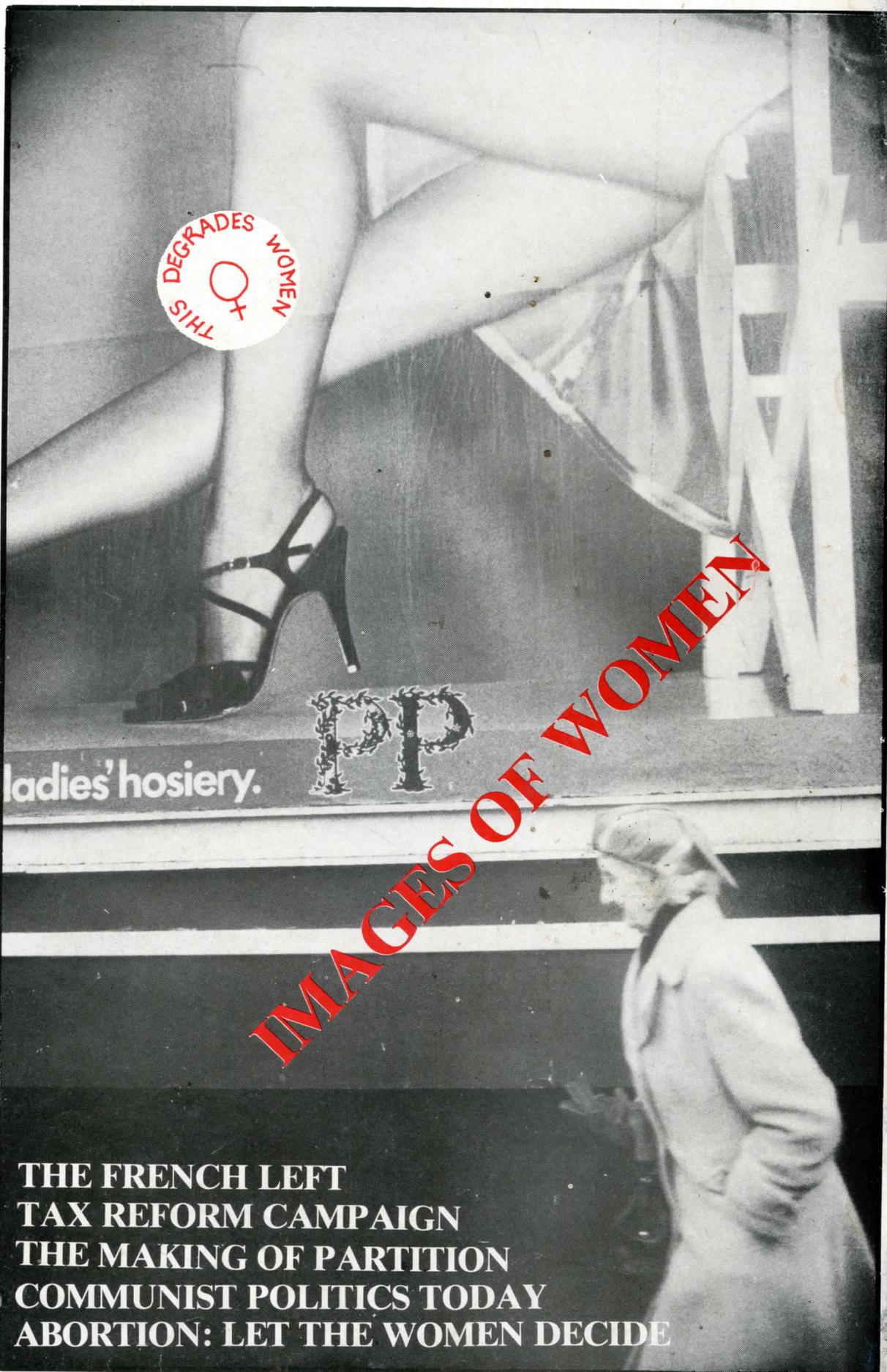


JUNE/JULY 1983

GERAITTON



ladies' hosiery.

PP

IMAGES OF WOMEN

THE FRENCH LEFT
 TAX REFORM CAMPAIGN
 THE MAKING OF PARTITION
 COMMUNIST POLITICS TODAY
 ABORTION: LET THE WOMEN DECIDE

PEOPLE'S MARCH '83

STEADY PROGRESS

If you are to believe the half dozen or so veterans who have now completed two Peoples' Marches For Decent Jobs, there can be no doubt; this year's was far better than 1982. There are a number of reasons.

First, the spirit, the militancy was higher this time round. The South Eastern Health Board in Kilkenny and Manpower in Dublin were occupied this year — direct action tactics we somehow didn't feel quite confident enough to undertake in 1982. Second, this time we got a little closer to our primary audience: workers, with visits to factories like Waterford Glass, the Sugar Company, Rowntree and Datsun — not to mention direct solidarity with those on the jobs front-line in Ranks and Telectron. Third, it was all probably better organised, more efficient. Though conducted on a shoe-string budget (there is apparently £1,000 available per marcher on this year's, TUC-sponsored British Peoples' March!), things nevertheless happen and the marchers have a good time — and why the hell not?

None of this, of course, adds up to taking Ireland by storm. Media coverage this year was, if anything, down on last year — maybe the novelty has worn off. Officially trade union support remains difficult to harness, especially at a time when tax reform seems a more immediate issue. Support was, though, up on last year and with the welcome addition of important trades councils like Dublin, Cork and Limerick — surely a sign that many trade union activities are at last beginning to realise that a united, employed and unemployed, fightback is becoming increasingly important. Finally, yet again the great mass of the unemployed themselves managed to avoid the march in droves. Resistance on the dole queues is still a minority pursuit.

Yet, does all this depress the Peoples' Marchers? Is the fledgling unemployed movement doomed? Not at all. Seriously, no unemployed activist even dreams of taking Ireland by storm — this year! We are engaged in the most difficult, and yet one of the most important, tasks facing the labour movement

— organising opposition to unemployment, the ugliest face of capitalism today and yet, *in practice*, the most accepted face. The task is gigantic, we count our progress in inches.

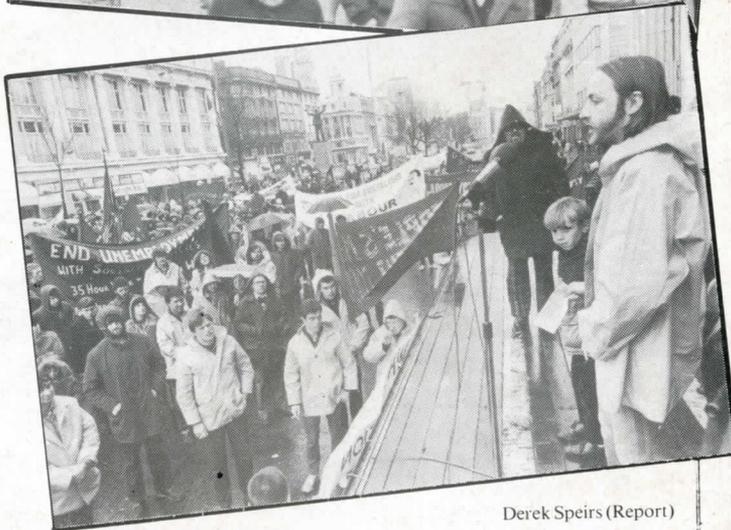
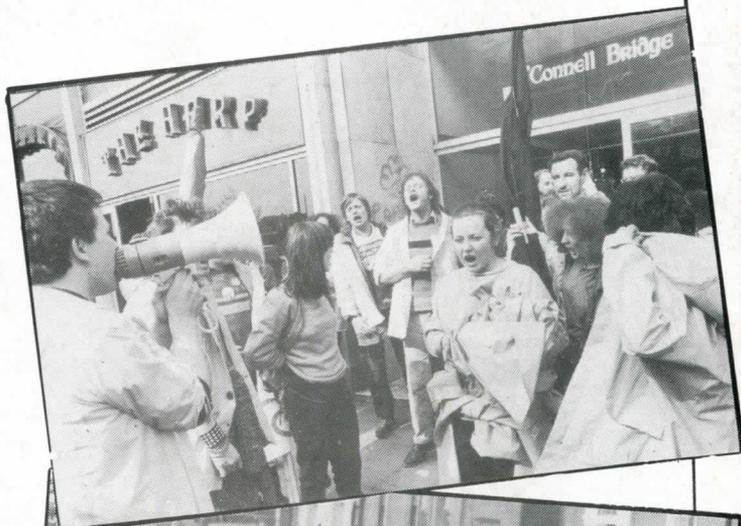
And progress there undoubtedly is. The wider trade union support for this year's march. The recent spate of opposition to closures in Ranks, Kingdom Tubes, Carrigline etc. Moves by workers on the Dublin docks and in the construction industry to take industrial action on the jobs issue and, last but not least, the slow but steady growth of Unemployed Action Groups around the country.

At the time of the 1982 Peoples' March there were groups established in Dublin, Waterford and Dungan and beginnings in North Kilkenny, Newbridge and Monaghan. Today we can add established groups in Cork, Sligo and Finglas, Drumcondra and the Liberties in Dublin plus beginnings in Carlow, Limerick and Dundalk. Add these to the seven or eight groups operating in the North and something approaching a movement begins to emerge.

Up to now, the Peoples' Marchers have really been the only occasions when the different groups have got together in joint activity. This is changing. With the established of a regular newsletter and meetings, more national protest activities are envisaged, the first being a lobby of the ICTU Annual Conference in Galway in July. Meanwhile, local groups are pressing ahead with plans for local unemployed papers, unemployed centres and joint trade union-unemployed committees.

This is really why those Peoples' March veterans believe this year's march was better than last year's. Not just because the march itself achieved more but because it reflects an undramatic but real growth of an unemployed movement in Ireland. **If you wish to help speed that growth then contact the Unemployed Action Group in your area or write to: Dublin Unemployed Action Group, c/o ATGWU, 112 Marlboro St., Dublin 1.**

JOHN CANE



Derek Speirs (Report)

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dermot Boucher ● *Paul Brennan* ● *John Cane* ● *Mary Cummins* ● *Des Derwin* ● *John Goodwillie* ● *Nora Hamill* ● *Jeff Kallen* ● *Molly Kallen*
● *Tom O'Connor* ● *Brian Trench*.

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.

GRALTON

An Irish Socialist Review

No. 8 June/July 1983

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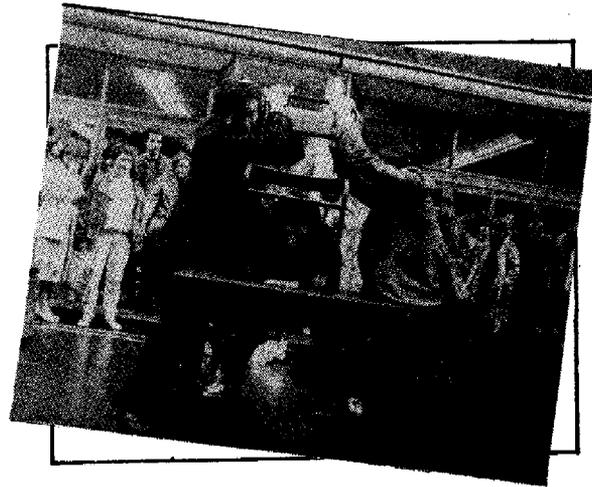
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Nicky Kelly Street Theatre (photos: John Hamill)

Cover photograph courtesy of the Grapevine Arts Centre, Dublin.



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THE SHOP STEWARDS AND THE NEW TAX CAMPAIGN

The long Winger of Austerity continues but, in early May, there arose in the working-class movement a veritable profusion of resistance. Not exactly a fight back, more a widespread declaration of "enough is enough". Tax reform was a major element. In this article DES DERWIN, a member of the Dublin Shop Stewards PAYE Committee, traces the development of the second great tax campaign.

On May 15th, the *Sunday Independent* warned of a coming "week of chaos". Ministers Kavanagh and Bruton did, indeed, have plenty of things to worry about — and denounce. Besides the tax stoppages on the Monday, strikes on pay beginning in Carrolls in Dundalk and the ESB, on official all-union mass meeting had been held in Dublin Airport on pay, Dublin dockers were escalating their strike on manning levels to take in the whole port, Dublin Gas unions announced a strike for Friday, the building unions announced a national day of action for June 10th over unemployment and taxation and the ITGWU had just rejected a Labour Court pay offer which the employers had already turned down as too high. Much of this action was averted by conciliation, but the tax issue rumbled on as it had done for four years.

There was of course another wave at work, that of closures. Early May also produced 'Black Thursday', May 6th, on which almost 1,000 people were made redundant in Telectron, Black and Decker and three other workplaces. Job losses and unemployment have been big factors in the quietness of the current wage round. However, while there was no general movement to defend jobs, there were significant developments. At last the sit-in tactic against closures had taken root with four simultaneous occupations after the Government's agreement to finally buy Clondalkin Paper Mills. The Limerick Ranks workers occupied and their Dublin brothers upped their aim from cash to jobs and began to contact the other sit-ins. (see elsewhere in this issue).

There was a lot happening. Parents and children were protesting against debarment from school busses and even the farmers seemed to be part of the new militancy with the Dundalk Spud Party. But one strand has special significance — the tax stoppages that spread from Waterford. While there was no generalised movement on pay, and less so on jobs, the new tax movement was being

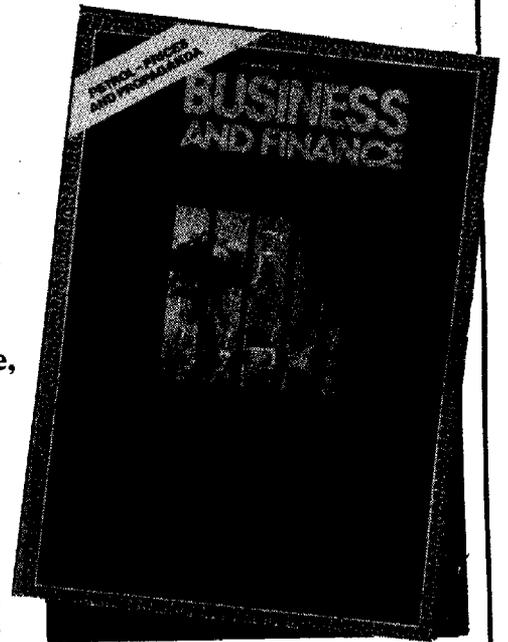
built — and built from below.

On Monday 16th May the Grand Old Duke's men (and women) stopped marching and began what was aimed to be a series of weekly one-day stoppages for tax reform. The trade union leaders having once again failed to take forward the tax campaign, the new phase was initiated from the Waterford shop stewards and taken up by shop stewards in Dublin and other centres. In the process of Waterford stewards visiting stewards in other towns and workplaces, and of local shop stewards committees being set up and canvassing their own area — a spontaneous shop stewards movement was set in motion. As a result the union leaders were pushed into adopting positive positions they had hitherto avoided.

In addition to this movement, of course, the word was coming up from within the union branches that occasional half-day stoppages and marches were not enough. The tax issue has resulted in the most substantial dissidence within the ITGWU in recent times, with 2,000 Waterford members going their own way, reports of large disaffection in Co. Wexford and open criticism of leadership tactics from the Dublin No. 2 Branch.

Whatever the outcome on tax, the stewards' organising work has set up links between shop stewards, across unions and at shop-floor level, that will have lasting results beyond the immediate issue. *Business and Finance* magazine referred to "the monster that has developed on the back of the tax protest at Waterford Glass" (19/5/83).

The February Budget increased the PAYE burden and brought tax equity no nearer. In January the Dublin Council of Trade Unions had turned down a resolution for action on the impending Budget in favour of an ITGWU call for a national campaign of demonstrations sometime later. The Dublin Trades Council decided to leave the organisational details to the ICTU.



Business and Finance discovers Reds under the beds.

And there they might have been left, except for a train of events which began with a letter from the ATGWU's District Secretary Matt Merrigan, in the second week of March, which suggested the tax withholding tactic. It was sent to all ATGWU branches and by March 22nd the Waterford Glass members had voted for the withholding to begin on 7th April. For two weeks wages were paid without tax and PRSI deductions, and for a while this action looked like spreading.

The establishment reacted with an alarm unknown before in the tax campaign. There was a closing of ranks: Fine Gael Ministers, Labour Ministers, Charles Haughey, the FUE, Archbishop Ryan, all strongly opposed the Waterford action. They were joined in this by John Carroll of the ITGWU and Des Brannigan, ex-advisor to the ICTU.

However, the tactic didn't spread because wages clerks elsewhere weren't as well organised or as close to the production workers. There was also some fear among workers of getting into debt or of somehow depriving the unemployed and the poor of welfare payments. Trade unionists throughout the country cheered on the Waterford workers, but from the helpless sidelines. But the Waterford lead had already begun to produce effects.

On March 28th, the ITGWU called a half-day work stoppage for April 13th on unemployment and taxation. On March 30th the ICTU wrote a letter to trades councils asking support for the ICTU tax campaign in "whatever manner is considered appropriate". It was widely recognised, not at least in Waterford, that April 13th was a substitute measure to head off the Waterford initiative in case it spread. But even the substitute had

to be militant (compared with the tactic in March 1979 when a march was called on a Sunday morning).

On the day April 13th was announced, "2,000 ITGWU members in Waterford rejected the national half-day strike as futile and decided to back the protest tactic initiated by Waterford Glass" (*Irish Times*, 31/3/83). The next day the Dublin No. 2 Branch gave only conditioned support to April 13th, calling for a programme of further protest action from the Union's executive. The Dublin Trade Council had backed the April 13th stoppage "as a first step in a sustained campaign of protest at the increased taxation of PAYE workers." (*Irish Times*, 6/4/83).

All over union members demanded a follow up to April 13th and many only came out reluctantly. Members were assured that there would be a follow up. At the Dublin rally after the march (which was big enough to show the vitality of the issue, but smaller than the 1979/80 marches), the loudest cheers were kept for Matt Merrigan's suggestion for a follow-up: "We need rolling stoppages, leading up to an indefinite strike." Waterford did not march on April 13th, holding its own action on April 20th.

Waterford Glass management dealt the final blow to the withholding tactic when on April 15th, after two weeks, they announced their refusal to pay out any longer without the tax deductions. On April 19th, the Waterford Glass workers opted for a series of two-day a week stoppages beginning on May 2nd. They were joined in one-day weekly stoppages by Waterford Engineering, ACEC, Cherry's Brewery, Norco, Hadensa, Robey Sports, Dungarvan Crystal, Ciba Geigy, O'Neill's, and J. Hearne Builders. In all 35 different firms have been involved in the Waterford stoppages at some stage.

Phase Two of the tax campaign had begun. The newly-elected Waterford Shop Stewards PAYE Committee set out the following demands:

- (i) immediate indexation of Tax Bands and allowances to take account of inflation over the last couple of years.
- (ii) to bring forward increases in Social Welfare Benefits to April 1st of this year.
- (iii) a reduction in the unjustifiable increases of PRSI income charges, and the abolition of the 1% temporary levy.
- (iv) the collection of the outstanding taxes and the introduction of an equitable tax system.

Any follow-up at leadership level to April 13th was postponed until the publication of the Finance Bill. The ICTU described it as "encouraging", submitted 41 amendments to the government and announced *their* follow-up: the tax campaign should now enter a

political phase. Not sustained political strikes mind you, but lobbying T.D.s and voting differently. And for which politicians? They didn't say. But since the major unions are affiliated to the Labour Party, they could only mean "vote Labour". The same Labour Party which had jointly enacted the PAYE/PRSI increases!

After two weeks, it began to look like the Waterford weekly stoppages would not spread throughout the country. Waterford was in danger of being isolated and the stewards faced the demoralisation and crumbling of their members. If the mountain . . . On April 26th the Waterford stewards called a meeting of Dublin shop stewards in St. Anthony's Hall, Dublin. The response was heart-warming.

The message from the 18 Waterford stewards who sat on the stage to the 100 or so Dublin stewards and trade unionists who attended, despite the minimal preparation, was simple. Marching was over; the national union leaders have let us down; The Dublin Trades Council have let us down. Waterford has been out for two weeks in a row, the movement must either spread now outside of Waterford or die there of a broken heart — and the hope of tax equity with it.

A resolution was passed designating Monday 16th May as the first of a series of weekly stoppages in Dublin, and wherever else possible. May 16th was designed to test the water and after that the stewards would monitor the situation. Everyone realised their work was cut out. Several stewards gave their best wishes and regretted that their place would not be out on the 16th. The recession's ravages and, in some cases, preoccupation with the wage round, were clearly limiting factors.

The follow-up meeting on 4th May elected a Dublin Shop Stewards' PAYE

Committee and heard reports of potential in a dozen workplaces, but firm commitments from less than half those. Meetings of Waterford shop stewards were planned with committees in several Dublin industries. It was the initiative of the Waterford shop stewards in actually visiting other stewards which was to produce firm hopes for stoppages in ten workplaces. Delegations from Waterford met stewards in Finglas, the oil industry and the ESB and also addressed a meeting of stewards from the Shannon, Limerick city and county area, seeking support for the 16th. Southern Chemicals of Askeaton, who had been refusing their tax-deducted pay for some weeks, decided to drop this in favour of weekly stoppages.

A major development came on 6th May when the ITGWU criticised the Finance Bill in stronger terms than the ICTU and launched a four-pronged campaign for tax changes: TDs would be lobbied; informational leaflets would be distributed; amendments would be tabled to the Bill through dissident Labour TD, Michael Bell, (which substantially incorporated the demands of Waterford) and, most importantly, the ITGWU supported "the principle of on-going protest action by members of the Union through selected work stoppages and other forms of industrial protest . . . be it for a half-day or a whole day, for one week or every week . . . to be decided by the members themselves in their respective employments through the ballot box." Although an absence of more positive leadership was regretted, this was, more or less what the shop stewards committees were working for themselves. The possibilities of much wider action, under the auspices of the biggest union, were opened up.

No-one associated with the shop



Mat Merrigan calls for indefinite strikes

stewards committees wanted two separate campaigns. However, Monday 16th, and the stewards groupings behind it, were on already on the roll. The ITGWU launch was seen as a response to this push. Besides, the feelings for unity were not shared from the other quarter. At the Dublin Council of Trade Unions on Tuesday 10th, an emergency resolution from the ATGWU, seeking Council support for the 16th, was not supported by the FWUI or the ITGWU and went down. An official circular in at least one Dublin ITGWU Branch stated that "normal work is to continue" on the 16th.

The turn-out in Dublin on the Monday surpassed the Committees highest hopes. There were stoppages at: Aer Lingus, Packard Electric, Rowntree-Mackintosh, Datsun, Unidare, CIE Inchicore and Phibsborough, seven oil companies, Tayto, CDL, Dublin Corporation (engineering), Tesco and Pickering Lifts. An estimated 3,000 workers were involved in Dublin. In Waterford 18 firms and 6,000 workers were out, and three firms in the Limerick area.

The Dublin stewards, with Waterford representatives present, met on Wednesday 18th and Sunday 22nd to review the position and plan ahead. The feed-back from the jobs was that many members did not share the organising stewards' sense of success — enough to question the wisdom of proceeding on the following Monday. But the 16th was only ever seen as a small beginning and, on the other hand, it had already done its job to some extent. The ITGWU had launched its campaign. Then, on Tuesday 17th May, the Executive of the Dublin Trades Council called for a lobby on the Dáil, by shop stewards, union representatives and members, for the following Tuesday, in support of the Bell amendments. If these failed they would call a Dublin stoppage on June 17th.

The stewards decided to reinforce the Trades Council action by switching the stoppages of those workplaces which still planned to come out, from Monday to Tuesday, and to call on all stewards and reps to attend the lobby. They also called for 17th June to be made a full 24-hour stoppage with on-going action after that until the tax demands were met. The Waterford stewards declared this to be ideal, and wondered if the campaign was not shifting into a new gear.

Around 400 workers from Waterford and Dungarvan took a specially-hired train to Dublin for the lobby on the 24th. They clocked up another first by staging an unusually powerful demonstration outside Leinster House, preventing some TDs entering — much to their outrage. They were joined by Dublin Airport and Askeaton workers and officers of the



Shop stewards crowd the ATGWU

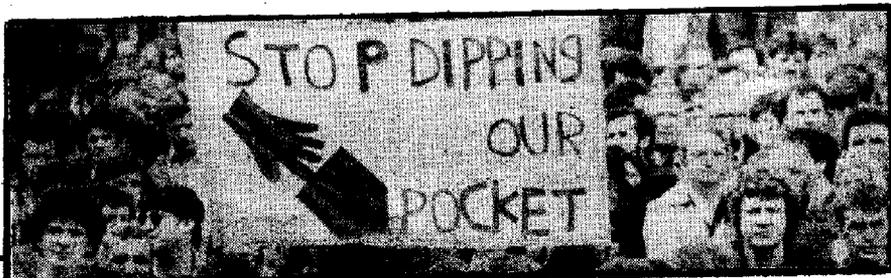
Dublin Trades Council spoke from the shop stewards platform. Nevertheless, the turnout from Dublin disappointed the Waterford people. It was becoming obvious that the second phase of the campaign was running out of steam.

Both in Waterford and Dublin, it was decided by the shop stewards to discontinue the weekly stoppages and concentrate resources on the proposed Dublin Trades Council stoppage on June 17th. A meeting of shop stewards from 34 branches of the ATGWU on Thursday 26th of May, summed up the new endeavour when they decided that: "the next phase in the campaign should be devoted to building support among the unions and the various trades councils for a 24 hour stoppage on June 17th and for repeat strikes on a monthly basis until the demands for reform of the tax system are met." (Irish Times 27-5-83). At the time of going to press, the only other planned action is a ballot of ITGWU Dublin NO. 14 Branch members for a stoppage on June 24th.

Much depends on what happens on June 17th. On paper, it would seem that the Dublin Trades Council has adopted pretty much the strategy that the Waterford and Dublin shop stewards were pressing on the official movement. However, amongst shop stewards involved, it is generally felt that if June 17th is not a full-blooded 24 hour day of action, but merely another march, then the second great tax campaign would be virtually over.

Waterford Glass and the shop stewards campaign has undoubtedly rattled the bosses. *Business and Finance* magazine devoted its cover story (19/5/83) to a scurrilous, vicious, lying attack on the Glass stewards, with Russian 'thugs' and all thrown in. It was followed by a saner and more accurate examination of the far left's influence in industry. But the same issue could echo the government's resolute confidence by declaring the tax campaign to be "a futile attempt to change the tax system. The tax system will not be changed until the country can afford it." That is what the trade union movement faces. Only sustained industrial and political action that really bites can shift them.

At the various meetings of stewards there have been occasional references to the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee of 1972. Since then there have been other waves of shop stewards organisation: the H-Block strikes in 1981, the small Ranks Co-ordinating Committee, a conscious attempt to establish a shop stewards movement in April 1980. The present stewards tax campaign comes nearer to the movement spawned by the DSSC in '72. It is less conscious of itself, more spontaneous, but as co-ordinated and geographically extended, if not more so. It's certainly more powerful being based on workplace representation and built on industrial struggle and tax strikes. The basis is now there for a national conference of shop stewards.



THE RANKS MANIFESTO

The Dublin Ranks workers have fought with great determination and militancy. In addition they have brought their struggle out to, and identified it with the tax marches and stoppages, the Telectron workers, the Limerick Ranks workers, the Peoples' March for Decent Jobs, and even the Nicky Kelly campaign. The document reprinted below, which was produced by the Action Committee of Ranks Dublin, is remarkable for two things. Firstly, for its breadth of interest and political awareness. What other group of workers in struggle has produced such a manifesto here in recent times? Secondly, for the fact that the Dublin Ranks workers brought it round the other occupations. It has been endorsed by Clondalkin Paper Mills, Kingdom Tubes, Carraigaline Pottery, and Ranks Limerick. At time of going to press they were awaiting word back from the Snia workers in Sligo. Such a document deserves the widest possible circulation. *Gratton* is pleased to help.

FELLOW WORKERS,

An Taoiseach, Mr FitzGerald, made a statement that the escalation of industrial action by the workforce in response to the imprisonment of some of their number was industrial suicide. This statement was made in the wake of a report claiming that our country's exports are at their lowest for some considerable time while our imports are at an unprecedented level. We will no doubt make a similar claim when workers again mobilise in response to increased taxation and cuts in social welfare payments.

We call on the Government to discontinue their policy of industrial and economic suicide, whereby:

1) They allow multi-national consortiums to pull out, having bled what they could from our economy and casting hundreds of thousands of Irish workers onto the dole. This happens after these companies have received massive profits augmented by large tax grants from the state including a mere 10% corporation tax which is offset by depreciation of plant and other devices and after having received free usage of our society's resources such as roads, education, health, telecommunications and security. Large EEC grants coupled with the taxes which we pay the state are used to pay for improvements of our infrastructure. Since these are necessary for industry, it is industry that should pay the costs or at least its share.

2) They allow these foreign consortiums to continue to exploit the Irish market at the expense of our own home produce thereby increasing unemployment even further.

3) They allow Ireland to become the dumping ground for foreign countries including almost every other member of the EEC and

become the lap-dog of Britain and France. This is another death knell for employment in this country.

The course which successive Governments of this country have chosen to take is one of bankruptcy and fear to stand up to international big business for our rights as a sovereign state. The spectre of defaulting to the international bankers who have our economy in a stranglehold looms over our monetarist Governments and spurs them on to inflict even harsher measures against the workers who are already overburdened.

Unemployment in Ireland has reached a critical level, creating a nation of frustrated and disillusioned youth and dejected, almost defeated workers, many of whom are barely above the poverty level due to inflated prices, decreased spending power and heavier tax burdens. PAYE has been massively increased by the simple device of refusing to index tax bands and allowances as inflation raged. The workforce is being diminished and the dole queues grow. The IDA, SFADCO, Udaras na Gaeltachta, ICC, Foir Teo, IIRS, AnCO and the useless Manpower Service represent a ridiculous attempt by the Irish authorities to stem the swelling tide of unemployment and deprivation.

What can Mr FitzGerald's 'Belt tightening' achieve when already the whole of the income tax revenue, of which PAYE represents 87%, is used purely to pay the interest of our foreign borrowing.

It is time to call a halt. We call on the Government to cease making extravagant grants to foreign national and multinational companies. We call for all companies operating in this country to have to pay in tax contribution for the services our society provides for them and that the ridiculous

10% corporation tax be scrapped in favour of a realistic figure at least in the region of 40%.

We call for the use of the law against companies who indulge in fraudulent activities such as withholding the PRSI contributions of workers from the Exchequer — these abuses are passed off with a shrug whilst the full might of the law is activated against those workers who stand and fight against the gross injustices perpetrated upon them by these companies, and meanwhile the official trade union movement stands idly by and declares its innocence and inability to help. Let them stand solidly behind the struggle of employed and unemployed workers or give up the pretence and proclaim themselves as civil servants acting in the interests of the state authorities who themselves bow to big business rather than the will of the people.

We call for the scrapping of the pathetic State Act which sets a minimum redundancy payment of a half week pay per year for workers with under 40 years service of 1 week for those over 40 years and for the enforcement of a minimal figure of at least ten times that amount. This should only be used when every other venue to secure those jobs have been exhausted. Also companies should be forced to pay the full amount of redundancy money from their own coffers and stop wasting taxpayers money through the State refunding to the company 60% of what it has paid to its redundant workers. Under the State Act we are paying our own redundancy compensation in effect.

Finally, we call on the Government to enforce liquidation upon firms who claim they cannot continue operations or live up to

their financial and moral commitments to their workforce and nationalise those companies or arrange for an alternative body to take over its operations. Even if these companies do not make a profit (while the vast majority are capable of doing so), they would provide solid necessary employment and save the country millions of pounds by virtue of the fact that they would be making a contribution to our economy rather than having thousands more workers being forced to live off it.

It would be far more beneficial for all, indeed it is imperative, that the Government concentrates its energies on maintaining present employment levels and attempting to increase on those levels, rather than indulge in artificial and pretentious AnCO schemes with a constant stream of temporary workers providing cheap labour for firms in an already glutted labour market. Schemes whereby the state pays employers to employ workers and ridiculous signs in Manpower centres advertising jobs with less than half the take home pay of those who are unemployed — it is a joke.

It is time the state gave consideration to helping its citizens and providing proper leadership, rather than exploiting them in every way they know how.

Nationalise Industry and save jobs.

We call on all workers, employed and unemployed, to stand together and let their voice be heard. To protest and demonstrate at every opportunity against this oppression by the state — there is no other word for it. And we would say to the whole official trade union bureaucracy, if you won't stand behind your membership, don't stand in their way.

Nationalise Industry — Now!

Signed: Alan Trimble, Dermot O'Donnell and Harry Fleming. Action Committee of Ranks Dublin.

February 14. I hear there will be a strike. FWUI No. 1 Branch will strike over a parity claim with Corporation workers. Rumours of strikes are common at Trinity, and never amount to much.

February 16. Academic staff meeting. Several people say that College can't operate if the strike goes ahead. The strike involves cleaning staff, security staff, and a number of general workers. Some faculty members surprise me by saying that since normal safety and cleaning procedures won't operate, they won't come in if the strike goes ahead.

We get a memo from the Board. It says that everything will go ahead regardless of the strike. The head of the Department asks me to read the memo to the students. I do. We discuss it. Students are totally unaware of why the strike is occurring, or how it will affect them.

February 17. Meeting with two colleagues from other departments. We don't know what our position is if the strike goes ahead. Our union (the Irish Federation of University Teachers) knows nothing about it. Trade union rules allow us to pass the pickets and do our jobs, since it isn't an all-out picket. We're not sure that will be good enough. We don't see how we can do our jobs without doing someone else's at the same time. If a scab unlocks the door in the morning and you enter the door,

February 21. The strike started at midnight. The monitoring committee couldn't reach an agreement. The question is, does the union have parity with Corporation workers such that it is entitled to the same rise the Corporation workers get automatically, or do they have to file a special claim, which is barred by the wage freeze.

Rumour has it that the FWUI wants us to carry on as usual, knowing that we can't. College seems to undervalue the workers' importance, and shows no signs that it will do anything to prevent things grinding to a halt. College could close in four days.

I arrive at work. A new memo from the Board. It tells you not only that everything will go on as usual, but where to get cleaning supplies, where to bring rubbish bags, and other ways in which we can help provide normal services. They have set up an 'emergency committee.' They make it sound like an act of God, not of government and college. The message is clear: the implied policy of letting things grind to a halt, which they so liberally led us to believe would happen, is finished.

I meet a colleague. We cannot take this situation. How many others are there like us? Where is our union? It is only Day One.

February 22. Further meetings in a nearby pub. There seem to be seven of us not doing business as usual. There

CLASS WAR COMES TO TRINITY COLLEGE

Reuben Henskeagh

are you not scabbing yourself?

February 18. IFUT meeting. Leadership stresses again and again that we can cross the picket lines and still be in keeping with good trade union practice. One member (who opens doors) wants to know if he should come to work or not. The leadership won't advise him publicly. Neither will the membership. He walks out, saying he quits the union. (Yet he is at a later meeting, claiming to be working hard to 'keep the college open' during the strike. Figure that one out.)

Someone suggests that we support the FWUI by declaring a lockout situation: reporting for work, ascertaining that it isn't possible to work, and going home, claiming salary for the time. No response. Someone else calls this 'middle class trade unionism' and says that you get "a day's pay for a day's work." Therefore we must work. Massive applause. The implication is that striking is basically wrong, a crime to be punished for. The middle class love to be accused of being middle class, and use that as an excuse to do nothing.

In the pub after the meeting, some of us discuss strategy for Monday when the strike is due to start. We agree to go in and see what's happening. Meanwhile, the FWUI and the college are meeting with the monitoring committee for the public sector pay freeze, trying to reach an agreement.

are about 350 other teaching staff. Many of them are already doing the jobs of striking workers; others claim simply to go in, teach, and go out again.

The strike spreads. FWUI No. 15 branch strikes in support. Further unions are coming out. There are 11 different unions at Trinity. We aren't in touch with any of them officially. There is no all-union council, no co-ordination. The seven of us are operating in the dark, but we cannot pretend to do "business as usual."

February 24. The strike intensifies. More working class unions go on strike in support: we look in vain for other teaching staff who reject the scab position. It's true that we are 'allowed' to pass these pickets, and it would be impossible to get our union to go on strike. Taking a strike vote is a cumbersome procedure liable to be only starting by the time this strike ends.

We are told about our 'obligations to the students' from people whom I've never heard talk this way before. Conveniently they seem to discover 'obligations' which will be forgotten as soon as the strike ends.

I held a tutorial in Bewley's yesterday. No nonsense, no problem. The atmosphere was better than in college and the attendance and results were perfectly normal. No dereliction of duty, no support of scabbing. What if everyone did this? Would it undermine the strike? After all, I didn't withdraw my labour. On the other hand, if many of us did this, the college would be furious. Not

because the students would stop learning, but because the administration couldn't stand to have us not under their thumb. They need us where they can control us — simply teaching isn't good enough.

February 25. In town, I run into a colleague 'on the other side who is interested in our position. He tells me there is a move on in IFUT to discipline us for talking to the newspapers (one fellow did), but this is a balancing act to answer the demand to discipline others who are scabbing. About 15 people have quit the union, 'putting college loyalty above trade union loyalty.' If anyone tries to discipline me, I will quit the union.

Later on in the pub some students overhear me talking favourably about the strike. I oppose the college's offer of payment to students to do the jobs of the cleaners. College offered students more money than they give the cleaners (they took out no PAYE or PRSI) to do the job. Word got out to the papers and college claimed to withdraw the offer, but no-one quite believes this. The students get hostile. "Why shouldn't we have the right to make money? The students' union always says we don't have enough money, so why are they trying to stop us making some now?" At this point analysis fails: it's a good thing violence doesn't come easily to me.

speakers, 'I hear that the strike wasn't even voted on democratically. We should tell the strikers that we won't support them unless they follow a democratic procedure.' The general secretary explains that it isn't our business to tell another union how to conduct its affairs, but I don't think everyone is convinced.

Two gems from the meeting: "We shouldn't even have a union. University staff should have an association, but not a union. Unions are bad for the country." "Why are people going on strike when the country is in such a bad position? They should consider themselves lucky that they have jobs at all."

A national officer says some mild words of reproach against those who did the jobs of other workers. He then attacks some of us (he never says who), accusing 'self-seeking publicity seekers' of 'holding court in fashionable cafes' (Bewleys?) and 'thinking this is Paris, 1968.' He sternly reminds us that it is not: "it is an industrial dispute in Dublin, 1983." Massive applause. Evidently, doing someone else's job isn't too bad, because it is only bending trade union rules, but unofficial workers' control of their own labour is a mortal sin in a university trade union in Dublin, 1983.

Finally a vote is taken on support for the all-out picket

A continuing theme in *Gralton's* coverage of education is the class nature of Ireland's educational system. Whether it concerns the question of who gets how much education, what sort of education is offered, who decides educational policy, or how trade unionism affects education, the class structure of society is constantly implicated. There are occasional moments when class conflicts in education come clearly into view — not at the level of abstraction, but in terms of people's actions. The recent strike at Trinity College was one such moment. This strike was an important illustration of who controls knowledge and the power that goes with it, illustrating too the class divisions within the existing trade union structure in Ireland. The following is a diary account of the strike, from an academic staff member's point of view.

March 1. Rumour has it that College saves £50,000 a week by not paying striking workers' wages, and that it would take about £200,000 to settle the thing. So wait about four weeks. An all out picket application has been lodged and will be decided on in the ICTU on Thursday. Our union meets Wednesday to make a decision. The seven of us have no idea what's going on inside, but we know there will be no support for the all-out picket.

We still find no support for our position. We are not on strike (an official strike is impossible and an unofficial one by seven people is of doubtful value) but we are not going in as usual. As individuals we continue to work, setting exam papers or marking essays at home, hiring rooms near college for lectures, etc. Other IFUT members think this stand is illogical, many students do too, college says nothing, but the striking workers that I know understand perfectly. University lecturers (including some supposedly 'left' ones) seem incapable of grasping the obvious, and get bogged down in the inertia of their own conformity.

March 2. Most of us cross over to attend the union meeting. We hope to get some support for the FWUI, if for no other reason than strikebreaking by IFUT members has made opposition to the 'all-out' request untenable in trade union terms. As the meeting starts, I descend from cloud cuckoo land. Says one of the first

request. Eight in favour, a sea of hands (roughly 200) opposed.

March 3. The all-out picket application is to be heard. IFUT raises some technical objections to the number of people on the ICTU committee and the application is postponed until next week.

March 5. The strike has been settled. The college has evidently offered the union what is asked for, though it is unclear how they found the money. It's a great feeling of victory: the workers have taken on the college and won.

March 18. Pay day. Seven of the academic staff (as far as I know) have had their month's pay cut in half with no word of explanation. We didn't strike and we didn't tell any college administrators anything about our activities. Who did? What did they say? Will our union back us up?

March 22. Since only seven of us acted 'abnormally', the union leadership (which doesn't include any of us) can't understand what we did and may not want to support us. Evidently, taking a principled stand which contains an inconsistency is worse than taking a consistent anti-strike position. We may get some union support on certain legal issues, however.

April 28. A lot of letters have come and gone between the administration, us, and the union. No-one in college will take ultimate responsibility for their action and college won't budge an inch: though what we did doesn't

violate our contract at all, *they* set the rules and *they* take away our salary. An administrator tells me, "Let's face it, Reuben, strikes are bad. They hurt people. This college can't be seen to support strikes." So much for all the legalisms and contract mumbo-jumbo.

In fact the deductions are simple harassment: you academics can't act like academics (who have always been able to control the manner of their teaching) *and* like the working class (who go on strike and 'hurt people'). If you try to use the power we gave you to ends other than our own, you're in deep trouble.

May 15. The conflict is still continuing. College officials have offered to meet with each of us individually to ascertain whether or not they have deducted the right number of days from our cheques — some offer. Anyone naive enough to take it up at this point is too foolish to work in a University. The union, however, appears to be taking up our case. If we can't get an internal solution, we will trust to the courts, those bastions of freedom and justice for the working person . . .

When all is said and done . . .

In 1905 the International Workers of the World (the Wobblies) declared: "*The working class and the employing class have nothing in common . . . Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.*" The entire strategy of Irish (and most Western) trade unionism seems oriented to defy that

maxim: to create a partnership between labour and capital that supposedly operates for the good of both.

But look at what happened in this strike: eleven unions went in different directions with no communication amongst them; existing ICTU regulations in this case nearly invited scabbing; and a group of powerful members of society were organised into a union which could not be brought to support a fraternal union in the same institution.

Swallowing the myth of the middle class, academic in (and out of) the union saw themselves suddenly as managers and took over 'managerial' responsibility: about 40 new Assistants to the Junior Dean were appointed in one day. Yet as the treatment dealt to the seven 'deviants' clearly showed, most academics are *not* managers in reality — they are only allowed play the game of being managers when it suits the real managers to have other people do their bidding.

The same principle applies to the entire working middle class and, for that matter, to the established trade unions. Any suggestion that real power has been obtained by signing a contract or getting a degree of relative freedom, more money, a supposed 'tax concession,' etc., is still illusory. For most academic workers, as with others, it is still the case that "the class that owns the machines does not work them and the class that works the machines does not own them." Until this situation is changed radically, education will remain the preserve of a self-perpetuating elite.

At 8pm, when last month's concert For Nicky Kelly in the SFX Centre, Dublin, was due to start, there was a long queue outside. The Limerick reggae band The Outfit was playing before they had all got in. The sound was right, the lights were good and the banner behind the stage was clear. This was obviously going to be a political benefit with a difference.

This kind of event is fraught with dangers and difficulties. How do you marry speeches, slogans, music and poems? How do you make sure the music doesn't jar with the political message? How do you mix celebration and solemnity?

The problems in this instance should have been greater than usual. Nicky Kelly had started his hunger strike, pleading his innocence of the train robbery charges and demanding his release, just two days earlier. The support campaign has been fully stretched to maintain some presence in the political arena, running at a constant sprint in order to convince Nicky Kelly that something can still be done for him on the outside.

The Concert For Nicky Kelly was mainly the work of the bands. Materially, it meant little. Morally and politically, it was an undoubted success. It would have been impossible to leave the hall that night without having been moved to consider Kelly's case more carefully. The mix of emotions —

frustration at not being able to do more, satisfaction at the power of the music, anger at the political mush of some of the lyrics and speeches, pleasure at the organisational cohesion of the event — was nearly over-whelming. The Outfit has recorded a single, "El Salvador" — a reggae song touching on what must be the safest radical issue in Ireland today. But the very fact of them naming a country which is the target of Reagan's "stabilisation" policies and singing about it in terms of "Salvador blues" identifies them in some way as a "political band".

They would admit themselves that the Concert For Nicky Kelly provided them with a rare and welcome platform in Dublin. Ger Costello, the singer-songwriter in the band, has been plugging away for quite a few years with other bands in Limerick. Now he and his mates have hit on a style and a lineup which gives them a fighting chance of making it in the big smoke. They deserve to, even if the emblems of political and social awareness in the songs are rather

crude and the reggae effect has been filtered through the Two-Tone approach.

The set was just long enough for them to establish themselves clearly in the audience's mind, and rouse them to listen keenly to what followed. By the time they had finished, the people had stopped coming in, but then came the next great snag of political benefit do's, the compere who makes a speech in each break as preparations continue for the next musical act. Ever been to an Anti-Apartheid Movement concert?

Here, it was avoided. Simple presentation of Dr. Ivor Browne, and he speaks while the plugs and leads are changed around behind him. An uncomfortable speech, because Dr. Browne is, as he tells us, uncomfortable. He's a professional, not a politician. Why should he get up on a platform to speak about an issue with which he is not directly concerned? Because, he says, psychiatry is tied up with politics, because when you put down the phone having declined the invitation to speak out in public you

get an uneasy feeling that maybe you're doing something to keep a person in gaol who shouldn't be there, because even if you can't satisfy yourself in detail that Nicky Kelly is wholly innocent, it is evident that he was wrongfully convicted.

Ivor Browne is not a campaign person or a party person. He's not going to mouth the slogans. And the slogan tonight is: Nicky Kelly is innocent. That's what it says on the banner, on the posters. Nor is Ivor Browne a rock music, or even modern folk music, kind of person. And he's still just right, because there are people there who are none of all those things, and for whom he articulates a way of identifying with the issue.

Theatre Action For Nicky Kelly follows quickly after Dr Browne's brief contribution. In a three-minute sketch, the violence on Nicky Kelly is skilfully simulated. The three-man bench of the Special Court is represented by one person plus two hand puppets, the Kelly character gets out of that character to join the chorus and thus prevents an exclusively emotional identification with him. Only two lines are spoken: "I did not beat anybody nor did I see anybody beaten" and "Nicky Kelly

KELLY'S CONCERT

BRIAN TRENCH on the music of politics.

is innocent." What sounds massively crude in the telling works well in the presence.

Next, Christy Moore gets straight to the point with *The Wicklow Boy*, his Nicky Kelly song which RTE will not play. It's a conventional 1960s-type protest song — direct, urgent, blunt, with possibly only one line that is not immediately graspable. It is a song written and performed for a particular moment, and unlikely to survive that moment.

Christy Moore also appropriately, has a Section 31 song (*Who are they to decide what we are to hear?*), a word of appreciation for the Channel 4 film crew who are present — and the very good sense to switch completely from the earnest protests to *Don't Forget The Shovel If You Want To Go To Work*, a very funny song about the Irish in London, in which the gabbled words refuse to fit into the lines. The Irish joke is turned on its head and back again.

Christy could do no wrong that night. His folk-hero status is being constantly enhanced. His involvement with Moving Hearts ended over six months ago but for this Nicky Kelly set he is joined by Donal Lunny and goes for the emotional jackpot with *Irish Ways*, formerly in the Hearts' programme.

This song arrived unsolicited from a member of the audience at a Moving Hearts gig in the Baggot Inn over two years ago and made it on to the first Hearts' album. In the version that Christy did in the SFX Centre last month, it was doubly chilling — firstly for the effect of



his voice, accompanied by synthesiser only, singing those hymn-like lines; secondly, for the clear statement of the race theme. This song projects a notion of a once unsullied Irish race constantly

but ineffectively interfered with during 800 years. Fortunately, not even our island location has prevented the kind of interchange which is the only condition of progress.

Next, Bernadette McAliskey, going quietly over the top as she tells the audience that the best of "decent, brave, honest" people in this country are either dead or imprisoned. The fighters against unemployment, the campaigners against the reactionary amendment, the marchers and strikers for tax reform, are all swept aside. Our attention is focussed exclusively on Nicky Kelly and on the people (whom she belittles as being no more than "petty") who keep him in prison.

The Moving Hearts have some technical problems; Mick Hanly breaks a string; the sound mix puts the keyboards too far forward; the tuning isn't right. But the Hearts are playing their hearts out for Nicky Kelly — and for the TV film which Channel 4 is making about them and about their involvement in the Kelly campaign. They sandwich a short appeal by Caoilte Breatnach for people to join that campaign, which loses absolutely nothing by being a bit hesitant. Nicky Kelly's slightly strangely worded letter says all we need to know.

There is a tangible tension as the Moving Hearts return with *Open Those Gates* — and then that tension is released with the instrumental, *Downtown*, and a call for Christy Moore to return to the stage. They're together again. It's a celebration — and it's serious. As we're enjoying the obvious *grá* that the Hearts and Moore have for each other, they're singing that there's "no time for love". You'd shout if there wasn't a lump in your throat.



Derek Speirs (Report)

Abortion; let the woman decide



Design: Flying Colours (Grapevine)

**WOMEN'S
RIGHT TO CHOOSE CAMPAIGN
P.O. BOX 1076, DUBLIN 1.**

In *Gralton 7*, Senator Brendan Ryan said he would describe himself as "a feminist in all matters, except the right to choose an abortion". In this article, **MARY GORDON** of the *Woman's Right To Choose Campaign* argues that a woman's right to control all aspects of her own fertility — including abortion — is **Fundamental to the feminist movement. So fundamental that, despite the problems it poses, you can't call yourself a feminist without supporting that right.**

Feminism is necessary because women are oppressed. This oppression is gender rather than sex-based, that is it arises from unnecessary and artificial social designations of appropriate behaviour. For example, there is no *sexual* reason why women should receive lower pay than men. However, gender differences are premised on a sexual difference. Women and men are different in one essential respect and that is that women bear children and men don't. All other differences between women and men follow directly or indirectly from this:

Differences, in themselves, are not necessarily oppressive. But in our society, as throughout most of the recorded history of the world, the ability to bear children is a liability — not because pregnancy is itself an oppressive state but because women do not control it. They are the victims rather than the managers

of their bodies' capabilities.

The demand for the right to choose is a demand for the right of every individual woman to decide whether or not to have a child, when and by whom. Abortion is only one part of that demand though it is, certainly in Ireland, the most controversial.

Abortion is controversial because it involves killing. Anti-abortionists claim this killing is, in fact, murder because the foetus is a human being in the same way and to the same extent as any person in society. Their argument hangs on the denial of any distinction between the born and the unborn, to use the current lingo. This denial of any distinction is, in both historical and common-sense terms, quite novel.

A foetus is not a human being in the sense that is ordinarily understood. It does not possess the qualities which we expect to find in a person, such as the

ability to think, communicate, feel, love or suffer. These are the qualities which form the essence of our humanity. The Holocaust, for example, was horrific not because six million creatures were slaughtered but because every one of those six million was a human being who thought, talked, loved, laughed . . . and suffered.

As well as not having any characteristics which we value as intrinsically human, there is no fear or suffering caused to the foetus itself through abortion, whatever sentimentalised "diaries" might imply. Undoubtedly, it is on the way to acquiring human characteristics but it is not yet a human being when it is killed. The killing is not murder.

When a woman has a spontaneous abortion or miscarriage it is not thought by anyone as a demise. The foetus itself cannot be publicly mourned because it cannot have been known. The woman is

the only person to have experienced it and, therefore, the only person who can miss it. If sympathy is extended, it is to her because of her loss.

By definition, the foetus, or the unborn, lives inside the body of a human being. It doesn't just lie there either but feeds and grows off the body of the woman. Her body, by sheltering and nourishing it, is actively giving it life. It depends totally on her — and only on her — to develop to the stage where it can survive in society. While it is still inside her it is not a social being. Society cannot sustain it. Its relationship to the woman is a one-way one of absolute dependency.

Very handicapped persons may also be absolutely dependent but this dependency is on society. Their survival only requires that *someone* looks after them. No particular person is forced to care for them and, most important of all, the job is, in the last analysis, voluntary.

But society is not entitled to insist that any particular woman must do what only she can uniquely do. For a woman to be truly free she must control her person. And that means being able to say yes or no to this use of her body.

To deny a woman this control is to deny her the capacity to give. Instead of *giving* life or giving birth, she is merely *producing* life or birth — like a machine. Not only is the woman dehumanised but the act of reproducing is also stripped of any generosity.

SOCIETY'S NEEDS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Our humanity is defined by our ability to transform nature to our own ends. Science and technology provide us with the means to live human, as opposed to animal, lives. Contraception and abortion represent the technology of fertility control. For many, however, the concept of control over nature as a positive process is abandoned in this area. Suddenly it becomes wrong to interfere with nature. Nature changes from being something that we positively act upon to being the inviolable manifestation of God's order.

This embargo on controlling reproduction has its roots in a superstitious ideology left over from an earlier age. Its appeal, however, is limited to countries like ours where religious concepts still carry significant weight.

Social requirements of population control have also attempted to influence reproduction. In the past, religious and social practice often went hand in glove. For example, the Jewish laws concerning cleanliness in women — forbidding intercourse when women are least likely to get pregnant — were responsible for a high level of fertility among the Jewish community, thus ensuring its survival

and growth. Nowadays, in a world where over-population is more the problem, state intervention, as in India, attempts to *decrease* fertility, regardless of religious scruples. But how the individual woman wishes to use her capacity to reproduce is equally as irrelevant to Indira Gandhi as to Pope John Paul.

More important though, there is a *potential* discrepancy between feminists and socialists concerning the right of women to control their own fertility. For feminists, it is above all an individual demand — the woman, and only the woman, should decide how to use her own body. For socialists, however, there is the question of the common good. The physical reproduction of the population can hardly lie outside the scope of the collective control of the needs and resources of a socialist society.

Can the needs of society be reconciled with an individual's right to reproduce or not to reproduce? A lot depends on what we mean by "rights" and where they come from. For many, including the Supreme Court in Ireland, rights originate either directly or indirectly in the mind of God. If God thinks everyone should have green cheese, when everyone has a "right" to green cheese. Alternatively, prefixing "rights" with the words "human" or "civil" simply begs the question of where these rights originate.

The truth is that rights are, in fact, demands. They don't "come" from anywhere, they are simply wrested by the people that want them. Workers don't have a right to decent jobs, or else they do — it doesn't really matter because what counts is that they want them. Of course, those who have a vested interest in denying demands also deny that they are "rights". Women want control of their bodies because they want to be free, to be fully human. Those who oppose women's liberation deny the "right" of women to choose.

But if women as individuals did control reproduction, would they do so in the overall interests of society? The answer is yes if, and only if, that society was a socialist society in which they played a real part in all the decision-making processes. Individual choices are never

independent of social forces. Women whose interests lie in a society where they are full and equal participants *will* choose to bear or not to bear children in accordance with the needs of that society.

It is surely an indictment of the so-called "socialism" of countries like Russia and China that in the former the state denies women easy access to contraception because it wishes to *increase* the birthrate and in the latter the state penalises women if they have more than one child because it wishes to *decrease* the birthrate. Such policies are imposed. They do not flow from the full and equal participation of women in the decision-making processes. Any socialism which has a vested interest in denying women's liberation is not socialism.

A VERY PERSONAL DECISION

Abortion is not a nice thing. It does involve killing and, although the foetus may not yet be a person, it will become one if it is left to develop. It will become a baby and most people's instincts are to protect and cherish children. A child is not being killed through an abortion but it can sometimes *feel* like that because pregnancy is often experienced as waiting, with the focus on the end product rather than on the intermediate stages.

Abortion feels totally different from contraception because a process has started — there is *something* there. But only the woman can feel that something. She alone can experience the foetus, if only as morning sickness, and so it has a reality for her which is not abstract, which it must be for everyone else.

To SPUC and Co. the world is full of foetuses which they claim to represent. But they don't know where they are. They are not particular foetuses, just all foetuses lumped together. When a woman has an abortion, she is not terminating any old foetus but her own particular one — one with a potential to be *her* child. It is a very personal decision and one that can be extremely painful.

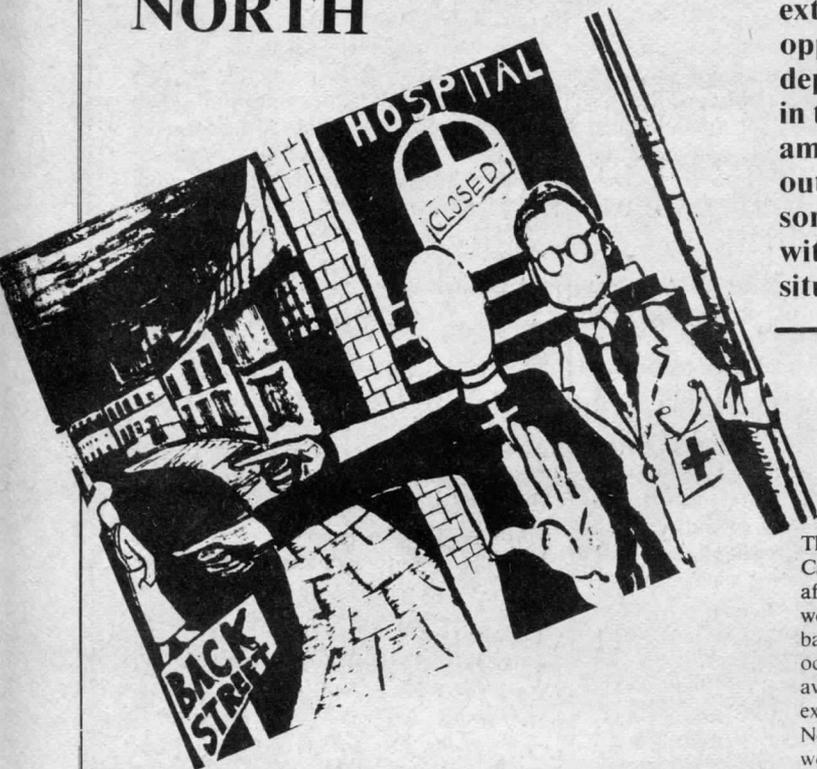
But it's decision that is taken because the alternative — an unwanted child — is worse. Abortion is not a nice thing, it is merely a solution — one that millions of women throughout the world seek every year. And as long as women are capable of getting pregnant they will demand, as a right, the facilities to terminate unwanted pregnancies safely and legally.

It is not good enough to "hate the sin but forgive the sinner", to patronise the woman with sympathy while abhorring her action. A pregnant woman — better than *anyone* else — knows what she is doing when she chooses abortion. Feminists are demanding that such decisions be respected.

**Abortion;
let the
woman
decide**

WOMEN'S
RIGHT TO CHOOSE CAMPAIGN
P.O. BOX 1076, DUBLIN 1.

ABORTION IN THE NORTH



The "abortion debate" in Ireland recognises no borders. In the North, the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign has been patiently arguing that the British 1967 Abortion Act should be extended to the North for some time now. The opposition to such a move is as bigoted, and as depressingly familiar, as the Pro-Life Campaign is in the South. Recently, NIAC conducted a survey amongst general practitioners in the North to find out their views on the issue. Below we present some of the major findings of the survey, together with background information on the abortion situation in the North from NIAC.

BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

The Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign was set up in May 1980 after the death of a Northern Irish woman as a direct result of a backstreet abortion. This tragedy occurred because of the non-availability of abortion facilities, except on a very limited basis, in Northern Ireland, and because the woman hadn't enough money to go to England to procure one.

The Campaign was primarily set up to try and bring about an extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland as a minimum demand, but it has also been involved in looking at the whole question of abortion — the medical, social and legal implications for women here and in raising the issue generally in public debate.

At present the law governing abortion in Northern Ireland is very different from the law in England, Scotland and Wales where the 1967 Abortion Act is in force. This gives women the right to an abortion, if two doctors agree that there is a substantial risk to her mental or physical health if the pregnancy continues. In Northern Ireland the law has not changed significantly since the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, which prohibited abortion totally. The passing of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act in 1929 allows some women to obtain an abortion on the National Health Service in certain conditions. These are if a woman has a serious medical or psychiatric problem which would jeopardise her life or health if she were to have a baby; if she is mentally sub-normal; in the case of contact with German Measles; if the child is likely to be severely handicapped. This legal

anomaly has meant that women with unwanted pregnancies in Northern Ireland have limited choices if they wish to end the pregnancy. As they are unlikely to get a termination in Northern Ireland (even when they fulfil the requirements) they must either find the money to pay for their fare and a private abortion in England, or they can turn to the backstreet — a frightening dangerous and by no means rare occurrence.

The anti-abortion lobby continue to argue that there is no demand for a change in the legislation here and up until now it has been difficult to gauge public opinion on the issue. What is clear is that there are around 15,000 women in Northern Ireland who have had abortions since the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act — a large and silent minority. In Britain there have been many, unsuccessful, attempts by the anti-abortion lobby, to restrict or remove the 1967 Act. One reason for their failure has been the vigilance of women in fighting back and defending the law. Another reason has been the British Medical Association's constant stand in support of the 1967 Act which they see as a necessary piece of legislation.

In April 1982 NIAC decided to gauge one section of Northern Irish opinion by carrying out a survey of General Practitioners, as they are often the first people to whom women will go when they wish a pregnancy confirmed. It seemed to us crucial to assess what the opinions and practice of GPs was in relation to the whole issue of abortion in Northern Ireland.

NIACC

DOCTORS ATTITUDES TO ABORTION

The results of the survey, conducted in April 1982, show that a sizeable number of doctors in the North find themselves faced with the problems of women wishing to have an abortion, and that many GPs are in favour of a reform of the law.

Less than 10% claimed that no women consulted them about unwanted pregnancies and 82% said that between 1-10 women came to them each year wanting an abortion.

Lack of contraception was believed to be the cause of unwanted pregnancies in the vast majority (82%) of cases.

15% believed that at least some of their patients had attempted to procure a miscarriage.

Over half (55%) utilised the existing legislation to refer women for termination on medical grounds.

Four out of five (80%) informed their patients of facilities in England that they could travel to for abortion if they did not qualify under the law operating in the North.

Well over half (57%) felt that the law in the North should be changed to make it easier to obtain abortions; 28% felt there should be no change and only 15% felt that the law should make it more difficult. (One of the doctors in this last category expressed the following opinion: "Should a woman gratify his animal desire — in many instances to degrade some fine male — she should answer for it. Girls, the sweet children, are taught what is forbidden: if they rebel, why should they add murder to their sin and involve another or others in this satanic scheme." No comment.)

Of the 442 GPs to whom a questionnaire was sent, 78 completed and returned it, a response rate of 16%. The survey cannot therefore claim to be wholly representative of all doctors in the North.

HAS THE FRENCH LEFT LOST ITS SOUL?

The coming to power of Francois Mitterrand captured the imagination of many on the Left both inside and outside France. Two years later, however, yet another experiment in socialist government appears to be failing. JEROME SAVIN, a French economic journalist, takes a detailed look at the successes and failures of the Left in France.

10 May 1981: Francois Mitterrand was elected president of the French Republic with 51.75% of the votes. As soon as the news was released at around 8 pm, throughout the country people went into the street to celebrate. In Paris itself, they gathered around the Place de la Bastille, symbol of the 1789 Revolution. Despite a huge storm, which broke out almost as if to underline the importance of the event, lots of people remained out late in the night, singing, crying, dancing, kissing each other, hooting their cars' horns.

It was the first time the Left had gained access to power since the creation of the Fifth Republic, in 1958: the last "progressive" government in France dates back as far as 1954. It seemed to be the beginning of a new era.

25 March 1983: Four days after the third devaluation of the French franc since Mitterrand's election, Jacques Delors, the economy and finance minister, who had just been reappointed, with broader powers, in a cabinet reshuffle disclosed an austerity programme which reminded some old people of the deflationary policies followed in 1935 by Pierre Laval. (He had gone on to become Prime Minister under Petain and was shot in 1945).

In order to balance France's external accounts, a cut of around 2% of private income is sought in 1983 through higher taxation and a "forced" loan to the State. This contrasts sharply with rises of 4% achieved in both 1981 and 1982.

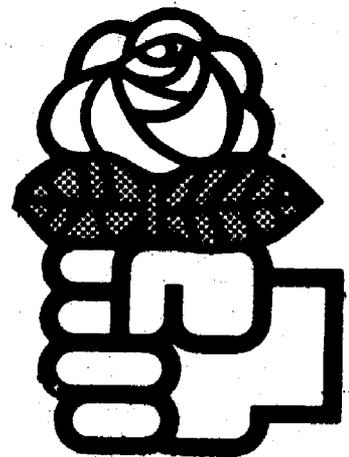
Unemployment, which France had controlled successfully compared with most European countries (8.3% of the working population in 1982, against 12.6% in U.K., 11.1% in Italy and 8.5% in Germany), will rise as a result.

French tourists will not be allowed to take more than FF2,000 in foreign currency and FF1,000 in French francs out of the country in 1983, which makes most foreign trips impossible and has been seen by many as an attack on civil rights, an area where the new government has had a brilliant record so far.

"Has the Left lost its soul?" many of its supporters are asking. Some claim to be ready to vote for the Right at the next election (theoretically, the next general election will be held in 1986, the next presidential election, in 1988). Some leading Socialists are expressing their concern more and more openly. Mitterrand's failure could leave the doors of power open to the most reactionary faction of the Right — that which is embodied by Jacques Chirac, mayor of Paris and leader of the RPR (Gaullist party) and would make any come-back of the Left an unlikely event for another 20 or 30 years.

This article will stress the fact that the Left has already achieved major reforms — some of which are likely to remain, even if the Right should come back into power. It does not have the weapons, however, to manage a crisis economy, open to the influence of major international trends. In the end, Mitterrand's success or failure will

depend on what happens outside France — especially in the US. This is a pessimistic view, but may be a lesson for the Left outside France.



"L'ETAT DE GRACE"

The 12 months which followed Mitterrand's election were nicknamed "*l'état de grâce*" (state of grace). The Right was so flabbergasted by the defeat of former president Giscard d'Estaing that its different factions started an argument about whose fault it was, an argument which is not yet settled today! It had neither time or space to counter the new government's action. International speculation against the French franc led to a first devaluation in October 1981 (8.5% against the deutsch



Francois Mitterrand

mark) but it was expected that this would give a boost to French exports by making French products more competitive in relative terms. In this way it was expected to help the government's efforts to limit unemployment, the number one priority in Mitterrand's programme.

The first sign of this "state of grace" for the Left was its success at the general election which took place on the 14 and 21 June 1981. It was called by Francois Mitterrand, using his constitutional privilege. On the first round, the Left gained 56.6% of the votes (of which 37.5% was for the Socialists and 16.1% for the Communists). After the second round, it had 328 seats on the National Assembly (where 246 seats constitute a majority; alone, the Socialists had more than that). Despite the loss of half of their seats (43, against 86 in the previous chamber), the Communists were represented by four ministers in the government which was then set up. They were the first Communists in government since 1947. Pierre Mauroy, the Socialist mayor of Lille, was appointed Prime Minister.

There was no constitutional power which could prevent the government

from starting to put into action the programme it was elected on. This consisted of a somewhat up-dated version of the *Programme Commun* adopted in June 1972 by the Socialists, the Communists, and the *Radicaux-de-Gauche* (left-wing radicals) for the 1973 general election and the 1974 presidential election, at the second round of which Francois Mitterrand had obtained 49.2% of the votes. This programme had been abandoned since the break-up of the Union of the Left in September 1977 but was reactivated as the only platform on which the parties of the Left could agree just before the 1981 election campaign.

The first "dramatic" actions of the new government took place in the area of civil rights, where Giscard d'Estaing's administration has had a gruesome record. As early as July 1981, the government announced that the *Cour de sûreté de l'État* (a special court for political offences, which had been used against left-wing militants and autonomists from Corsica, Brittany and the Basque Country, as well as against plain spies) was abolished. In August, the parliament approved an amnesty law in favour of petty offenders, as is the custom in France each time a new president is elected, but this time it was broadened extensively to include people fined for strike actions, conscientious objectors etc. That same month, the government announced that it was to abolish the death penalty, although opinion polls showed that a majority of French people remained in favour of it. The law was passed in October.

In August 1981, the parliament started to study a law on decentralisation which was designed to give broader powers to local, departmental and regional assemblies, thus countering the French tradition of centralisation, which dates as far back as the Jacobins of the 1789 Revolution. One of the most important institutional reforms France has had for decades, it was adopted by parliament in January 1982. It includes a special statute for Corsica, giving special powers to a Corsican Assembly. This has had the effect of stopping the endemic bombings in the island, at least for a while.

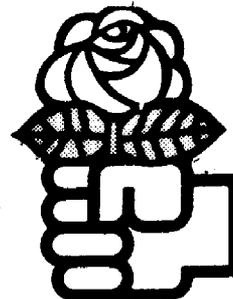
There is plenty to credit in the area of women's rights too, through the actions of the ministry for women. A nationwide campaign in favour of contraception was launched. Although the cabinet was split on the issue, it was agreed in the end that abortion should be free (it was already legal): the department of social security now refunds the women who have had one, the normal procedure for any medical treatment. Instructions were given to police on how to deal with raped women, although feminists think that not very much has changed here. A law is currently being discussed in order to ban

the exploitation of women in advertising.

Gay rights were also supported. A change in the law on the age of consent means that there is now no difference in France between homo-sexuality and heterosexuality, at least as far as the law goes. Police, under the instructions of the government, stopped raiding the meeting places and have even been seen protecting gays on some occasions.

Illegal immigrants in France were allowed to legalise their situation; some 130,000 took advantage of the offer, which is something short of the real numbers. There are 4.2m foreigners in France, out of a population of 54m, and racism is spreading with the rise in unemployment.

Better protection was also given to tenants, whose leases can now be more or less automatically renewed when they end, so long as the rent is paid up to date. Rent increases themselves have been controlled. Although this is very important since not very many people in France own their own houses, this backfired somewhat. Landlords have stopped putting flats and houses on the market and it has become very difficult to find accommodation, although a recent survey showed that there are 165,000 empty flats in Paris, i.e., 13% of the total number.



KEYNESIAN ECONOMIC REFORMS

The most important civil right is obviously the right to work. Unemployment was the number one issue during the 1981 election campaign. In 1981, 382,000 people lost their jobs in France (some 23.4% more than in 1980) and the feeling of insecurity this very steep increase created was one of the main factors behind the victory of the Left. For the whole of 1982, unemployment remained more or less stable at around 2m people, and this was perceived as the main achievement of the new government. But how did it reach this target?

Under the leadership of Jacques Delors, the economy and finance minister, a perfect classical Keynesian policy was followed. Demand was stimulated by granting more money to the people who needed it most, a measure

which had the advantage of going in the direction of social equity. The minimum wage rose eight times between June 1981 and December 1982, making a total increase of 33.5%, or 5.1% in real terms, if inflation is taken into account. Family and accommodation benefits were also increased substantially. Unemployment benefit rose by 28.5% between July 1981 and December 1982. The minimum income the state pays to pensioners or handicapped people went up by 50% between May 1981 and December 1982, but to only FF2,125 per month (£200).

France's budget deficit was substantially increased in order to finance this injection of money into the economy. From FF 30 bn in 1980, it went up to FF81 bn in 1981 and FF99 bn in 1982. Francois Mitterrand insisted that this deficit should remain within the limits of 3% GNP, more or less the percentage of the German budget deficit, but lower than most OECD countries.

New incomes for the state were found through higher direct taxation on the wealthiest people. A tax on capital was created, bringing in FF4.5 bn in 1982, but taxation on inheritance, particularly low in France (the maximum rate is 20%) was not increased. A levy was set up on companies' entertainment expenses and a special tax was established on banks' and insurance companies' profits.

In order to try to keep the deficits of both the department of social security and the agency dealing with unemployment under control, the contributions of both employers and employees were increased. Both of these bodies are separate from the French state budget. The social security deficit, which was FF66 bn in 1981, went down to FF5.6 bn in 1982, while the unemployment budget deficit fell by almost 75% from FF24 bn in 1981 to FF6.4 bn in 1982.

The general idea was that this injection of money into the economy would give France time to breathe until its main trading partners came to the "rescue" by the recovery of their economies, often depressed by the monetary policies which has deepened the crisis. This recovery was predicted unwisely by the government for the second half of 1981. It did not occur in 1982 either. All in all, output remained more or less stable in 1981 (-0.1% from 1980) and grew only slightly in 1982 (+1%), not enough to have any significant positive impact on employment.

At the same time, the government tried to fight unemployment by acting on the labour force. In February 1982, the maximum number of working hours per week was lowered from 40 to 39. It was announced that this was to continue during the following years, the target being 35 hours by 1985. This project has now been dropped (officially, however, it is only postponed) since it was proved



Demanding the 35 hour week

that very few jobs, if any, were created by this method.

The government's decision was that these 39 hours would be paid as 40. Employers, especially in the labour intensive sectors, where "potentially" more jobs could be created, increased productivity instead of hiring more staff. This was often easy since capacity was not being fully used. Several advisers to the government think that such a project would have had an effect only if it had been possible to go straight to 35 hours and to pay only those 35 hours. The drop to 35 hours was refused by the employers, who thought that it would disrupt production, as indeed it had in 1936 when Leon Blum lowered the working week to 40 hours. The unions, on the other hand, reflecting the interests of their members, refused to accept any wage cut.

The decision to grant a fifth week of paid holiday to everyone went in the same direction and for the same reasons is thought to have had no positive effect on employment.

In its fight against unemployment the French government put a special emphasis on school leavers. Special training courses were created for them. Official statistics, which seem overstated, put the number of teenagers who benefit from this at 100,000. Even if these do give them a chance to find jobs more easily when the courses are completed, they obviously do not create any jobs in themselves. Moreover, the average number of teenagers surplus to current job market requirements who will leave school in the next few years, through mere demography is around 150,000. Obviously, no miracle is to be expected here.

The most "efficient" way which has been found to combat unemployment so far has been to replace older workers, who are asked to retire, by younger people. In company after company (it also applies to civil servants), the state negotiates "solidarity contracts" which set an early retiring age, around 55, at which people can stop working. It frees

working places, which are then filled by young unemployed people, the number of whom is specified in the contract. Companies which agree to sign such a contract receive special grants and incentives: they pay lower social security rates on the new workers and the state finances part of the pensions of the people who retire. Another version of this scheme, but one which has been used less, gives the possibility of lowering the working week below 39 hours through a form of job sharing. All in all, 200,000 people found a job in 1982 through this scheme, according to the Prime Minister.

This relative success is probably one of the factors which led the government, the unions and the employers to agree last February to lower the general age of retirement from 65 to 60. This has been criticised, however, on the grounds that financing of today's new pensioners was not secured. It is too early to say whether this had any positive effect on employment.



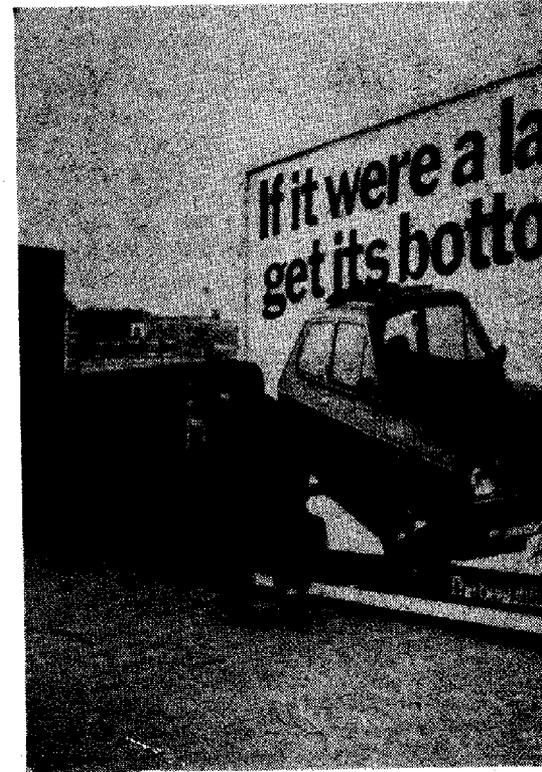
NATIONALISATIONS

When it came into power, the Left coalition was aware of the fact that short-term management of the economy was not enough, and that it would have to act on its structures. Nationalisations were expected to provide the weapons for this purpose.

Historically, the nationalised sector has always been larger in France than in most other Western countries. It was

Images of Oppression

WOMEN AS



The *Women As Advertised* exhibition developed from a suggestion made at an exhibition space meeting in The Grapevine Arts Centre a year ago. Eight people decided to look through magazines and pick out ads we considered offensive to women, with a view to a possible exhibition of the subject. In one evening we collected a large range and at a subsequent meeting we decided it would make a feasible and worthwhile exhibition. We were surprised and shocked ourselves at the implications that these ads held for women. We felt that if an exhibition could stimulate thought and, possibly, action, on an individual basis, then it could only be positive.

We hoped to make clear in the exhibition that: exploitation of women in advertising comes from an historic background; it is only allowed to continue and proliferate because of a combination of tradition, ignorance, habit and passivity; it is possible to make known your feelings about ads that you find inappropriate, offensive, misleading etc. through official channels (though at present these channels

ADVERTISED

The Grapevine Arts Centre in Dublin is hiring out a very interesting exhibition of examples of how advertising exploits women. Although pretty well booked out into July, information on hiring the exhibition (for a maximum fee of £20, plus transport) can be obtained from:
GRAPEVINE ARTS CENTRE
31 NORTH FREDERICK STREET
DUBLIN 1.
 Telephone 728721



remain inadequate in action and inaccessible due to a low public profile).

Because of the Grapevine's tiny budget, the show consisted of ads and commentary spraymounted onto news sheet panels. It was generally classified into categories such as violence, possession, glamour, stereotypes, with an introduction and comments sheet. It ran for one month and aroused such a good response that we applied to and received funding from the Council for the Status of Women and Family Planning Services Ltd. With these grants we redesigned, remounted and heatsealed the exhibition onto 15 A1 sized panels so that it is both compact and hardy for touring.

The remounting and design took a year to organise as the majority of the work had to be done on a voluntary basis. A group of highly skilled people put a lot of time and energy into the work and the exhibition is informative, simple and dynamic. It is structured along similar lines to the first edition but it is a professionally presented high quality exhibition.

Grapevine Arts Centre



Marchais and Mitterrand

mainly created in two waves: in 1936, during Leon Blum's "Front Populaire" (when Banque de France, railways and war industries were nationalised) and after France's liberation in 1945, when the Left participated in power. This was the main attack on the private sector, when Renault, Air France, the largest banks, the largest insurance companies, the electricity and the gas companies, the coal industry and others were nationalised. For other historical reasons, the French State in 1981 also controlled the two oil companies (Elf-Aquitaine and Total), most of the nuclear industry, part of the aerospace industry (SNIAS, SNECMA), part of the chemical industry, France's largest shipping company (Compagnie Générale Maritime) and the largest advertising agency (Havas). There was also a state monopoly on tobacco and matches (SEITA). In 1974, the nationalised sector accounted for about 11% of GNP and around 8% of the labour force.

The tradition of state intervention into industry had never really been contested by the Right. Even Valéry Giscard d'Estaing only opened minority stakes in the capital of some of these companies to private investors, while ensuring that they would be run efficiently, without any distortion of competition in their favour to the expense of the private sector. Most of them were "reasonably" efficient and profitable. Some of them very much so, while those which were running at a loss were usually in line with the problems of the industry they belonged to (chemicals,

shipping, for example). As the Left was putting it, "In France, nationalisation works". It is not surprising, therefore, that every programme of the Left since 1973 had included an increase of the nationalised sector.

The list of the companies to which this would apply was a key element in the negotiations between the Socialists and the Communists in 1981. In the end, the following companies were included in the nationalisation bill which was passed by parliament in February 1982.

- Compagnie générale d'électricité (electronics, shipyards, telecommunications, cables, building contractors . . .)
- Rhône-Poulenc (chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles . . .) — Saint-Gobain (glass, building materials and contractors, computers . . .)
- Thomson (electronics, telecommunications, computers . . .)
- Pechiney-Ugine-Kuhlmann (aluminium, chemicals)

— Suez and Paribas, France's two financial conglomerates, with extensive holdings in banking, finance services and industry.

— the French banks with deposits in excess of FF1 bn. (foreign-owned banks were excluded from the bill).

Before this, the two French steel companies, Usinor and Sacilor, came under almost complete State control in November 1981 through the compulsory conversion into capital of the long-term loans which had been granted to them by the preceding government.

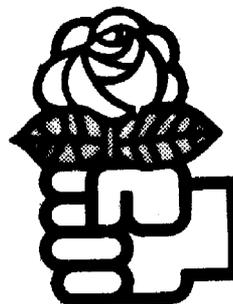
As well as all this, negotiations started with several groups which controlled French companies and government wanted to take over. These included:

- Matra (mostly weapons)
- Dassault (aeroplanes, mostly military)
- CII — Honeywell Bull (computers); it was majority-owned by Saint-Gobain, the American Honeywell group having a minority stake of 47%, but providing the technology
- CGCT, ITT's French telephone subsidiary
- Roussel-Uclaf, a pharmaceutical and chemical group majority-owned by Hoechst of Germany.

These negotiations were also successful in the end. Private capital retained minority stakes in most of these companies. However, the cost was very high, particularly when it was necessary to keep a technological tie with the foreign partner.

At the time of the takeover the newly nationalised industrial companies had a joint turnover of FF 250 bn, representing 20% of the total sales of French industry and 15% of its exports. They had 750,000 employees. Together with the groups which were already under State control, the nationalised sector accounted for around 30% of the sales and 24% of the labour forces of French industry. In the financial sector, the state, with the newly nationalised banks and financial conglomerates, increased its control on deposits to 90%, and on loans, to 85%.

The total cost of the nationalisations has been put by the government at FF36 bn, excluding interest, which appears understated. The shareholders were well indemnified since the constitutional court vetoed a first draft of the nationalisation bill on the grounds that they were not being given a "fair" deal. The second draft was around 30% higher. It was then passed by this august body, whose decisions are without appeal and whose members, appointed for 9 years by the presidents of the Republic, the Senate and the National Assembly, had all been chosen before Mitterrand's election, therefore by the Right. In 1982, the cost of indemnities for the state budget is thought to have been FF4 bn. In 1983, it is expected to reach FF7.8 bn, more than the new tax on capital will bring in!



PROBLEMS OF CONTROL

The new nationalised companies have been in state ownership for one year now. So what has changed? In most cases, they have new chairmen, although not everywhere: Matra, Dassault, Roussel-Uclaf and Saint-Gobain have retained the same one, as did Rhône-Poulenc, although he later resigned. They have six union representatives on their boards, sitting beside six state representatives and 6 "personalities" who are often leading businessmen.

These boards have demonstrated grave difficulties in defining their industrial strategies. In the beginning, they were given relatively precise orders from the government. These often conflicted, since the different ministers could not agree. Since this brought chaos and huge delays over the smallest matters, Mitterrand said solemnly that the companies' autonomy of management should be respected. This led the industry minister, Jean-Pierre Chevenement, to resign. His successor, Laurent Fabius, is the fourth industry minister since May 1981!

Now the relationship of the nationalised sector to the state is organised through a relatively vague plan to be in force for four to five years, which is supposed to co-ordinate the companies' strategies with the government's overall aims. It is interesting to note that these plans specify that these companies must maintain the same number of employees over this period, which may mean a reduction in some branches, compensated through increases in some others. The plans not only suggest no growth in the labour force, but for some of the companies with the largest problems, such as those operating in the steel and coal industries, they specify the pace, albeit relatively slow, at which the labour force will be reduced.

It may look strange that the government has not been more ambitious in this area. It would appear that no-one in the Left had thought when in opposition that nationalisation would mean not only industrial but also financial responsibility over the companies involved. With the crisis, most of them operated at a loss in 1982 — only one out of five industrial groups included in the nationalisation bill made a profit. The government could not prevent their investments from declining by around 4% in 1982, since the special financial effort which was made in their favour (FF13.2 bn in 1982) was short of their needs and could not be increased as the general budget had its own problems. Moreover, this money was used too often to cover losses or to help restructurations in declining areas. There was no way this

could have been avoided but it was unfortunately at the expense of expanding industries, such as electronics, where prospects are brighter.

It must be stressed that private sector investment declined by 7% in 1982 (i.e., by more than in the public sector). Some people on the Left think nevertheless that the huge multinational companies the state now owns would have invested anyway and that it would have been more efficient to concentrate on nationalising smaller companies in the private sector. It is doubtful, however, that this would have had any different impact on employment.

One of the key political issues of the moment in France concerns the role of the nationalised banks, which are being accused of not supporting enough industry and of being responsible for some bankruptcies. They answer that they cannot increase their commitments much more and that they must remain profitable since a large part of their activity (more than 50% for the largest of them) takes place abroad where they are judged by "international", standards, generally taken to mean American. This profitability is already threatened by "bad debts" on bankrupt countries in Easter Europe and South America and on ailing companies both in France or abroad. The government seems to have accepted this position since this year it did not ask them to pay any special contribution to the nationalised industry, which in 1982 amounted to FF9 bn.

As for the government as a whole, it is in the social field that the nationalised sector is most innovative, following the passing of an act on its "democratisation". However, it must be noted that the board representation of its employees has been institutionalised more than ever before, through the unions. In France,



Pierre Mauroy

only 20% of the labour force is unionised, and this proportion has decreased since the victory of the Left. In the nationalised sector, as in the private one, there has been no mobilisation. The number of days "lost" through strike action in industry as a whole was 2.3m in 1982, up from 1.4m in 1981, but far from the 4m recorded in 1976.



THE TURNING POINT

Meanwhile, on 13 June 1982, the French franc was devalued by 10% against the deutschmark. This was the turning point. It followed elections for the department assemblies, held in March 1982, at which the Left retreated smartly. The Socialists obtained only 29.7% of the votes, the Communists 15.9% in these politically insignificant contests.

As always, the devaluation was sparked by international speculation. Most observers agree, however, that more structural reasons were behind it. Economists think that the main culprit is France's annual inflation rate. In the middle of 1982, it was still above 13%, against 9% in the UK, 7% in the US and less than 6% in Germany. While these countries had achieved very steep declines, admittedly at very high social cost through monetary policies, France had more or less retained the rates of the two previous years. This high rate is obviously connected with the Keynesian policies France was following, but also to the relative strength of the dollar, which reached new peaks every day (from FF5.59 in May 1981 to around FF6.28 in spring 1982.) This made imported products, especially energy, more expensive.

The result was a loss of competitiveness of French exports compared to those of most other countries. The deficit of the balance of payments increased sharply. From FF59.4 bn in 1981, it reached FF 93.3 bn for the whole of 1982. Not only did exports decline by 3% in 1982, but imports also rose. This was due mainly to "durable" goods: for example, the market share of imported cars rose from 28.1% in 1981 to 33% during the first quarter of 1983. In other words, foreign countries benefitted more than France! from its financial policy.

So how did the government react? A freeze on prices and salaries was enforced for four months. A special effort was made in favour of companies since the belief spread that the number of unemployed was closely connected to the financial good health of the private sector — a difficult thing for the Left to admit. This help remained limited, however, by high international lending rates. France was unable to lower its internal rates since it had to protect the franc, so it was only in January 1983 that the 12.25% basic lending rate of January 1981 could be regained from a peak of 17% in May 1981. When the problem of the deficit of the department of social security and of the agency dealing with unemployment came back to surface, as it is bound to do regularly, it was settled by a rise of employees' contributions, while those paid by employers did not change. Civil servants were also asked to pay a contribution to the unemployment fund; they did not before, since they cannot be made redundant.

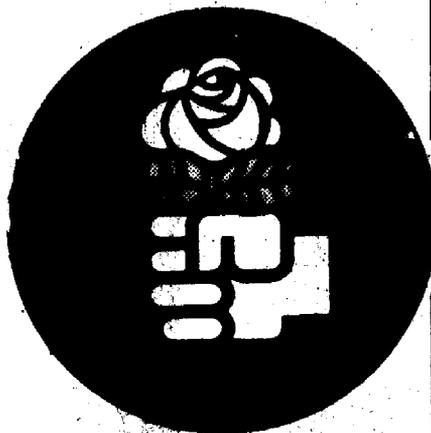
All in all, this policy failed. Although inflation decreased to 9.7% for the whole of 1982, it remained higher than in most OECD countries (annual rates for 1982 were 3.9% in the US, 4.6% in Germany and 5.4% in the UK). The two devaluations did not help to balance the external accounts. On the contrary, exports did not rise since there was no demand for French products abroad as they were too expensive in relative terms and anyway overall demand was stagnating because of the crisis. At the same time import prices increased in line with the depreciation of the franc. Moreover, France's external debts increased very sharply, partly to finance the defence of the franc and partly to buoy up the state deficits and the nationalised sector. The actual figure is one of France's best kept secrets. The OECD estimated it at \$14.5 bn for 1982, against \$6.7 bn in 1981. According to *Le Monde*, France in fact borrowed \$25 bn on international markets in 1982. At this pace, France would have been ready for the IMF to move in within a few months.

However, very important mid-term municipal elections were being held on the 6 and 13 March 1983. Obviously, the time was not ripe for any drastic political decision. The government did its best to hide the truth: the Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, said in private that "he would not be the man for a third devaluation of the French franc" and in public that "he had no God-Knows-what austerity package in his pocket." This did not prevent the whole election campaign from taking place in a very heavy atmosphere. In some places, candidates of the Left campaigned on security, by calling for more police and on racism, by accusing the immigrants of being responsible for unemployment, thus

openly taking over some of the Right's most reactionary programme items. No new idea on how to cope with the crisis was floated.

The municipal elections were a defeat for the Left, which gained only 44.2% of the votes, against 53.6% for the Right, in the first round in towns of more than 30,000 inhabitants. In other words, the Left lost votes from its traditional working class base, which did not relish the prospect of a decline of its purchasing power in 1983. It also lost that middle-class vote which had enabled Mitterrand's election in 1981 by switching from the Right to the Left. Apparently, these people could not accept the fact that the government did not seem to have any long-term projects nor to be able to master the situation. The increases in taxation and social contributions were another contributive factor.

The results of the election ignited a new round of speculation against the franc. After several days of political drama which were not unlike the days of May 1968 when no-one seemed to govern the



country, the franc was devalued by 8% against the deutschmark on 21 March. On 22 March, Pierre Mauroy was reappointed Prime Minister of an almost unchanged cabinet, which was a major disappointment to the Left. He was apparently the only man who could prevent the coalition from exploding. On 25 March, Jacques Delors disclosed the new famous austerity package.

A CONFUSED FUTURE

The days which followed the municipal elections were marked by a very important debate within the government coalition. Part of it, specifically the Communists and some leading Socialists, including some private advisers to Mitterrand, were in favour of France's withdrawal from the European Monetary System and of protectionist measures, arguing that the Left could not let its policies be dictated by the "external constraints". It was only at the last minute that Mitterrand, whose image

faltered a great deal during the crisis, decided against it.

In this he was following those, led by Jacques Delors, who thought that it would mean a huge depreciation of the franc resulting in a dramatic jump in inflation, a sharp decrease in production and therefore a large increase in unemployment, since the loss of foreign markets would not be compensated by a gain in France. The protectionist lobby is nevertheless growing every day and it is not impossible that it will gain the majority in the Socialist party at its next congress, in the autumn.

Some already forecast a failure of Delors' plans. The dollar is still rising and has now topped FF7.4, an all-time record. It has been estimated that this will cost as much in external deficit this year as the austerity package will save! US interest rates remain very high, leading international rates and preventing a revival of investment in France. Short term problems strangle long term projects. The coalition may still have ideas, but has no money to finance them.

Mitterrand has already remained in power longer than any leader of the Left in France's history. Is he going to be ousted by the Right, which is restless this spring, or, worse, according to his point of view, by the Left, which will consider that he has betrayed his ideals? Or will he stay in the Elysée Palace? For how long? Following what policy: Pierre Mauroy's middle-of-the-road approach, protectionism with the most dogmatic members of the Left, or a more liberal route with part of the Right but without the Communists and probably losing some of the Socialists? Everyone is asking these questions in Paris these days. Nobody, however, has yet come up with any answers.



THE EIFFEL TOWER, PARIS, FRANCE.

HIDDEN FROM IRISH HISTORY

The role of women in the land and national movements of the turn of the century has been largely obscured in the standard accounts. MARGARET WARD, whose book *Unmanageable Revolutionaries* is published this month (June) by Pluto Press and Brandon Books, says that the rediscovery of women's part in these movements must alter our perceptions of that period of Irish history.

Feminist historians have devoted a great deal of effort to the task of excavating the contribution made by women to major world-historical events. Not only political issues, but the changing role of the family, the impact of industrialisation etc, have come under close scrutiny and many commonly accepted beliefs have been turned on their heads.

Feminist research has not simply produced facts to add to those already known. A notable feature of the work has been the discovery that women cannot be merely written onto the historical stage, to take their place alongside men. The perception of the historical events themselves is affected.

Eventually, the whole history of humankind will have to be re-written and gender relations incorporated into historical analysis. One reason for this is that women activists have not necessarily always agreed with their male comrades. History has almost by definition been male; the contribution made by female contemporaries has been either obscured or distorted — sometimes deliberately, sometimes because of a lack of comprehension of their aims. What we are now finding is that, in many cases, the women's analysis of situations was more radical and the course of action they advocated more democratic.

This does not mean that women as a sex are inherently more egalitarian than men. But it would appear to be the case that women who become aware of their own sexual oppression — even if this awareness remains fragmented or unexpressed — often find themselves emotionally compelled to extend that consciousness to other social

groups and — from that perspective — to broaden out their political concerns.

Women's consciousness of sexual oppression has engendered a more radical critique of the existing social structures and refusal to be fobbed off by half measures of reform. When women activists have had the rare opportunity to put forward their own views, they have often come into conflict with men who, by virtue of a more privileged position, were hostile to the demands of their female contemporaries.

A brief sketch of the hidden dimensions of two important landmarks in Irish political life — the Land War and the Treaty — demonstrates these fundamental differences and shows why male commentators were reluctant to write women into their accounts of events.

LADIES LAND LEAGUE

The alliance between constitutional nationalists and Fenians which was negotiated by Davitt and Parnell, resulting in the formation of the Land League, has been claimed as the first occasion when a popular mass movement was created in Ireland. Formed in 1879, its aim was to mobilise the tenant farmers and peasantry into a force which would win a reduction in rack rents and, ultimately, achieve peasant proprietorship.

Thousands flocked to the banner of the League, collectively defying the power of the landlord. The inevitable repression soon began. The leadership was jailed, while Prime Minister Gladstone tried to buy the people off by means of a Land Act which made a few minor changes to the system. But the agitation continued, becoming increasingly violent, and Gladstone and the imprisoned Parnell, jointly alarmed at this upsurge of militancy, agreed upon the "Kilmainham Treaty" of May 1882.

As a result the prisoners were released, the Land League disbanded and popular agitation was brought to an end. Thereafter, the political focus shifted from the poverty-stricken fields of Ireland to the floor of the House of Commons, where the Irish Parliamentary Party pursued its policy of persuading the Liberals to pass a Home Rule bill for Ireland.

What this standard scenario completely obscures is the pivotal position of women during the whole period. When the men went to jail the movement did not collapse for lack of leadership. A Ladies' Land League, headed by Anna Parnell, had been formed in order to continue the resistance. Not only did the women continue the work, they consolidated what had been a fairly ramshackle



Anna Parnell: "possessing a better knowledge of the real economic condition of the country and of the social and political forces which had to be acted upon to work out the freedom of Ireland than any person, man or woman, that I have met."

movement and made alliances with the poorest amongst the peasantry and landless labourers. They were determined, in Anna's words, that a programme of "permanent resistance" be organised — a permanent resistance that would not dissolve in gratitude at the first crumb of reform tossed to them by an all-powerful British government, but which would grow in strength and extend its demands until the Irish people had achieved complete social and political independence through their own efforts. When the Ladies' Land League was itself proscribed and some women jailed for their defiance, they redoubled their efforts to continue the resistance, prompting shame-faced comments from one of the male leaders that he wished the men had acted "as strongly, as regularly and as effortlessly."

Anna Parnell was described by a close associate of her brother's as possessing a better knowledge of the "real economic condition of the country and of the social and political forces which had to be acted upon to work out the freedom of Ireland than any person, man or woman, I have ever met." Charles Parnell was a landlord and a Member of Parliament, while his sister was his financial dependent, possessing neither political nor economic power. But the power of the landlord class was one of which she had direct experience, and it was a power she wanted to see destroyed.

Nor did the Ladies' Land League confine their concerns to Ireland. They sent a donation to the evicted miners of Durham, a gesture of solidarity completely alien to all but Davitt amongst the male leadership. The message of thanks they received, which made a clear link between the interests of the English and Irish working

class was certainly far removed from the majority of the Land League.

As a woman, Anna had no right to vote or to sit in parliament and she became increasingly scornful of the delusions of those who felt that Liberal promises of Home Rule were worth anything. For the women of the Ladies' Land League, disenfranchised and economically powerless, only a democratically controlled movement which drew in all sections of society was worth struggling for, because only such a movement would have space for women and could reflect the aspirations of politically conscious women.

That was the type of movement they were struggling to create while the men were in jail but they were ruthlessly crushed by Parnell on his release. The much more moderate organisation set up on the place of the disbanded Land League — the Irish National League — refused to admit women into its ranks. For the next few decades, Irish women could not join any organisation because Irish men had discovered to their cost that women "could not be controlled", as Tim Harrington, secretary of the National League, bluntly told Maud Gonne when she attempted to join nearly twenty years later.

CUMANN NA MBAN

In 1900 Maud Gonne formed Inghinidhe na hEireann in protest at what she discovered to be a conscious exclusion of women and for fourteen years that small group did much to re-establish women's right to engage in political activity. It was Cumann na mBan, however, which staked out the strongest claim for women. But in the process they ensured that male minds would always perceive the women's role as that of the binder of wounds, the handmaiden rather than the comrade.

However, even the formation of Cumann na mBan was a victory over those who felt that an organisation for women was unnecessary, that they should instead be content with getting out their collecting boxes whenever they were asked, returning to the home quietly and obediently when the task was over. The eventual compromise was to ensure that the women of Cumann na mBan remained separate, without any voice in the policy-making body of the nationalist movement.

There were many within Cumann na mBan who fought angrily against this dismissal of their capabilities. However, they failed to see that it was not their capabilities which were downgraded, it was their sex. Cumann na mBan always argued against the feminist insistence that they should put their own demands as women firmly upon the political agenda, believing that to be a selfish luxury in comparison to the urgent needs of "the nation".

Although feminists and nationalists never reached agreement on the issue, the two groups of women were to eventually find common cause in their rejection of the Treaty — a rejection which in part focused upon the symbolism inherent in the pro-Treatyites' refusal to extend the vote to women between the ages of 21 and 30 so that they, too, could vote on the question. Those who had been most active during the long years of war against the British were to be allowed no say in the peace settlement. The debate over this issue came to symbolise the differences between the two sides. One represented the

aspirations of an emerging Irish elite, the other fought for the creation of a new social order, one which would put into effect the Easter Proclamation's guarantee of equal rights for women.

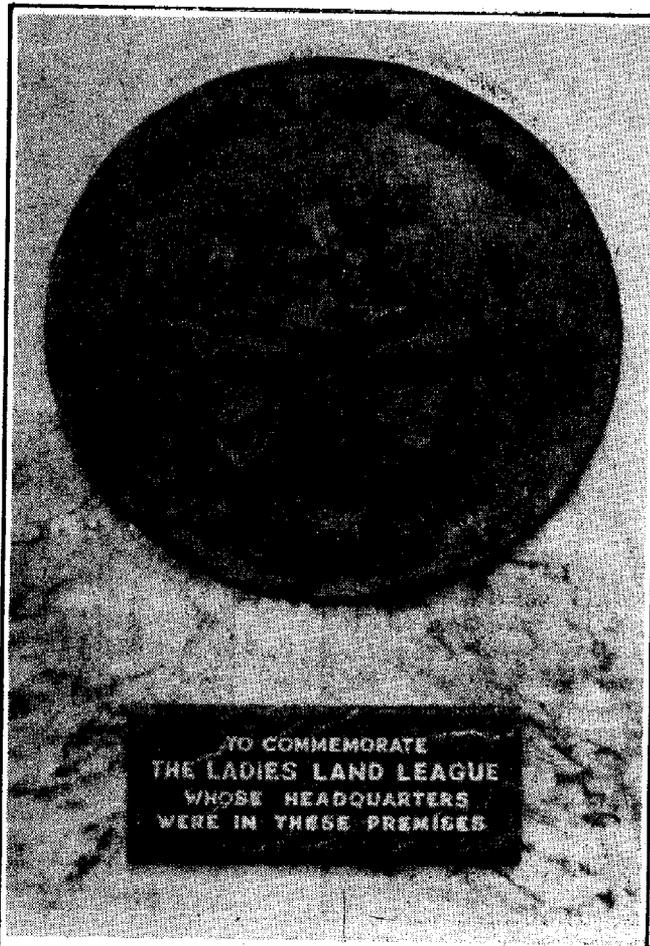
Cumann na mBan was to be the first organisation to reject the Treaty. Women members of the Dáil battled fruitlessly to have the scope of the franchise widened, only to be told by Arthur Griffith that the Treaty would be "torpedoed" if they had their way — surely an indication of the radical potential of many women of the time. Cumann na mBan had at their 1921 Convention already called for all citizens over the age of 18 to be given the vote, affirming that a decision taken on any other basis could not be considered binding.

Once again, women's lack of political influence, despite the strategic importance they had assumed, necessitated their advocacy of the most open forum possible. Their half-articulated consciousness of their sexual oppression led them to the realisation that the Treaty settlement had nothing to offer women. Although their role in the ensuing civil war was acknowledged to be crucial, when the ceasefire came, it was as if Cumann na mBan had never existed. De Valera addressed the "Legion of the Rearguard" and exhorted them to bear their sufferings" in a manner worthy of men who were ready to give their lives for the cause." Such indifference to their plight from their acknowledged leader must have been a severe blow to the 400 women who were in jail because they refused to yield to the pro-imperialist onslaught.

BACK TO THE HOME

The years of disappointment following the end of the dream culminated in the 1937 Constitution, which affirmed the primacy of women's domestic role. It was confirmation of what de Valera had always insisted upon in his political life: that woman's place was in the home. The vigorous campaign against the Constitution was organised, not by Cumann na mBan, which took the traditional Republican abstentionist position during the whole debate, but by such women as Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, who for 20 years had consistently fought for the interests of women. The feminists fought valiantly, but they failed.

The adoption of the Constitution was a serious defeat



The bronze commemoration plaque recently erected in the offices of the Allied Irish Bank, 39 Upper O'Connell Street, by the Irish History Workshop. The plaque was designed by Cliona Cussen. (Photo: Sean Ward). Donations towards the cost gratefully received via Gralton.

for Irishwomen. It has taken a new generation of feminists a decade of struggle to win for women a limited right to control their own bodies — a right which is now being seriously threatened.

Uncovering the hidden history of Irish women discloses generations of vibrant and energetic women who, against innumerable prejudices and obstacles fought for their right to full citizenship. It also leaves us with the inescapable truth that women must organise in their own interests to achieve liberation.

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WHY HAVE A COMMUNIST PARTY?

On the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary celebrations, *Gralton* invited EOIN O MURCHÚ, editor of the *Irish Socialist* and NEC member, to put the case for the Communist Party of Ireland today. In our next issue, we hope to take a look at the historical role of communist politics in Ireland by Mike Milotte, author of a shortly-to-be-published book on the subject.

Fifty years ago, in June 1933, the preparations laid by the Revolutionary Workers Group came to fruition with the formal Re-Formation of the Communist Party of Ireland only ten weeks after the burning, by a clerically-inspired mob, of the communist headquarters, Connolly House in Great Strand Street, Dublin.

That attack was indicative of the times in which the Communist Party was reformed. Fascism was on the march throughout the world, and in Ireland too the Blueshirts were rearing their ugly heads and proclaiming the virtues of the discipline of the Corporate State.

Fifty years later, the Communist Party is still here despite the problems of different decades, the hysteria of the Cold War era, the fanatical anti-communist reaction of clerical domination, the sectarian passions inflamed by British Imperialism in the North and the dissolution of much of the early idealism of the independence movement by the defeats suffered at the hands of the Free State and of Fianna Fáil's compromise.

But, if the Communist Party is still here, it is still far from being a mass party. Its membership is small, and its political influence seems, at first sight, quite negligible, if we take election statistics as a guide. What, then, is the purpose of the Communist Party? Why be a member of it?

Of course, there are important political questions involved, issues which divide the Left quite sharply: should workers follow a revolutionary road, or should they try to modify, to reform, the existing capitalist system; and if they choose the revolutionary road, what form will their future socialist society take. More particularly, what emphasis should be placed on the national question, and how does this relate to the struggle for

socialism.

But, there are some who will find themselves in broad agreement with what the Communist Party argues for, who will still ask what use it is to be a member of such a party.

Our first point is simple: the unique contribution which the Communist Party can make to the struggle for socialism in Ireland, a struggle to place the working class in fact in control of society, is that it unequivocally stands in the Marxist and Connolly tradition. The Communist Party is a party which sees the national and social questions linked to each other, and has always been clear about this.

Also, by nature of the fact that it is a Marxist party it lays especial emphasis on political questions, on who has state power and how they use it, and is not confined to purely economic issues.

At the same time, the Communist Party has proven itself again and again over the years an extremely effective and influential force in the industrial and economic sphere. Particularly in the North, it alone has proved capable of overcoming sectarianism and fighting on the twin fronts with resolute determination: with the organised working class (predominantly Protestant) for social and economic aims, but never shying away from the political context of the struggle for socialism in Ireland, the need for reunification and independence from British Imperialism. There has never been room for Orange 'socialism' in our party.

Of course, we do not see ourselves as playing the only role in the struggle for socialism. And it is not just a question of numerical reality. We recognise the genuine socialist convictions of many people outside our ranks, even if we have strongly-held differences with them on, say, the nature of existing socialism. We

have not shied away from defending the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, even in moments of great difficulty for them, as in the current situation of attempted counter-revolution in Poland. But we have not made a fetish of our commitment. We believe that the real world will teach its own lessons, and that genuine socialists will recognise imperialism's attack on our socialist revolution when it comes.

Naturally, it will be a help if there have been those there who have all along seen this ugly reality of imperialism, and the Communist Party places a high priority in its own work on defending existing socialism and showing its true nature and successes to the working class.

But, we do not live by a commitment to an external revolution. We support the Soviet Union, not because it is a far away country, but because the lessons which its revolution can teach us will prove vital for the Irish working class in the long run. And, most immediately, because in a world threatened with nuclear destruction it is crucial that the real character, hopes and aspirations of the workers of the Soviet Union be made clear in the West. There is no Soviet threat to human life on our planet; but neither will the Soviet Union abandon its commitment to socialism and its support for progressive movements throughout the world.

No, what inspires us — as indeed it inspires others — is the belief that what is wrong with our society can be changed; that poverty, wasted lives, unemployment, violence, crime, alienation can all be ended, and that the great human values of people can be given free rein — if we change our social system.

We are not exclusivist, then, in our approach to this fight. Each country has its own specific history, and Ireland is no different. No serious revolutionary can

ignore the significance of the Irish Labour movement, the industrial tradition of the unions and even the social-democratic tradition of the Labour Party. These traditions may contain limitations, but they still reflect a certain sense — even at their worst — of the working class as a separate class with separate interests.

It is our aim, in fact, to help to strengthen that separate consciousness, and while we believe that our party, with its international links, its roots in the militant struggle of the Irish working class, and its theoretical inheritance of Marxism, is a sharper and clear forum for that separate working class consciousness, we would be blind indeed to ignore the strivings for a better life that the best of the Labour movement tradition embodies.

And can anyone seriously talk of building socialism in a country still dominated by British Imperialism? The Republican tradition is also a vital part of the Irish people's specific revolutionary inheritance. It has often been diverted into the cul-de-sac of militarism, the romantic lure of the armed campaign; it has often been emasculated so that the real essence of republicanism, the demand that the people control all the wealth of the country, has been reduced to a quest for a separate national identity alone.

But, no matter how much diverted or emasculated, again and again the real national question has reasserted itself; the land of Ireland for the people of Ireland, and an overcoming of sectarian differences to build a true national democracy.

The great tragedy, however, of Irish politics has been these twin failures: the failure of the labour movement to play its role in the national independence movement; and the failure of the national



The Essex Street headquarters of the CPI

Derek Speirs (Report)

movement to link itself with labour. It is not just that Labour 'waited' on the national question; Republicanism 'waited' on the social question, too.

The Communist Party draws strength from both these traditions, and sees one of its major roles as being a bridge between them. Theoretically, we are proud of the work we have done to combat the imperialist arguments of the Walkerites, of the Two Nationists and the apologists for the multinationals. But our work has not just been at the theoretical level. We have been there on the ground, arguing in the unions for civil rights and, now, for the Declaration of Intent to Withdraw, and constantly working to build up the working class organisationally, on both political and industrial levels.

Our hopes for Left Unity, as in the Left Alternative programme, have been somewhat dashed. But we have not retreated, and will not retreat, into political sectarianism as a consequence. We still see the coming together of these three strands of the Irish working people as central to socialism in Ireland: the labour movement, the republican movement and the Marxist movement of which the Communist Party is the representative.

But, neither will we wait. We believe that our party has its own role to play directly in organising the working class to resist capitalism and imperialism. We are proud, too, of our record on this. In all areas of the people's struggles, we have been active. In the struggle against fascism in the thirties, in solidarity with Republican Spain, in the battle against unemployment in the fifties, the housing action struggles of the sixties, the civil rights movement in the North, solidarity with Vietnam, with the people of South Africa, with the peoples of the Middle East, in the battle against pay restraint, against the Common Market, against the foreign multinationals, yes, our party has been to the fore in all these arenas of struggle.

It is hard to take the constant jibes of reaction, the sneers of the cosmopolitan sophisticates of bourgeois Ireland. But we take strength from the history of struggle of the Irish people. We know that there will be another day, because the working people will never disappear. And we take strength from the successes and achievements of socialism, because we know that one day our people too will build a free society in a free country.

Fifty years of militant, uncompromising struggle is a proud record, and a worthy one. We have played a vital role in the past, and are convinced that we will continue to do so in the future.

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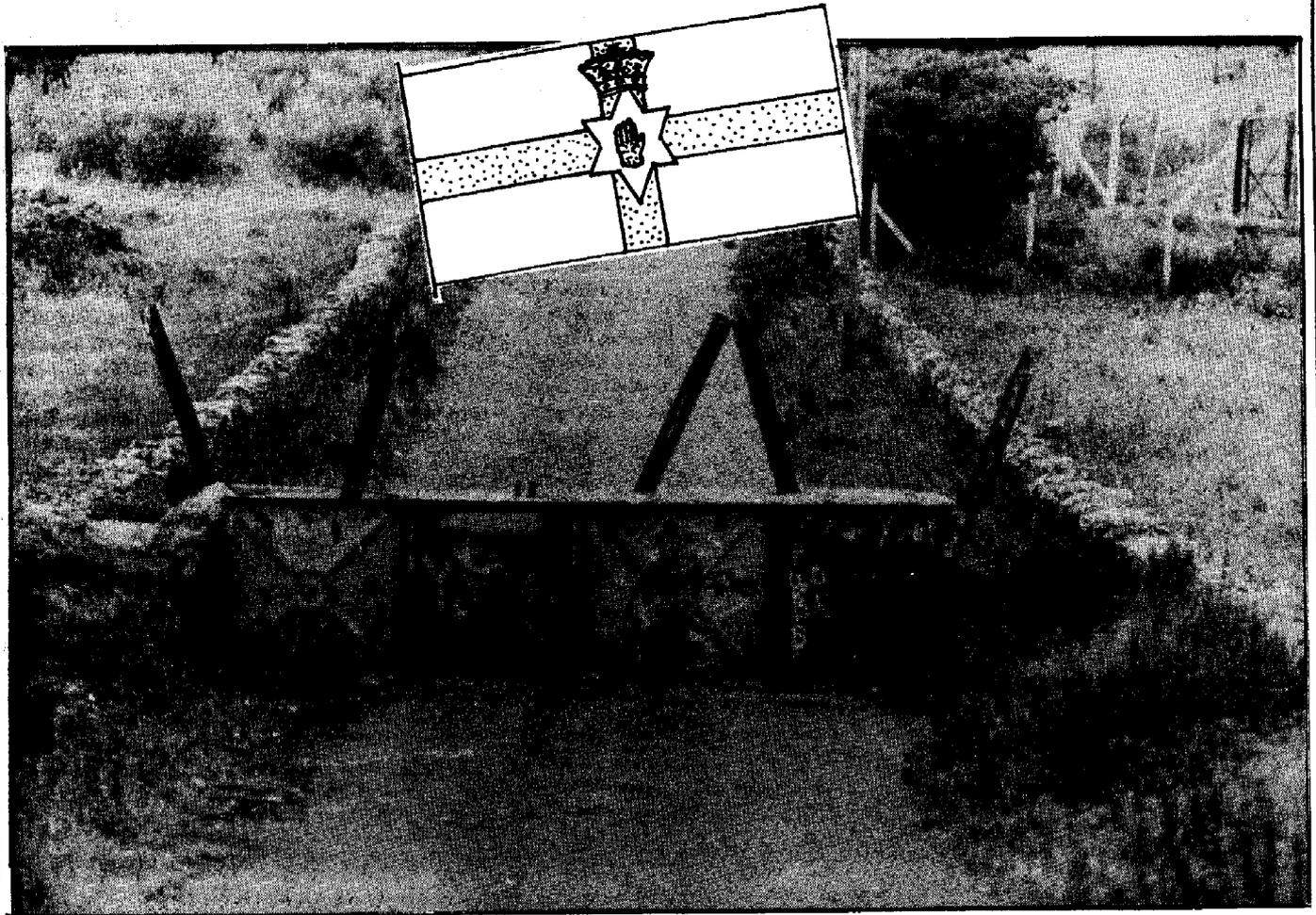
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THE MAKING OF PARTITION

JOHN GOODWILLIE



Derek Speirs (Report)

In a previous article ("The roots of Partition", *Galton* No. 4), I looked at the origins of the sectarian dividing-line in Irish politics which has remained stable since 1885. I concluded that the British Government had not had an overall strategy of formenting sectarian divisions, but that there had been regional variations in economic life which produced different political attitudes.

The purpose of this article is to consider how an existing division in political attitudes came to be reflected — inexactly — in the administrative partition of the island. Partition can only be explained in terms of the background of the Home Rule controversy against which it was set.

BRITISH ATTITUDES TO HOME RULE

The general election of 1885 left 82 Irish Nationalist M.P.s holding the balance of power in the House of Commons between Liberals and Conservatives. The Liberal leader, Gladstone, formed a government with Nationalist support and introduced his first Home Rule Bill, which was defeated in the House of Commons when 93 Liberal M.P.s voted against. The latter formed a Liberal Unionist Party which was allied to the Conservatives and merged with them in 1912.

Gladstone was returned to office in the general election of 1892 and introduced

his second Home Rule Bill in 1893. It passed the House of Commons, but was defeated in the House of Lords, which at this time had the power to veto and a permanent Conservative majority.

Under a Conservative government in 1904 the top civil servant in Ireland, Sir Antony MacDonnell, produced a scheme for partial devolution of power stopping short of Home Rule. When the scheme was released as a kite-flying exercise it created such a storm in Unionist circles that the government repudiated it.

In 1909 the House of Lords rejected Lloyd George's budget, and as a result of their veto, power was ended by the Parliament Act 1911. The government, led by Asquith, brought in the Third

Home Rule Bill in 1912. Passed by the House of Commons and opposed by the House of Lords, it became law under the Parliament Act in 1914. However, the First World War had just broken out and the operation of Home Rule was postponed.

So, during a period of almost thirty years, Irish Home Rule was a matter of contention between the two major British parties. What was the difference between them?

The Liberals were the party of the middle and lower middle class, also having the working class vote, at any rate in the towns. One of their reasons for advocating Home Rule was that discussion of this issue was an excuse for deferring consideration of social reforms.

With their predecessors the Whigs they made the initial decisions which set the colonies on the gradual road to self-government. The direction of their policy was therefore neo-colonial: they aimed at retaining influence while entrusting an initially limited amount of power to the local inhabitants. Home Rule for Ireland fits into this pattern. They thought that the granting of Home Rule would satisfy Irish national aspirations, and, with a destabilising element removed, Ireland's attachment to the United Kingdom would be strengthened.

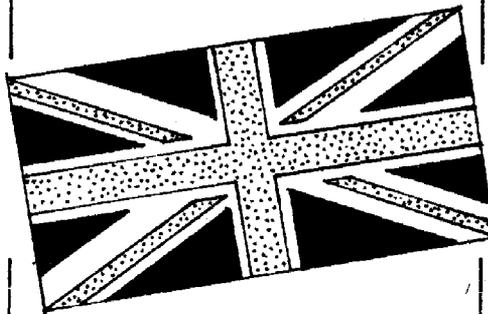
The Conservatives used the Home Rule issue as a means of getting into power. They represented gentry and business interests. Their aristocratic connections resulted in the "Curragh Mutiny" of March 1914 when large numbers of Army officers offered their resignations rather than take military action against the Ulster Unionists. The Liberal Unionists, who defected to them in 1886, brought over sections of the aristocracy and financial institutions, and the most go-ahead manufacturers. British industry, which had led the world, suffered from an economic recession in 1875-86, and was looking for markets and sources of raw materials. This led it to support an imperialist policy.

Much of the Conservatives' opposition to Home Rule was couched in the language of protecting Protestants or protecting those loyal to the Crown; the Irish were regarded as unfit for self-government, or, alternatively, determined on total separation in league with England's enemies. But the overriding fear seems to have been that giving in to Ireland would make rival imperialist powers believe that Britain was weak and would not be able to react to a threat to her interests; and that colonial peoples would be tempted to follow Ireland's example. The Conservative leader Bonar Law told Ulster Unionists at Balmoral in

1912: "You hold the pass, the pass for the Empire . . . You will save the Empire by your example."

THE NATURE OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM

At this point it is necessary to ask what British imperialism was and did it have interests in manipulating Ireland in a certain direction? Imperialism in the common-or-garden sense has been around for thousands of years, and some Marxists such as André Gunder Frank seem to regard it as arising with the birth of the capitalist system several centuries ago. However, most Marxists follow Lenin's definition of imperialism as a stage that capitalism reached in the 1880s.



Lenin defined it as follows (all references at end of article):

(1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this "finance capital", of a financial oligarchy; (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed.

If we try to apply this to Ireland, we have problems. Points (1) and (2) would be relevant to the imperialist power more than the dominated one. As far as point (3) is concerned, Britain exported little capital to Ireland: Ireland exported far more to Britain.

Point (4) deals with the sharing out of markets and raw materials. Ireland, because of its small population and poverty, was not very important to Britain as a market and it provided no raw materials, unless we count labour and

food. However, supplying labour and food is really what any peripheral region of England was doing for the industrial centres. If Irish emigration had been cut off, all Britain would have needed to do would be to half emigration from Britain to Canada, Australia, etc. Irish food had been important, but from the 1870s grain from Canada and the United States was undercutting Irish prices, causing an agricultural depression which resulted in the Land War. And from the turn of the century refrigerated meat from Argentina, Australasia, and Denmark was in competition with Irish meat.

We are left with point (5), which amounts to saying that Britain needed to ensure that no other power got possession of Ireland. But this was the precise reason why Henry II came over in 1172: there is nothing specifically capitalist about it.

On the face of it, then, Lenin's analysis is totally irrelevant to the Irish situation. But Lenin certainly regarded Ireland as subject to British imperialism. Anthony Brewer points out: "Today, the term imperialism is generally taken to refer to the dominance of more developed over less developed countries. For the classical Marxists (including Lenin) it meant, primarily, rivalry between advanced capitalist countries, rivalry expressed in conflict over territory, taking political and military as well as economic forms, and tending, ultimately, to inter-imperialist war."

If we regard imperialism in this way, it is not a question of British imperialism exploiting Ireland. *Ireland at the beginning of this century was subject to British capitalism, which happened coincidentally to be in its imperialist stage. That is all that British imperialism in Ireland means.*

REACTION IN ULSTER

We can now return to look at the reaction in Ulster to the proposals for Home Rule. The landlords throughout Ireland were afraid that under Home Rule their land would be confiscated. However, the Land Acts of 1885 to 1909 enabled tenants to buy their land on a government loan, repaying the government through annuities. By 1922 the majority of land had been purchased, and the landlords had become interest receivers. Since many landlords were also English landlords, English opposition to Home Rule was lessened.

The Ulster Protestant middle class centred around Belfast industry. They were afraid that Home Rule, once granted, would lead on to Irish control of customs and excise. An Irish government

The specially-erected pavilion for the Ulster Convention of 1892.



would establish tariffs to foster industry (there was in fact no demand for this from budding Irish industrialists, but politicians like Parnell and Griffith advocated it). In retaliation, Britain would erect tariff barriers against Ulster industry and drive it out of business. Belfast industry depended on Britain for markets, credit, and raw materials. The shipyards, engineering and textile industries of Belfast were oriented to the British market and could not suddenly turn their hand to making a different range of goods for the Irish market. The middle class were also afraid that Ulster, the most wealthy area of Ireland, would be overtaxed to pay for an Irish bureaucracy, grants to Southern industries, and land purchase, by decision of a predominantly agricultural Home Rule parliament.

The Protestant tenant farmers consistently followed the lead of the landlords and capitalists from about 1900, once land purchase was fully under way.

The Protestant workers followed the lead of the middle class. Their ideology made them sympathetic to imperialism. There were fears about civil and religious liberty, there was the fear of tying themselves to Southern wage levels and to a low standard of labour protection, there was the fear of losing their marginal privileges (jobs and houses) over Catholic workers in Ulster, and they shared the fears of the middle class which would mean mass unemployment. Given the absence of any sizeable socialist consciousness, as distinct from trade unionism and the "gas-and-water" reformism of the Belfast Trades Council

and Labour Party, the Protestant workers were looking after their own material interests. An independent Irish capitalism had nothing to offer them for the foreseeable future. As Eamonn McCann remarks, "there is a Catholic folk-myth which holds that . . . the protestants, blackmailed and befuddled by sectarian loyalist propaganda, chose, against their own interests as Irish people, to retain the link with Britain . . . The workers in the Belfast shipyards and in the engineering factories had nothing to gain and their jobs, possibly, to lose in the United Ireland which was on offer."

The rabble-rousing speeches from Lord Randolph Churchill in 1886, like those of Bonar Law in 1912, did not create the opposition to Home Rule: they strengthened an indigenous movement that already existed.

The upsurge of Irish Nationalism had resulted in a revival of the Orange Order, which was joined by many middle-class people as a way of influencing the proletariat. The Orange Lodges took on the then important work of checking electoral registers. A rally of 20,000 Orangemen on 26 April 1886 threatened to defy a Home Rule government. 20 Anti-Home Rule associations were formed in two months. Thousands of meetings took place, at some of which there were threats of buying weapons. Military preparations took place quietly.

The 1893 Home Rule Bill was responded to by the organisation of a network of Unionist clubs and the holding of a convention of 11,879 delegates elected at meetings of Unionist voters. Speakers threatened passive

resistance and self-defence. The convention declared it would repudiate the authority of a Home Rule parliament. 100,000 loyalists marched in Belfast. There was some acquisition of arms and formation of rifle clubs, for which an Ulster Defence League raised funds.

The scare created by the devolution proposals of 1904, and the establishment of the Independent Orange Order as a focus of working-class dissent, resulted in the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council, with inbuilt representation from the Orange Order. Hitherto Unionism had been organised on an all-Ireland basis, but now Ulster Unionists were recognised as having different interests from Southern Unionists.

In response to the renewed threat of a Home Rule Bill after 1910, small quantities of arms were quietly imported. Craig had spoken of buying arms in 1910. Carson said: "We must be prepared, in the event of a Home Rule Bill passing, with such measures as will carry on for ourselves the government of those districts of which we have control." There were three demonstrations of over 100,000 people. Orangemen began drilling. In 1912, 447,197 people in Ulster signed a Solemn League and Covenant to use "all means which may be found necessary" to defeat Home Rule and to refuse to recognise the authority of any Home Rule parliament. In early 1913 the drilling units combined into the Ulster Volunteer Force, which by February 1914 had between 90,000 and 100,000 members. The UVF made plans to look after supplies, transport, police duties, hospitals, evacuation of women and

children, seizing of arms, and positional (i.e., not guerrilla) warfare. By July 1914 it had over 40,000 guns. A Provisional Government of Ulster was ready to take over local administration, education, customs and excise, and postal services. *It is difficult to accept the view that this movement was created from Britain, or that it was all bluff.*

Historians point out that between 1886 and 1912 the focus of opposition to Home Rule shifted from Britain to Ulster. It is true that because of land purchase there was no longer such involvement by the British aristocracy. But was it because there was so little Ulster opposition in 1886? Nicholas Mansergh has written: "It may reasonably be supposed that the enactment of Home Rule in 1886 (but not in 1914) would have allowed the peaceful re-emergence of an unpartitioned though possibly federal Irish state." Conor Cruise O'Brien contributes a double negative: "It would be unsafe to say that an English majority led by Gladstone and an Irish majority led by Parnell could not . . . have achieved a settlement which preserved Irish unity." Peter Gibbon comments: "If the (1886) Home Rule Bill had been passed . . . it is unlikely that popular Irish resistance would have been unified or serious."

This is difficult to accept. The Ulster opposition was led by people who were perfectly well aware that both the 1886 and 1893 Bills would be vetoed by the Conservative House of Lords, if passed by the Commons. The British aristocracy was going to bail them out and it was not necessary to prepare for doomsday. In 1912 the Ulster bourgeoisie had not acquired new reasons for opposing Home Rule: the reason that civil war was threatened was that now they had to stand or fall on their own resources.

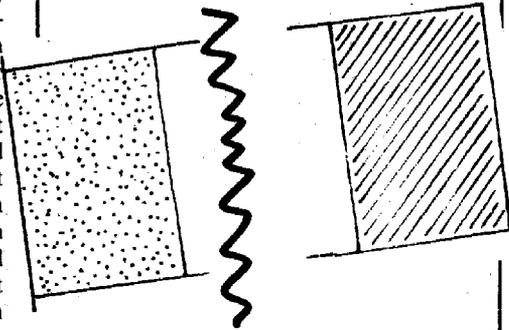
THE SOLUTION OF PARTITION

The idea of partition as a solution had been floated for some time. In 1886 the Ulster Liberal leader, Thomas Sinclair, had said there would have to be partition if Britain could not govern the whole of Ireland. Gladstone said he was willing to consider the exclusion of Ulster or part of Ulster if the House of Commons accepted the Home Rule Bill in principle.

When the 1912 Home Rule Bill was being prepared both Lloyd George and Winston Churchill argued in the Cabinet that there would have to be special treatment for Ulster, but the Cabinet decided to wait and see what would

happen in Ulster. A government backbencher proposed the exclusion of four counties (Northern Ireland minus Fermanagh and Tyrone). In January 1913, Carson proposed the exclusion of all Ulster. In March 1914 Asquith suggested that any county could vote its own exclusion for six years.

After the Easter Rising in 1916 Lloyd George held inter-party talks on Home Rule, which agreed on the granting of Home Rule with the Six Counties excluded, but could not agree whether exclusion would be permanent or temporary. The Unionists of Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan agreed that their inclusion in a Home Rule Irish state was the only way in which a permanent Unionist majority in the Six Counties could be guaranteed. Although the



inclusion of a large Catholic minority served to maintain the Unionist all-class alliance, there is no evidence that this was deliberate: the aim was simply to take as many Protestants as possible under its protection.

Finally in 1920 the Lloyd George government introduced the Government of Ireland Bill which provided for separate home rule for the Six Counties and the Twenty-Six. The Treaty of 1921 which created the Irish Free State left the border where it was established in 1920, and following the collapse of the Boundary Commission it was re-affirmed in 1925.

It is sometimes suggested that Partition was imposed by Britain out of fear of social revolution in Ireland. For example, C. Desmond Greaves has written: "Partition was aimed at stifling a revolution that was in progress in Ireland and raising an insurmountable barrier in the path of another."

How strong was the social revolution in Ireland? There were several instances of working-class methods of fighting the national struggle: three general strikes in 1918-20, the Limerick Soviet, the strike against munitions transport in 1920. There was the Belfast engineering strike

in 1919. There was land seizures in the West in 1917-20. There were half a dozen soviets (seizures under workers' control) in 1920-21 and more after the Treaty. There was a massive expansion of trade unions. But there was no mass socialist consciousness and no organisation.

While there were elements of the ruling class who thought that Sinn Féin meant Bolshevism, it is difficult to believe that at a time of heightened class conflict throughout Europe, the ruling class as a whole believed that Ireland was in greater danger of going socialist than Germany, or Britain itself. And if they thought the danger was greater in Britain, they would hardly have been worrying about startling socialism in Ireland.

In any case, the decision to partition, Ireland had been taken long before the British bourgeoisie learned what a Bolshevik might be. In 1913 Bonar Law wrote to Carson: "I have long felt that if it were possible to leave Ulster as she is, and have some form of Home Rule for the rest of Ireland that is, on the whole, the only way out." In February 1914 they both said that they had no objection to Home Rule for the rest of Ireland if Ulster was excluded.

In conclusion, it seems evident that Partition was of indigenous Irish origin. It is futile to blame modern Britain for the Ulster Plantation, or for the way in which certain British governments and parties exacerbated sectarian divisions.

In enacting Partition, the British ruling class was deciding that they could not enforce the wishes of either Protestants or Catholics over the other without creating a repressive state apparatus of such dimensions that it would have replaced bourgeois democracy by the equivalent of fascism. And British capitalism's interests in Ireland were not important enough for them to pay that price.

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Books

WATCHING PAINT DRY

THE IRISH LABOUR PARTY IN TRANSITION 1957-82. Michael Gallagher. Gill & Macmillan. £15 (hardback).

"I gather from Deputy Tully that someone accused the Labour Party of going Red, which hurt his feeling very much. May I straightaway dissociate myself from any such suggestion? The Labour Party are, and always have been, the most conservative element in our community. Far from the Labour Party going Red, they are not going anywhere... The Labour Party are a nice, respectable, docile, harmless body of men — as harmless a body as ever graced any parliament." The speaker is Sean Lemass in 1966. Short but, let's be honest, decidedly sweet. Is there, indeed, much more to be said about this unfortunate organisation? Michael Gallagher obviously thinks so but, 326 pages and 15 quid the wiser, I can't really see it myself.

1966 was, of course, the year that Labour appeared to come out of the closet and admit that it actually stood for, gulp, "socialism". "Socialism is much more fashionable now" declared Brendan "I'm an Irishman second, I'm a Catholic first" Corish. "On to the New Republic", "The Seventies will be

Socialist" trumpeted the new radical intellectuals Conor Cruise O'Brien and Justin Keating in the run up to the 1969 Election. None of it fooled Sean. In 1983 it all sounds faintly ridiculous as Spring and Co., without a socialist blink, gleefully participate in a government that, if it continues the way it is going, will make the Cosgrave Coalition look like the proverbial vicarage tea party.

Apologise. It is difficult for an outsider to be "fair" to the Labour Party right now. Michael Gallagher, effectively finishing his story in 1977, does a better job. For good or bad, he sets out the record over the last twenty odd years. It's balanced, it's sympathetic, it's detailed, it's largely accurate... it's incredibly boring. Like watching paint dry.

A lot of the fault is the author's. In the worst bourgeois academic tradition, he refuses to engage himself in any debate on questions, like coalition, that rack the party from time to time. The record he presents is an almost entirely parliamentary one — a story of the chiefs, not the indians. Some attempt is made to "place" the party in sociological terms but the insights are unoriginal and the project defeats him. If the Irish Labour Party has a soul, a mission,

even a *raison d'etre*, then Michael Gallagher has failed to articulate it.

But can anyone articulate something that, on the evidence of this book, is simply not there? Is it not true that, with the possible exception of the late sixties, the Irish Labour Party has not even sought to represent the interests of the working class, a minimum obligation of a social democratic party? Rather, has it not sought to represent the interests of its own leading members? That may not make it a pro-capitalist party, but it sure as hell doesn't make it a pro-socialist one. Meanwhile, the only possible *political role* for such a party is as an electoral pawn in the game of bourgeois democracy played out between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

Militant and the dwindling non-militant (and non-militant) left in the party must somehow demonstrate either that this analysis is wrong — a herculean task — or, more realistically, that it can all be somehow changed. And how realistic is that project after the betrayal of socialist hopes in the late sixties? The task would surely be a hundred times harder now.

This book has provided an, admittedly jaundiced, outsider with further ammunition with which to write off the Irish Labour

Party. Maybe the same ammunition, impeccably "objective" as it is, can stir someone on the Labour Left to articulate a different conclusion. If not, then I'm afraid Sean Lemass has the last word.

JOHN CANE



CONSERVATIVE APPROACH

THE CRANE BAG. Vol. 7, NO. 1: *Socialism and Culture.* £4.00.

In the seventh year of publication, *The Crane Bag* has taken a sabbatical from specifically Irish topics and explored "alternative perspectives" — first Latin America and now "Socialism and Culture." A curious concept lies embedded in the structure of this seeming effort at liberalism: that of socialist culture as a foreign or isolated entity. This inability to come

to terms with the very concept of socialist culture causes this issue of *The Crane Bag* to lose equilibrium at points, for both the conservative views on the right and those expressed by Communist Party members rest on the tacit assumption that socialist culture is somehow externally imposed, rather than a natural evolution of art from a socialist reality.

"Socialism and Culture" is divided into three sections: a critical introduction and discussion of contemporary Soviet and Eastern European authors; "critical debate" on socialism and aesthetics; and "Socialism and the 'Irish Connection,'" which is largely devoted to investigations of Ireland's "socialist" writ-

ters of past eras (O'Casey, Wilde, and Shaw). The trichotomy speaks for itself: socialism as foreign, socialism as abstract theory, and socialism as past attempts. Little has been done to provide a framework for socialist culture as an ongoing issue in the West. This deficit is the major failing of the current *Crane Bag*.

The conservative approach of *The Crane Bag* is best summed up by one of its main promulgators, Dennis O'Driscoll, who states in his article "The writer in the Eastern European context" that: "it would be invidious to pursue the line (so frequently followed in journalistic circles in the West) that writers from the Communist Bloc are

worthy of attention in accordance only with the extent of their overt dissidence." Yet O'Driscoll and others then pursue this line with painstaking skill. One must suffer innumerable gratuitous references throughout the issue to the oppression of Solzhenitsyn, for example, who has no place in any publication devoted to socialism.

The section on Soviet and Eastern European writers starts largely to the right, and it is sad that the reader will in all likelihood be so unfamiliar with the material presented that this collection of critiques will be taken as an accurate cross section of the extremely complex field of Eastern European and

Soviet literature. By far the best article in this section is W.J. McCormack's "Poetry and Modern Hungary," which is singularly elucidating in its investigation of Hungarian culture, touching on such points as its linguistic isolation and continual negotiation of imperialising neighbours. In such discussion, he draws some thought-provoking parallels with Ireland.

The theoretical section on "Socialism and Culture" is extremely uneven in quality, polarising at every turn into a non-analytical polemicism that mars the very concept of this section as one devoted to theory. Two mutually negating articles on "aesthetic theory" by Peter Fuller and Robert Ballagh do little to inspire dialectical enquiry into what ought to be a discourse on socialist aesthetics. I have long wondered why Peter Fuller's defensive non-historical approach ever

finds its way into print in any serious journal — it is topped in offensiveness only by Paul Ricoeur's diatribe against 'totalitarianism' in his discussion of the works of Jan Patocka, the Czech phenomenologist.

This section is redeemed by the well-informed and analytical approach of Jennifer Todd in her article, "Aesthetic experience and contemporary capitalism." Todd maintains a synthesis of social analysis and aesthetic evaluation through a comparative study of Georg Lukacs and Walter Benjamin. This article examines the fine line between aesthetic and cognitive experience, and though tending to pull political punches, as it so common in advanced theory, it avoids slipping into the right or left wing idealism that ignores contradictions and on-going political struggles. Carefully

written, Todd's article represents exactly the level of debate that has long been missing in Irish cultural theory, and stands out as a red beacon of serious enquiry.

The section on socialism and the Irish connection is the safest one, unlikely to invite intensity of discussion in any quarter. Any political interpretation by the contributors can be balanced by the reader's own knowledge of the ongoing critical interpretations, since a good number of *Crane Bag* readers will already be familiar with the texts discussed. The section includes a naive if optimistic comparison of Polish and Yugoslav cultural policy as examples that might be pursued by the Arts Council, while refusing to discuss the obvious gap in social realities: the cultural policies of the aforementioned countries are peculiar to socialism and central planning, and Ireland is not a socialist

country.

The *Crane Bag* begins and ends with Richard Kearney's painful tolerant scepticism of Soviet motives, which I see as an unfortunate overstepping of editorial liberty. He maintains what Roland Barthes would call a "third party" approach of so-called cultural autonomy from politics, which does not seem to me to be a tenable assumption in contemporary analytical discourse, and thus locates the political axis of the *Crane Bag* somewhat to the right of centre.

The *Crane Bag* must be lauded for the bravery of its attempt to open up a dialogue around a very sensitive subject. As a whole I would give it high marks for concept and information, but low marks in theory, lacking as it does a focal point either culturally or politically.

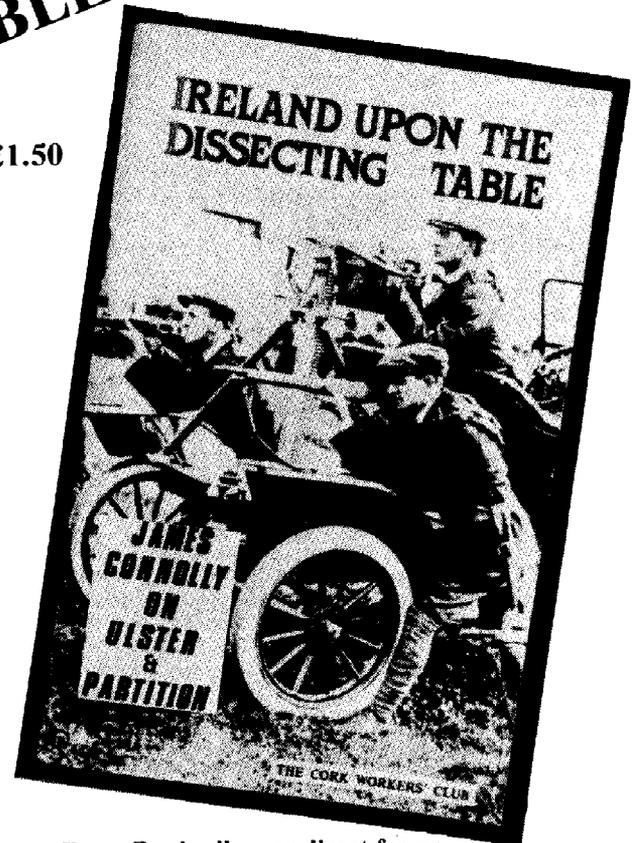
MOLLY KALLEN

IRELAND UPON THE DISSECTING TABLE JAMES CONNOLLY

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When the spectre of a Partitioned Ireland first loomed on the political horizon, James Connolly saw with adequate clarity what was at issue, and he opposed it. Why he did so can be readily gleaned from the collection of his writings assembled and arranged in chronological order in this pamphlet. Here, the reader is presented with the greater body of his work pertaining to Ulster. It is not suggested that herein is provided the answers to current problems; the writings of no man can do this on their own. What is offered, however, is a ready insight into the values and considerations that influenced Connolly, as a revolutionary Socialist, in his opposition to Partition. This opposition was based not so much on the abstract principles of an inviolable national territory, as on the real dread that from such a political arrangement the forces of a revolutionary working class movement would emerge the one real loser. To him this was the crucial issue. Partition would not merely introduce a new element of regional division in working class ranks, it would also assure the perpetuation of sectarian divisions already rife within those ranks, especially in Ulster. That is to say, Partition would divide the Irish working class vertically as well as horizontally, and in the process re-enforce the ascendancy of the respective bourgeois ruling factions over the whole. James Connolly did not survive to see his fears realized, but there are few who could quibble with his prediction that Partition "would perpetuate in a form aggravated in evil the discords now prevalent, and help the Home Rule and Orange capitalists and clerics to keep their rallying cries before the public as the political watchwords of the day. In short, it would make division more intensive and confusion of ideas more confounded."

Ballots or Bullets

Dear Gralton,

Do I detect a hint of sour grapes in F. O'Farrell's attack on Joan Kelly's article 'Ballots and Bullets' (Gralton 7).

Comrade O'Farrell betrays his/her political allegiance by describing the Republican Movement as "the Provisional Alliance", a term constantly used by the Workers' Party (who have at least had the honesty to drop Sinn Fein from their title). Nevertheless, I don't mind listening to criticisms of the Republican Movement, from whatever quarter, just so long as they're reasonable.

F. O'Farrell seems to have a problem grasping the meaning of the term 'nationalist'. Surely it's obvious that it means those who believe in the ideal of national unity. And that doesn't exclude anyone who is a Protestant — not only am I 'from the Protestant tradition' but I'm also a nationalist.

He/she then goes on to suggest that because one company used the re-siting of their premises, following an IRA bomb attack, to rid themselves of militant trade unionists, the economic bombing campaign should cease.

Now fair enough, these workers may have made some gains in their struggle against their individual employers but would Comrade O'Farrell even dream of using the same argument against the armed struggle waged in Palestine, Azania or El Salvador. Somehow I think not.

As it's been pointed out in the past, nine out of every ten cattle-dips in Zimbabwe were destroyed during the war by ZANU and ZAPU guerrillas, consequently inflicting hardship on the people. In Azania, ANC guerrillas have planted bombs in shopping centres, sometimes killing black civilians. In El Salvador, the FMLN-FDR frequently attack the transport system, bridges, etc.

There's no loud cries of 'terrorists' from the likes of F. O'Farrell then. But why not?

The reason is that any serious revolutionary recognises that any struggles within the capitalist/imperialist state must be subjected to the overall aims of the struggle for national liberation. No amount of Gregory Deals (however much one respects Tony Gregory), or minor concessions to trade unions, are going to seriously threaten the capitalist system. If they could they wouldn't be made.

F. O'Farrell also says that the Republican Movement shouldn't be supported allegedly because some of its supporters in America believe that there will be a greater role for American capitalism in a united Ireland.

The Republican Movement has reiterated on a number of occasions that its policies will not be dictated by pressure from support groups or individuals, whoever they are. And whatever individual supporters of the Republican Movement may hope for in a united Ireland doesn't necessarily reflect the aspirations of the Movement.

I could call for support for Fianna Fail or the Workers' Party in the hope that when they come to power they will give tax exemptions to sado-masochistic window cleaners and make Terry Wogan High King of Ireland. Now if I were daft enough to aspire to these lofty ideals, would that mean that Fianna Fail or the Workers' Party also believe in them? Catch yourself on, F. O'Farrell.

Let's admit it, after years of crying about how the Republican Movement should enter constitutional politics in the North they've done it, and they've come out fairly well. If Sinn Fein had been trashed we would never have heard the last about how they've no support.

Sinn Fein and the Republican Movement do have support — 64,191 first preference votes, 35% of the nationalist vote. And the reason why is that over the years people have become increasingly sickened by reformist parties who make accommodations within the system for their own narrow party and careerist ends.

Sinn Fein presented themselves as a radical alternative and a lot of people believe in that alternative. Like it or not, that's a fact.

Yours etc.,

Terry Fennessy,
142 Shangan Road,
Ballymun,
Dublin 9.

GRALTON,
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Harold's Cross,
Dublin 6.

Letters

The SLP and the Revolutionary process

Dear Gralton,

I have my doubts about some of the proposals that Des Derwin put forward as an alternative or replacement for the SLP in his "Lessons Of History" article in Gralton 7.

Firstly, he was correct in saying that the SLP was an "organisational experiment" that attracted the non-aligned, Social Democrats and pseudo-Trotskyists into its fold. The performance of the SLP, however, cannot be solely judged on its organisational merits or the specific policies put forward from within its midst. It must be viewed, rather, in the context of the broad historical forces that act upon working class politics both within Irish and European/global dimensions.

Within these dimensions, the economic climate has a much more significant influence on ideological positions than is thought generally among the Left. It would be naive to suppose that non-aligned Leftists, Social Democrats or Super-Trots could generate anything significant without coming to a realisation or recognition of their ideological shortcomings.

It would be even more naive to think that these shortcomings could easily disappear after much pint-drinking and debates! No matter how many SLP-type situations you could regenerate, all would sooner or later come to naught. It would be equally unrealistic to suppose that a united Trotskyist Front could work miracles — let alone havoc!

On the other hand, the "serious left" has little to contribute by way of pointing the way forward to a Socialist Ireland (by "serious left" I mean the WP or CPI). One positive element within the CPI has been its flirtation with Gramsci — but this appears to be an isolated event and merely on paper (akin to a Trotskyist's flirtation with Rakovsky), of no great importance for the moment.

The sad fact remains that no party on the Left has yet come to grasp — be it Social Democrat, Trotskyist, Stalinist, SLPist, Maoist or any unaccounted variation — the fullness of the crisis facing the Irish working class nor the opportunities for advancing Socialism.

This fact is blatantly ignored in the pages of *Gralton* (even!), *Workers Life*, *Irish Socialist*, *The Worker*, *Militant*, *Socialist Republic*, *Irish Communist* etc. and will continue to be ignored. For how long?

Shall the Left forever remain in the blind alleys of Schematism, Dogmatism, Fantasy and Opportunism? Shall the writings and observations of Marx, Engels and Lenin remain total abstracts to be brought off the shelves only for petty ideological disputes? Shall the reality of the Socialist countries, the liberation movements, the waning fortunes of Imperialism, the consequences of world historical processes be lost on the Irish Left?

One major realisation on the ideological front that must be faced is that pseudo-Trotskyism can only play into the hands of Imperialism, whilst pseudo-Stalinism can only thwart and de-accelerate the process of building Socialism.

A future socialist movement cannot afford to be side-tracked or coerced by these two "deformities" or negative phenomena that have arisen in the course of past socialist history. Let this be the first "lesson" in considering a future Socialist Labour Party.

Yours etc.

Owen McCarthy
50 Boherboy Close,
Lotabeg,
Cork.

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