britain.

Diaries seems to be just about the only real growth area on the Left these days. It's slightly weird. As the number of really important events that you might want to make a note of declines, the number of lefties wielding diaries increases. What it all means is beyond me, but it's no use fighting it, soon the lefty diary will be as *de rigueur* as the PLO scarf and the German anti-nuke sticker. Here's your choice so far.

**IRISH WOMEN'S DIARY AND GUIDE BOOK.** Published by Irish Feminist Information, c/o 25 Market Arcade, Dublin 2. 192 pages. 6" x 4". Price: £2.50 (IR). Reduced rates for bulk orders up to mid-October.

This is the fourth edition of the ever-popular (sales of 7000 last year) Women's Diary. MOLLY O'DUFFY reviews the 1983 edition:

The 1983 Diary is here already with a much more fortunate cover than last year's, which in many

cases got covered up as being offensive to women. In bold blue, it is the first cover that in any way lives up to the first 1980 one.

The guidebook part is necessarily scrappy. It contains useful information on such things as labour legislation and discrimination in the Social Welfare Code together with seemingly arbitrary, but nevertheless interesting, articles on the Brehon Laws and heroin. One could take issue with the content of some of the contributions: for instance, it seems strange to concentrate exclusively on Irishwomen United in an article on the radical women's movement, when the Feminist Federation was a more recent manifestation of it.

Every woman will have her own quibbles and the authors regularly and enthusiastically urge the users of the diary to fill-in the special cut-out form with their comments and criticisms. Few will argue, however, with the usefulness of the practical help sections. We are told clearly what to do if we have a sexually-transmitted disease, have been raped, or sexually harassed at work — even if we encounter a burst pipe!

The actual diary aspect is less satisfactory as the entry spaces for each day are vertical, which is more restrictive. It is delightfully and professionally illustrated with amusing cartoons and up-to-date photographs.

It also sports the inimitable star profiles. Mine describes me thus: "Sensual, patient, pleasure-orientated, powerful and sensitive, emotionally mature, great intellectual capacity, trustworthy." Now, who could argue with a book like that? A good buy, for Irish women.

**IRISH SOCIALIST YEARBOOK AND DIARY.** Published by Red Inc. c/o 25 Market Arcade, Dublin 2. 192 pages. 8"x6". Price: £3.95 (IR) from late November and at special reduced rate of £2.95 (IR) + 60p postage from late October to late November at above address.

According to the publicity blurb, as well as the usual diary section, this new publication will provide a guide to parties, organisations and pressure groups on the Left, trade unions, publications, political events, statistical information etc. Also, "challenging analyses of Ireland's social and economic problems, and the possible socialist solutions." Sounds a bit like GRALTON.

Nevertheless, it could be good. It all depends on how comprehensive and accurate the information will be with this kind of project. Coming from the same stable (with John Horgan and Mary Jones also involved on this one) as the Women's Diary, it has a head start on design, distribution etc. It's

appearance, although posing some possible problems of choice for socialist feminists, is to be welcomed.

**GAY MEN'S DIARY.** Published by Gay Men's Press. PO Box 247, London N15. 192 pages. 6"x3½". Price: £3.00 (UK).

This is a British publication which is probably not on general sale over here but if you come across it, or want to write off for it, it is not a bad buy. The diary spaces are a bit small and the profusion of pink would make some of it hard to actually write on. But the facts and essays are good. The latter includes an hilarious table-turning spoof on understanding heterosexuality entitled, "Tolerance not Pity" whilst the former contains the priceless piece of information for anyone born on January 10th that this is also the very same day in 476 when John I, known as "Red Boots", gay Byzantine emperor, died. You live and learn.

John Cane

## CLARA THE COPE

**COPING ALONE.** Clara Clarke. Arlen House. IR£1.95.

"Great," I thought when I heard this book *Coping Alone* had been published. At last a guide for the single parent. *Coping Alone*, with the wealth of information it imparts, mainly serves to illustrate the countless ways in which single parents are discriminated against.

In view of the forthcoming Referendum on Abortion this book could have seized this timely opportunity to highlight in stronger tones all the discrimination against single parents in the Legal and Social Welfare System. It could have put forward a strong argument pro a Woman's Right to Choose then again this author is not given to excessiveness or extreme viewpoints.

Clara Clarke is a perfect example of thousands of single Mothers/Parents in Ireland today whose existence the Central Statistics Office refuse to acknowledge. Clara married at 17 years and left a failed marriage at the age of 22 with two small children in tow. Her choices were divorce "Irish style", i.e., separation without any documents; an annulment if she was lucky; or divorce *a mensa et thoro*. Clara has a Church Annulment —

recognised by the Church but not recognised by the State who continue to view her as a Dependent of her spouse.

*Coping Alone* is a simple, honest and good guide to your rights within the law as a single parent. All of us have at some stage of our lives tried to cope with the Legal or Social Welfare System and know how painfully tiresome and tedious it can be. This book provides a handy solution when dealing with such Departments and will inform you on what kind of questions you can expect to be asked and what entitlements are available to you. There are sections on housing, mortgages, subsidised flatlets, rented accommodation, the law, obtaining different types of legal separation, annulment and how to go about it, civil decrees of nullity, custody and guardianship of the children, single fathers and Northern Ireland.

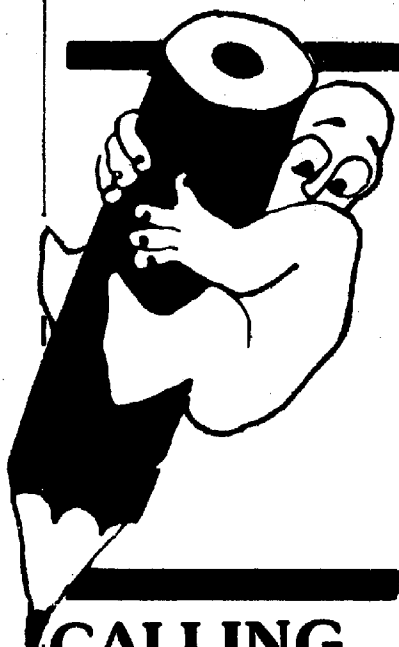
The laws surrounding the non-divorce situation, domicile, nullity, adopting your children (when remarriage) are particular to Ireland and would make unbelievable reading anywhere else. This is why, despite the fact that it is a moderate book, it has become an essential term of reference here since there is no other book in Ireland similar to it and also because it is so difficult to obtain information from any Government Civil Service Department.

The State cannot afford to ignore this situation for much longer. Proper Divorce Laws and financial support from the State are essential if single parents are to lead a normal life and not constantly fall below the poverty line. The State, by spending one million on an Abortion Referendum when they daily turn a blind eye to the burden of single parenthood, is neglecting the welfare of an enormous number of Irish children.

Mostly, this is a good book. As a guidebook for single parents, it provides valuable information. However, I feel the author would have been better advised to confine herself to the imparting of information rather than making value judgements — particularly in the chapter on Sexuality which tends to smack of an Angela McNamara-type conscience, as the following quote reveals:

"Ideally, sexual activity should be an extension of a relationship based on caring, love and respect. The ideal is not always easy to attain, but hopping in and out of bed with anyone who is available is no substitute, and besides being a sign of immaturity, it is damaging to your mind, your body and to your reputation."

Cathy Cotter



## CALLING THE SERIOUS LEFT

Dear Gralton,

I am an occasional reader of your magazine and appreciate the "non-sectarian" image that it tries to propagate amongst the Left — this, despite the fact that the majority of the Editorial Board come from a particular group, the Socialist Workers Movement.\*

Whilst the magazine, in general, deals with peripheral issues like the Anti-Amendment Campaign, Poland, Culture and Art and Euro-communism, it is not making a serious attempt to examine the difficulties of the Irish economy and the prospects for socialism — both of which are of immediate importance to the Irish working class.

Therein, also lies the most fundamental differences between sections of the Irish Left, because slightly different economic interpretations can mean major differences in the future welfare and standard of living of the Irish working class.

The Workers' Party is the only section, at present, that has comprehensively tried to deal with overcoming the present economic difficulty and building the future socialist society. There have also been some notable contributions on the issue in the pages of the *Irish Socialist*, paper of the Communist Party of Ireland. The economic stance of the Labour Party, throughout its recent political career, is already well known.

The similar groups on the "Left of the Left" have pre-occupied themselves with single issues such as

Northern Ireland, the famous Anti-Amendment Campaign (which is, I think, a blue herring!), Poland, the H-Block campaign etc. There has been very little serious research on the immediate issues facing the Labour Movement from this particular section.

Marxism itself, has received very little attention in the pages of *Gralton* so far — despite its central role in transforming society.

If Ireland finds itself on the brink of a revolutionary situation, the Left will have failed abysmally in a) formulating the most important questions of the present period, b) forwarding the cause of Marxist unity by engaging in sectarian squabbles and c) popularising itself at all because of the first two points.

I hope you can devote more time and expertise to this problem in your pages and also to attracting a greater input from the serious Left i.e., the Communist Party of Ireland and the Workers' Party.

Owen McCarthy  
50 Boherboy Close  
Lotabeg  
Cork.

*\*Editorial Note: As this statement could be read two ways, we would like to make it clear that this is a matter of past history prior to the initiation of GRALTON. Only two members of the present Editorial Board are currently members of a political party or organisation.*

## STUDENTS HIT BACK

Dear Gralton,

You ran a piece in the last issue saying "socialists should not support students". The argument runs that because the system only allows in the relatively well-off people they should not be supported.

Your contributor has confused students with the system. We, as students, either individually or as a group did not create the third level system that denies access to nine out of every ten of our age group. We do not take the decisions as to who can and on what basis they should get into third level education.

It is statistically correct that the vast majority of students come from well-off backgrounds. But, we are people in our own right. We are not the private property of our parents. If a survey was done on the real income of students one would quickly discover that they could not be shoved into the ESRI's middle class pigeon hole.

The dependency relationship

created by the system of parents financing students is a deliberate decision to tie students to their parents. Not only tie them to their parents but also to their values. And since the system only allows in the middle and upper middle class then these are the values it seeks to force on students.

Given the present third level system, students have a choice. Accept the situation as it stands or attempt to change it. Students, especially in the last twenty years have been fighting for change within the education system and society in general. The Union of Students in Ireland is working hard to improve its work so that students can more fully realise their role as a force for change.

Your contributor sought the aid of an ESRI report to back up his call that socialists should not support students. This bastion of right-wing economics seeks to entrench the position of the rich within the educational system — not change it. Our position is that the present education system serves the rich, not the people. One way to perpetuate the present system is to make it more expensive — a

position no 'socialist' should support.

Finally, *Gralton* — a socialist review — by publishing this backward article in its last edition without a reply from the editorial collective leaves one wondering as to the purpose of the magazine. The fact that the magazine cannot see the justice of supporting the demands raised by the students leaves one wondering whether you wish to promote genuine socialist ideas or are more interested in journalistic speculation. You cannot promote socialism by promoting its opposite.

Union of Students in Ireland.

*Editorial Note: Like all articles published in GRALTON, the article on students reflected the views of its author and not necessarily the views of the Editorial Board. GRALTON does not support specific demands: its function is to provide a forum for various points of view which are actually held within the broad spectrum of socialist opinions.*

## LETTERS

Keep them short and send them to Gralton, c/o 25 Mountainview Court, Harolds' Cross, Dublin 6.

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If you wish to become a member of the Co-operative simply fill in the Supporters' Subscription box below and send the appropriate money. You will be informed by post of all meetings.

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## IT'S UP TO YOU

Unlike most magazines, Gralton does not see itself as delivering the tablets from on high. Whether or not it succeeds depends on the response from readers. The magazine is open to those on the left who need the outlet to explore new ideas or review old ones or have a contribution to make — whether in debate or in providing information.

Contributions, ideas, complaints, disagreements, fivers, threatening letters etc., to:

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One of the things that young people these days have a lot of trouble understanding is the concept of "public spending cuts" — as we used to call them in the old days. Every time one of us old codgers from pre-revolutionary times goes along to a Connolly Seminar or a Larkin Memorial Weekend, or one of those Oral History Classes in the People's University, we get question after question on the issue.

Nowadays, the kids can't understand the logic of it. "Logic!" I usually quip, "good marx almighty, t'wasn't logic we had at all in them days, t'was capitalism." (The kids love it when you throw in the odd "t'was" — they're really into the folk tradition these days.)

Anyway, the kids usually point out that the whole thing about state involvement in a capitalist economy was that the state came in and did the things that capitalism wouldn't do because there's wasn't any profit in it. So, when the state took responsibility for something it was, a) because it wasn't profitable but it was necessary for the existence of the economy from which capitalism got its profit (i.e., roads, hospitals, education etc) or, b) if the service didn't exist there would be widespread disquiet, discontent and potential revolt against the system (i.e. social welfare, pensions, etc).

So, says the kids, it just didn't make sense to cut these things. As it was, the system spent just barely enough to pay for the necessities — this was the *minimum* level of services that capitalism was prepared to provide, or could get away with. Cutting these, say today's kids, surely stripped away any pretence that the system was about anything other than making profit for the few?

Y'know (y'know is nearly as good as *t'was*) the kids are really innocent these days. Y'see, it happened something like this:

First the economists started bleating about budget deficits and the like. Now, most people didn't take economists seriously on account of the fact that when they all added up the same figures they all got different results — and none of them had ever got the right answer to anything. Then the politicians all got together and began singing the same song about doom and gloom. Those of us who know how the system worked could see the consequences coming a mile off.

Now, just because there was doom and gloom didn't mean that nobody had any money. Doctors and lawyers were pulling in thirty and fifty grand a year. What we used to call executives were in the same league. Every now and then

## Unwinding the bandages

someone bought a race horse for about a million. A whole lot of people lived in big houses in the country that you needed maps to get around — and these were just the houses they used at weekends.

I'll tell you how good the times were for these people: when Patrick Gallagher, the property speculator went broke — went *broke*, mind you — the court directed that the receiver should give him £500 a week in *living expenses*. And his brother was to get another £500 a week. This is the kind of coinage these people dealt in when they went *broke*.

So you can see there was a fair amount of slack in the economy. But what was the first cut announced? They cut down on the things you could get free on the medical card. Things like aspirin and bandages. It made no difference when Willie Bermingham of *Alone* pointed out that a lot of old people needed bandages for the ulcers on their legs and couldn't afford to buy them.

When it was pointed out that the high cost of these items on a medical card was because the doctors and chemists were ripping off pounds on items that cost pence — well, one would imagine, say today's kids, that the priority would have been stopping the rip-off by the doctors and chemists.

The kids of today find it staggering and unimaginable that back in 1982 the *first thing* capitalism did to try to deal with its economic problems was unwind the bandages from the ulcerated legs of old age pensioners.

But, like I say, today's kids are a bit innocent. Those of us who lived under capitalism know that that kind of thing was par for the course.

And it got worse. The way capitalism saw it — if it didn't pay, close it down or put a hefty price tag

on it. Let me tell you young folks about my mate Joey Larkin.

\*\*\*

Joey Larkin didn't really understand how severe the public spending cuts had become until the night his house went on fire. That was in the early hours of June 14 — about two hours after the Fire Brigades Fiscal Rectitude (Temporary Provisions) Act of 1985 came into force.

The fire officer jumped down from the tender and waved a clip board. "One hose or two?"

"What?"

"One hose or two?"

"For Christ sake, my house is burning down!" Joey had come home from the late shift to find the house ablaze and his family crouched on the roof.

"Sorry, mate. Regulations. It's all down here", said the fire officer. He waved the clip board. "One hose, ten quid. Two hoses, twenty quid. And we have a Special Offer — five hoses at the knock-down price of forty pounds."

"Oh, Jesus, what is this? Can't you just . . . ?"

"Sorry mate, don't agree with it meself, but the government is cracking down on this squadermania attitude. You want something, you pay for it."

"Look, just put the fire out, I'll take the Special Offer, anything, I don't care, just . . ."

"That's fine. One Special Offer", he marked the clip board, "Forty quid. And the first ten gallons of water are free, we'll invoice you for anything above that."

"Hurry, for God's sake!"

"Ladders?"

"Huh?"

"You want we should use ladders? Looks to me like a three-ladder job."

"Jesus!"

"One ladder, seven pounds, fifty pence. Two ladders, fifteen . . ."

"Yes, yes! Anything! Just save my wife and kids!"

"Rescue job, is it?" The fire officer flicked through the papers on his clip board. "Ah, yes, here's the rescue rates. One spouse — come to think of it, you couldn't have more than one spouse, could you? That'd be bigamy. Funny the way they put these things."

"Please hurry!"

"One spouse, twenty-five pounds, right?" He scratched his nose with his pen. "Suppose they put it like that in case we come across any arabs or something. Y'know, a harem. That way it'd be twenty-five quid a go for each spouse. You're not an arab, are you? Anyway, let's see — one spouse twenty-five quid. All others rescued, twenty quid a head. How many kid did you say?"

"Four, four, four, hurry!"

"Of course, there's a ten percent discount for kids. The socialists in the Dáil insisted on pushing through that amendment before they'd vote for the Bill. So that's . . . let's see . . ."

Joey was kneeling on the ground and banging his forehead off the pavement.

"That's £159.50 plus thirty per cent VAT . . . mmmmm . . . carry the one . . . that's £207.35."

"Help", whispered Joey, "help them."

"Mind you, it's very smokey up there. We should take breathing apparatus just to be on the save side. Say two units, thirty quid. And VAT . . . £246.35 total."

"Aw, please save . . ."

"And ten percent service charge. £270.98. Tell you what I'll do, since it's a new scheme, and the government needs the word of mouth advertising, let's call it an even £270 right?"

"Oh, God . . ."

"I'll take a cheque, credit card, or cash, please yourself."

"My money's inside — burning!"

The fire officer turned to his driver. "Okay, Mick, under the new regulations this goes down as a false alarm. Let's go. Sorry mate, it's more than my job's worth."

Just then the roof began to collapse and Mary and the kids jumped, making it just in time. Joey stood there, stunned, and looked at the two broken legs, three broken arms and four cases of shock which his wife and kids shared. Just then an ambulance pulled up.

"How's she cuttin', chief?", said the driver to Joey. "Right, there's four quid on the meter so far, and . . ."



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