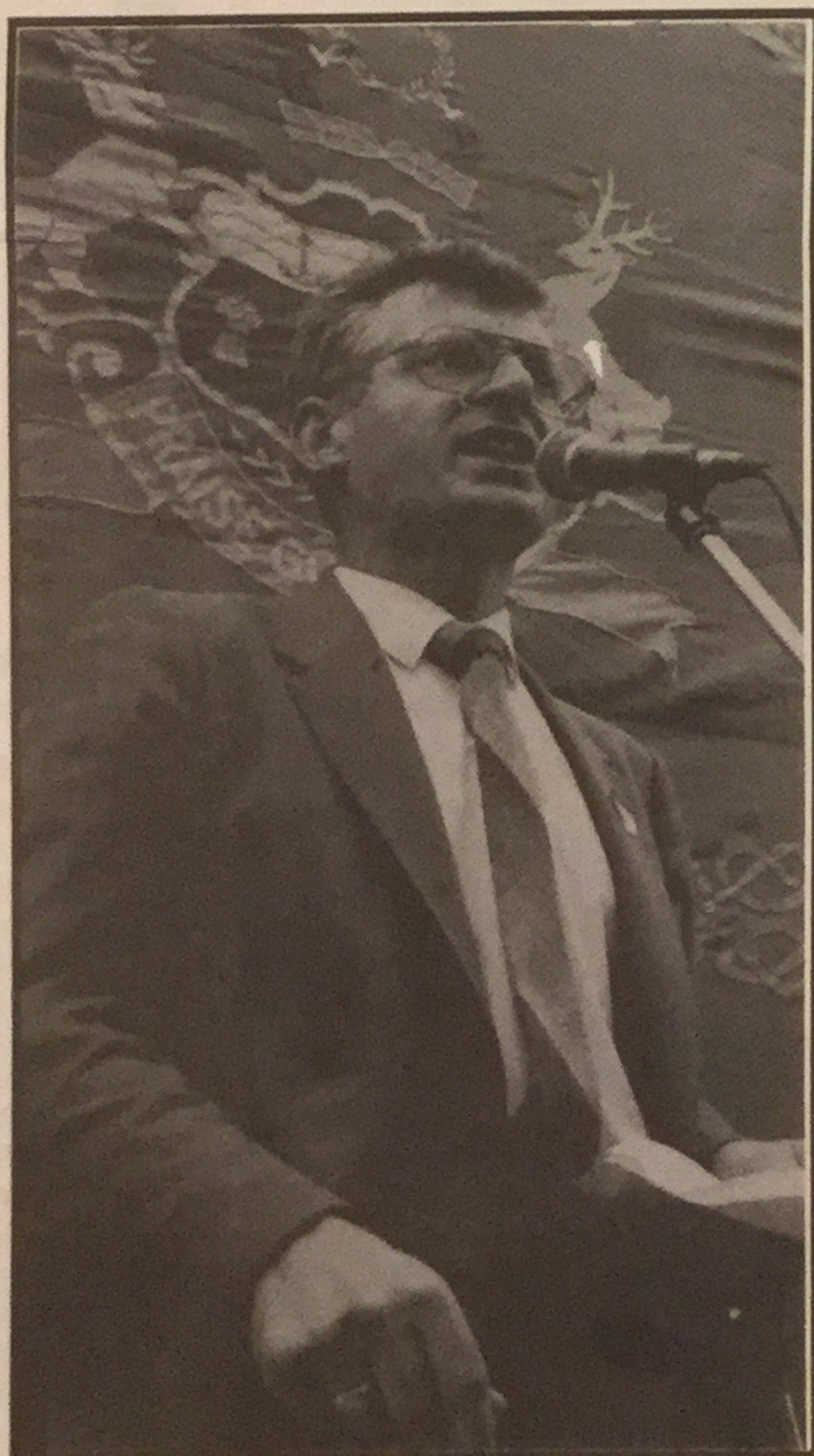


DUBLIN WEST
INDEPENDENT
LABOUR
NEWS **SUMMER 1992**

WEST DUBLIN CRIES OUT FOR FACILITIES

Councillor Joe Higgins says:



“If you want to fight for change, join Independent Labour in Dublin West ...

“We are campaigning hard on the issues affecting working-class people, fighting for jobs and facilities and for a democratic, socialist society run for the good of the majority rather than for the privileged few. Get in touch now. Join our campaigns.”

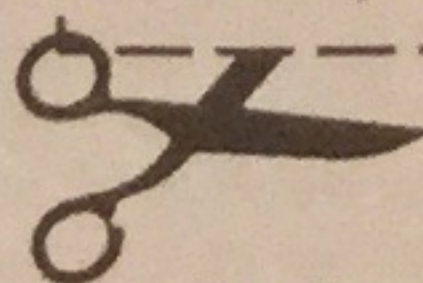
Name

Address

.....

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Phone (if any)



Send to Councillor Joe Higgins, Orchard Ave., Dublin 15, or phone 8201753

Ask any parent or young person in Ballyfermot, Clondalkin or Mulhuddart/Blanchardstown about the things our areas lack most.

Indoor recreation facilities will be first or second on the list - a place where the youth could go to spend their free time away from the streets. The huge youth populations in many areas and the lack of facilities makes for a social time-bomb waiting to go off.

The community centres which have already been built through the dedication of local communities and local authority funding are very important resources but they couldn't hope to cope with providing comprehensive recreation facilities.

• Leisure centres

About £10 million in each area would construct major leisure centres including such features as swimming pools, bowling alleys, gymnasias, games rooms etc. As well as this, each housing estate should have playing areas that could be used in all weathers and could be lit in winter.

These facilities would transform life for very many people, taking huge pressure off parents and giving the youth a place to go where they could spend their time in a healthy way. This could help end the scourges of 'joy-riding' and vandalism that plague many communities.

These facilities could be provided by Dublin County Council and Dublin Corporation if the government made the funds available. Fi-

anna Fail, Fine Gael and the PDs will no doubt laugh at the idea and say there are no funds. That is a lie.

Each year the government pays £800m in interest to foreign banks and another £1,700 to the banks at home. As well as that the multinational companies send profits of over £2,000m out of the country annually. Irish business people send about £1,000m to invest or speculate with abroad. That's £5,000 million each year that leaves this small country.

What's a mere £30 million against these huge amounts? Why should whole communities be starved of resources while the banks are never forced to wait for the huge interest payments they demand? Why do right-wing councillors never raise these issues?

• Campaign

The Independent Labour organisation in Dublin West is launching a campaign to highlight the burning need for recreation facilities in west Dublin and to push for the funds that are needed to provide them. A series of meetings will be held to draw up a comprehensive list of the facilities that are needed in different areas.

A political campaign is being organised to highlight the need for urgent action on this issue and to force government and local authorities to provide the necessary funds.

Clondalkin and Mulhuddart Welfare Rights Groups Help through the maze

Areas like Blanchardstown and Clondalkin, ravaged by high unemployment, have increasing numbers dependent on social welfare and the confusing Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme.

With only a few local authority houses being built, the waiting list is spiralling out of all proportion and those 'lucky' enough to have local authority houses have to contend with the bureaucratic maze of Dublin Corporation.

The need for local welfare rights advice and information centres has never been greater and is now even more relevant with social welfare minister Charlie McCreery's plans for a vicious onslaught of cuts or, to use his words, 'target' certain areas

of the welfare system. Welfare rights centres exist in Blakestown and Mountview in Blanchardstown; and in Neilstown in Clondalkin. Another is being launched in Ladyswell, Mulhuddart. These are staffed voluntarily by local people and can give straightforward information, a leaflet or form or more specialised advice for those in desperate situations.

There is also an opinion expressed by some that certain welfare recipients are spongers, bleeding the country dry. This is far from the truth. The reality is a painful existence of getting by day to day on payments which even agencies established by the government (like Combat Poverty) describe as way below the poverty line.

Areas with a high concentration of low-income earners often breed an environment of hopelessness and isolation. People feel that their rights are trampled on, that they are caught in poverty traps, utterly powerless - no matter where they turn, they lose out. For the majority, low-paid jobs or exploitation in part-time work is the only alternative, putting them effectively back to square one - working for the equivalent of the dole or a little extra, but with the loss of certain extra benefits.

For extra help, many people go through what can be a degrading experience of queueing, maybe for hours, in the local health centre for Supplementary Welfare. Because of the discretionary nature of the scheme, your case may be refused while a similar one is successful - thus making the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) a powerful figure.

Unfortunately, Mr McCreery's welfare 'reforms' will push more people into the poverty trap. His bill includes proposals to:

- Abolish sickness benefit for people on unemployment assistance - they will have to go now to the CWO
- Unemployment benefit will not be paid to most workers who receive redundancy payments
- Pay-related benefit will be discontinued for many workers
- Disability benefit and occupa-

tional injury payments will be taxed

- Optical and dental benefits for workers will be taxed
 - An income limit will be set for new claimants of deserted wife's benefit
 - Part-time workers will get less unemployment assistance than before in many cases
 - No increases in child benefit and social welfare increases only of 4% (not necessarily in line with inflation, so therefore no real increase).
- Community organisations and the trade union movement should campaign together to stop these attacks on working-class people.

The Blakestown and Mountview Welfare Rights Group gives advice on: Monday - Thursday 11 AM - 1 PM and Friday (emergencies only) 10 AM - 12 AM Venue: Blakestown Community and Resource Centre.

'Charity not enough' says Ballyfermot youth

A Ballyfermot activist has condemned the "begging bowl approach" to solving the problems of poverty.

Susan Lynch, a supporter of Independent Labour and a resident of Ballyfermot Parade, was recently featured on radio and in the national newspapers for her criticism of the 'People in Need' Telethon.

"Events like Telethon trivialise people's misery and do not call for any social change", she says.

"With 1.3 million people living below the poverty line and 280,000 people unemployed, charity is not much of a substitute for the effects of government cutbacks."

Susan believes that the ordinary people who fund-raise are motivated by all the best intentions

"But every day in Ballyfermot I see the chronic effects of poverty in crime, 'joy-riding' and drug addiction.

"Even if the whole £2.5 million raised in Telethon was devoted to this, it would only be a drop in the ocean.

"It is always the ordinary people asked to make sacrifices and donate to these charity events. Millionaires were paraded on our screens during



Susan Lynch

Telethon to get free advertising for their companies.

"The banks enjoyed massive publicity from it, yet they add to homelessness by foreclosing on people's loans and they didn't show much charity in the recent strike to their own low-paid workers.

"It's about time a halt was called to these charity events. Instead the emphasis should be put on securing massive state funding to combat poverty and create jobs in our areas."

Gaza: descent into hell

Councillor Joe Higgins recently visited Israel/Palestine as part of an international delegation to attend the appeal of jailed Palestinian socialist and trade unionist Mahmoud Masarwa.

This man was framed in a similar way to the Birmingham Six. Here, Joe gives an account of the horrific poverty and repression suffered by the brave Palestinian people.

What has been done to the Palestinian people must rank as one of the great crimes of this century. My visit to Gaza left me stunned. It is one thing to see on television but it is a shock to see the reality.

Gaza is a narrow strip of land between Israel and Egypt. There are 750,000 Palestinians crammed into it. Jabaliya and Shati are two such camps. There are 80,000 people packed into one square mile in Jabaliya. Their houses are rough concrete structures.

Sewage runs openly through Shati and pours, untreated, into the Mediterranean! Patches of waste ground are covered in garbage. A sickening smell hangs in the air. It will remain with you long after you have left the area. Gaza is, in reality, a giant prison/labour camp. Each day thousands of Palestinian workers trek to Tel Aviv, fifty miles away, or to other cities. Many have to leave as early as 4.30 AM to clear the



security checkpoint and get to work on time.

There is a curfew in Gaza every night from 8.00 PM. During the Gulf War there was a permanent curfew. Occasionally the women were allowed out for an hour to get some food. The older people who lived in these squalid conditions were mainly peasants used to fresh air and open spaces. Massacres, murder and persecution led them into these hell-holes.

The massive oppression of the Pal-

estinian people which has left over 1,000 dead and over 120,000 injured continues to fuel the anger of the Palestinian youth who have been involved in the mass uprising of the Intifada since December 1988. There is a strong feeling among the radical youth that the Palestinian leadership should be seeking to broaden support for the Palestinian people among the tens of millions of working class and poor in the Arab world, rather than courting rich sheiks and monarchs.

Real town centres for west Dublin

It may well be September before the serious problems of the town centres for Mulhuddart/Blanchardstown and Lucan/Clondalkin come before Dublin County Council.

The communities in west Dublin are suffering from last year's irresponsible Fianna Fail decision to overthrow the long term plan to site these centres at Ronanstown and Blanchardstown.

Unfortunately the proposal by O'Callaghan Properties to build a town centre at Quarryvale rather than at Ronanstown has put two working class communities in opposition. The threat is that if Quarryvale goes ahead then Blanchardstown won't. And if Quarryvale is overturned O'Callaghan says he

won't build in Ronanstown, leaving Clondalkin without a town centre.

Both Mulhuddart and North Clondalkin desperately need the facilities that a town centre would provide. It is a disgrace that these communities should be put in the present position.

Independent Labour News believes that there should be a joint solution that will give both communities their centres. The Department of the Environment and Dublin County Council should intervene to bring all the parties involved together for consultation, including the local communi-

ty organisations.

Independent Labour believes that the problem could be resolved if the government made immediate funds available to finish the Fonthill Road, and to carry out other necessary infrastructural work that would make the Ronanstown site viable, and on this basis that the town centre was built at Ronanstown with Quarryvale zoned for industry. This would allow the hard-pressed communities in Mulhuddart/Blanchardstown and in North Clondalkin to have the town centres that are so badly needed.

Permanent jobs - not casuals

The recent bank strike and the dispute in An Post highlight the attempts being made to introduce casualisation and part-time working on a wide scale throughout the economy.

Casual workers are the most exploited and low paid, with no job security, often no union rights and difficulty getting mortgages or bank loans.

They are used by employers to undermine the conditions of permanent workers and to weaken trade union organisation. In the private sector, individual contracts are being increasingly used in industry and the building trade. Workers in Thorn EMI are on strike now at shops all round the country because this hugely profitable company wants to let go 90 workers and have 30 out on contract.

The retail and drapery trade unions,

like IDATU, have been seriously weakened by the introduction of part-timers, who now outnumber full-timers in some Dunnes Stores. The Communications Workers' Union make it clear that they want recruitment in the Post Office. They are not defending high overtime earnings. Their demand is to fill the 450 vacancies with permanent, full-time workers who will have equal pay, conditions and trade union rights.

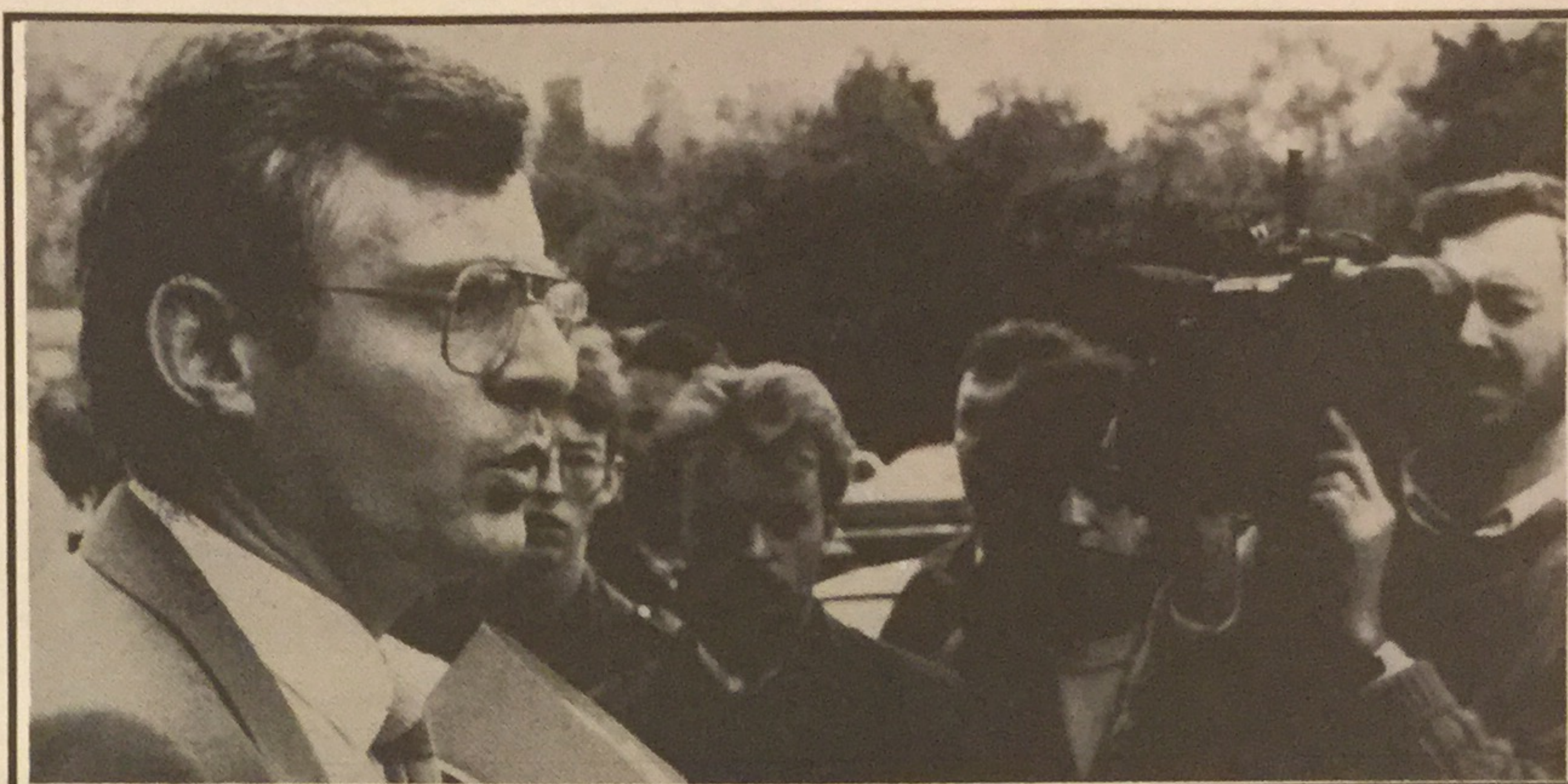
All workers and trade unionists should heed the warning of what has happened in the drapery and retail trade where part-timers live in fear of management. This process of casualisation should be stopped by the unions before it is too late.

NOT TAKING 'NO' FOR AN ANSWER

Since being elected to Dublin County Council on June 27th last year, Joe Higgins has been fighting hard on many issues confronting working-class people in Dublin West.

While some councillors spend hours cultivating their links with journalists, Joe Higgins puts the emphasis on empowering the people themselves - giving support, advice and direction to the many local groups and struggles.

The Independent Labour strategy is to battle on the ground alongside these community groups and to bring their harsh realities into the cosy Council chambers. Joe Higgins does not accept the routine refusals from Council officials to demands by the local people for improvements to our areas, but demands the extra resources necessary.



UNEMPLOYMENT SCANDAL

Moving a motion in the Council last autumn demanding emergency action on the crisis of unemployment and facilities in West Dublin, Councillor Joe Higgins was savagely attacked by some Fianna Fail and Fine Gael councillors.

Showing their utter bankruptcy these people voted against the motion which called for an emergency meeting of the Council to discuss these problems.

COUNCIL FUNDS

Dublin County Council is scandalously starved of funds by central government. There are now 400 less staff than there were four years ago.

There is a massive £80 million shortfall between what the Council gets from the government and what it should get if parity had been maintained with domestic rates.

Joe Higgins voted against the 1992 estimates because of this short-fall and demanded emergency funding for Council services.

FIGHTING FOR LIGHT!

A number of estates in Mulhuddart, Blakestown and Mountview spent last winter in darkness.

Joe Higgins spearheaded in Dublin County Council a campaign by the local communities to have a major upgrading of the lighting.

After a long battle Council officials finally agreed to begin this work. This is a tribute to community organisations like the Whitestown Residents' Association and the Blakestown and Mountview United Residents' Committee.

Now there is a new threat to lighting in residential estates in West Dublin. The government is refusing to pay about £800,000 to Dublin County Council for lights and upkeep on the new motorways such as the Navan Road and the Western Parkway, putting pressure on the Council to divert funds from lighting in residential areas.

Joe Higgins is adamant that this must not happen. The government must be told that the lights will go out on the

motorways, not the estates, if they do not provide the funds.

STOPPING 'JOY-RIDING'

So-called 'joy-riding', followed by car burning, is a scourge in a number of communities in West Dublin. Residents in Clondalkin and Mulhuddart have taken determined action to stop this.

Joe Higgins has fully supported them and has publicly congratulated them on Dublin County Council on many occasions.

He has worked particularly closely with the Blakestown and Mountview United Residents' Committee which has done sterling work in this regard.

However, community pressure will have to be maintained and the final solution must be decent jobs and facilities for the youth.

EHB SITES

Eastern Health Board sites in Corduff and Hartstown have been allowed to lie derelict for several years. They became an eyesore for the communities around them.

Both communities urgently need the clinics which were supposed to be built on these sites but government cutbacks are preventing this.

Joe Higgins has over a period of months pushed hard for these sites to be cleaned, landscaped and developed as community amenities until such time as the clinics may be built. He has met the EHB on the issue.

Action is being taken at last with meetings due to take place on the sites between the Council and the EHB.

The Willowood Residents' Association and the Corduff Action Group and Corduff Gardens residents have worked hard on this issue and they must be fully consulted about the action that is going to be taken.

MOTORWAY NOISE & SAFETY

Residents of Whitestown, Mulhuddart Wood and Village Heights have had to endure a sharp change in their areas since the new Navan Road opened. Noise levels are dramatically increased

from the traffic.

As a result of a motion from Joe Higgins, Dublin County Council is currently doing a survey of noise levels.

There will be a fight for assistance in the form of double glazing of windows to the affected householders.

TRAVELLING PEOPLE

Joe Higgins has been very active in helping to advance good relations between travelling people and the local settled community

Having taken a very strong stand in 1990 against a proposal to build a massive halting site in Mulhuddart which would have been a ghetto, he has been pushing for the implementation of a programme of small housing developments and halting sites constructed in

consultation with the travellers concerned, the local community and Dublin County Council.

TYRRELLSTOWN BUS

The people of Tyrrellstown have been pressing for the bus service to be extended to the entrance to their estate. Dublin Bus is frustratingly slow to respond.

Joe Higgins will continue to push for this along with the Wellview Community and Environment Committee and the Tyrrellstown Community Association.

When bus drivers came under serious attack recently in the area the people of Ladyswell, Parslickstown and Tyrrellstown responded magnificently to protect their service. They deserve better from Dublin Bus.

WOMEN'S EQUALITY

Joe Higgins has fully supported the campaign for equal treatment of women in the social welfare code.

In November, the Blakestown and Mountview Welfare Rights Group organised a very successful meeting to inform women lodging claims for arrears because the government has refused to implement an EC equality directive since 1986.

Joe Higgins was invited to speak at this meeting. Thousands of Irish women are watching the attempts by the Fee Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) to force the government to pay these women who received discriminatory unemployment and disability benefits. Independent Labour supporters will continue to press this issue.

Higgins to stand in general election

Joe Higgins is to stand in the next general election as Independent Labour candidate in Dublin West. He was elected onto Dublin County Council last year when he topped the poll in the Mulhuddart area in Greater Blanchardstown.

Joe Higgins went on the Council with a proven record as a fighter for working-class people. In 1987 he spear-headed a very forceful campaign to prevent the closure of Blanchardstown Hospital which forced the Minister for Health to announce that the hospital would be kept open and up-graded.

In 1990 he came within hours of being sent to jail by the High Court for standing four-square with the working-class communities in Mulhuddart against Dublin County Council's plan to build what would be a disastrous ghetto for travelling people in the area. Since then he has been prominent in fighting for proper accommodation for travel-

lers and fostering good relations between them and the local settled community.

Joe Higgins is a prominent supporter of the labour movement monthly newspaper *Militant Socialist*.

He was a member of the Labour Party for 15 years and was on Labour's national executive for 10 of them. He had a national record of opposition to Labour's disastrous coalition with Fine Gael, pushing instead for the Labour Party to be an independent and socialist party fighting for the needs of working-class people.

In 1987 Joe Higgins was selected to stand as Labour candidate in Dublin

West but was opposed by the party's right-wing leadership.

They rewarded his years of hard work for Labour and his loyalty to genuine socialist principles by expelling him in 1989.

Since being elected to the Council last year as Independent Labour, Joe Higgins has been working flat out with local community organisations in fighting for desperately needed facilities in working-class areas.

If elected to the Dail Joe Higgins would live on the wage of an ordinary worker and donate the remainder of his TD's salary to building a democratic, socialist alternative to the present failed system.

Women fight second-class status

The recent nightmare suffered by the pregnant 14-year-old rape victim showed well the overall position of women in Ireland.

This girl was the victim of terrible violence but, instead of doing everything to help her, the police, the Attorney General and the High Court gathered against her to stop her leaving the country for an abortion.

•By Ruth Coppinger,
Independent Labour, Hartstown

The government shed crocodile tears for this unfortunate girl. Only last year the Rape Crisis Centres almost shut down through lack of funds and the Aoibhneas refuge in Ballymun presently faces closure for the same reasons. This refuge - the only one for battered women in north or west Dublin - only costs £96,000 a year to run.

The luxury K Club in Kildare, owned by millionaire Michael Smurfit, got £600,000 from Lottery funds and is a playground for millionaires like Ben Dunne and Dermot Desmond. Women's rights are low on the list of government priorities.

The 8th Amendment was the law used to impose the injunction on the rape victim. It also bans pregnancy counselling and abortion information. This amendment was foisted on us by groups like SPUC who oppose contraception, sex education in schools, oppose removing the stigma of illegitimacy, divorce, and even funding of



School students from west Dublin marched with the Youth Rights Campaign to lift the injunction on the 14-year-old rape victim.

Rape Crisis centres. They ignore the reality of up to 10,000 Irish women having abortions every year and support all the conditions which drive these women to choose abortion. The repressive legislation against women should be repealed and the government forced to act immediately - not dither - to make provisions for the right to travel and information and to legislate for limited abortion as the Supreme Court

allowed.

Of course, there can never be equality for women until there is economic change. The United Nations reported that women do two-thirds of the world's work and only own 10% of the world's wealth. In Ireland, women still do not get equal pay, and are generally caught in low-paid work with little prospect of promotion. 75% of all part-time workers are women, who often have no sick

or holiday or maternity pay. Women bear the burden of government cutbacks in health and education. However, Irish women are asserting our rights like never before. The election of Mary Robinson showed the mood for change. The demonstrations of outrage at the treatment of the rape victim forced the Supreme Court to let her go and to change the law within days.

It is vital that women, particularly

working-class women, get politically active. The priority of this government and their allies in Fine Gael is profit. They stand for the status quo which keeps our communities in poverty and which keeps women in chains. The resources needed to build the creches and refuges, to pay equal pay, to give women decent health services, can only be provided in a socialist society where the rule of the elite is ended.

Genuine socialism can solve crisis

Right-wing governments controlled by Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the PDs are always telling us why they have to tighten our belts, and how there is no alternative.

Successive tightenings of these same belts have left 281,000 unemployed, one third of the population living below the poverty line, and 45% of the children of this state being raised in poverty.

However, any time their friends in big business are asked to cough up there always seems to be the alternative of moving to some tax haven or moving production out of Ireland, further swelling dole queues

We in the Independent Labour Group do not believe that there is no alternative to this rule of the bosses and millionaires.

The money is there. Five billion pounds every year is taken out of this country by multi-nationals, Irish bosses investing abroad, and debt repayments, money made from the sweat of

workers. These resources should be taken from the hands of the greedy minority and put under the control of the majority in society.

If working-class people unite, we can end the rule of big business and their political friends, the root cause of mass unemployment and poverty.

Internationally also there is a crying need for democratic socialist change.

There is no need for millions to starve and live in the degradation of the 'Third World'.

There is no need for wars to satisfy the greed of ruling elites.

There is no need for indiscriminate pollution to make bigger profits for big business.

If the world's resources are planned for the good of humanity rather than allowed to remain in the stranglehold of the powerful conglomerates, all these problems can be resolved.

Independent Labour in Dublin West stands in the tradition of great socialists like James Connolly and Jim Lar-

kin and believe in a genuine socialist society where the working-class majority govern.

This has nothing in common with the Stalinist dictatorships which ruled in the USSR and Eastern Europe from the late 1920s until recently when they were heroically overthrown by revolutions of workers and youth.

By drawing together the working-class in the trade unions, community organisations, the unemployed and young people, we can rebuild a powerful labour movement in this country and use their example of 'people power' to get rid of our own corrupt capitalist system.

We fight for an economy planned under democratic workers' control and management, to provide for the needs of the majority rather than the profits of a few.

In such a genuine socialist society we could all enjoy a secure life, free of unemployment, poverty and hardship. Join us.

What we stand for

- Emergency government action to solve the jobs crisis, including stopping the outflow of profits from the country in order to finance state investment in industry, a national building programme, expansion of our public services and a shorter working week.

- Sports, recreational and other facilities to be built in working-class areas to help tackle crime and youth alienation. Facilities should be open to all at reasonable rates.

- An end to the cuts in health, education and local authority funding. The government must be forced to give back the more than £1,000 million it has cut from these services since 1987.

- A national minimum take-home wage of £150 per week for all aged over 18 and trade union rights for all to outlaw low pay and exploitation.

- For the immediate implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on Social Welfare, including a minimum payment of £80 per week to all adults dependent on social welfare.

- An education system open to all the people.

- For a reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio, provision of remedial teach-

- ers, the building of Regional Technical Colleges and the reversal of the decision to means-test ESF grants.

- End discrimination against women. For equal pay and social welfare entitlements. For removal of repressive legislation and all barriers to equal opportunities for women. Government funds for the building of creche facilities, rape crisis centres, refuges from violence and free family planning services.

- Prosecution of all the millionaire business people who have used public funds for speculative purposes and to enrich themselves.

- End the scandal of "one law for the rich, another for the poor".

- Take the banks into public ownership in order to plan the economy for people's needs, not profits.

- Stop the bleeding of PAYE taxpayers paying off over £2,000 million yearly to these parasites.

- A democratic socialist alternative to challenge the dominance of the three right-wing parties, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the PDs.

- The Labour Party should link with Democratic Left and other left forces and the powerful trade union movement to build a movement to end the rule of big business.

Join our campaign for a better life. Contact us today. Write to: Councillor Joe Higgins, Orchard Avenue, Dublin 15, or phone 8201753. If there is no answer, please leave your name, address and other details on the answering machine.

Housing list misery

Thousands of people in Dublin are suffering on the housing lists while the government slashes housing funds.

Two years ago £17 million was spent out of public funds to refurbish the Taoiseach's Office.

In the same year from the same public funds Dublin Corporation only spent roughly £200,000 to build six new houses.

At the same time the Corporation had and still has 5,000 on the housing waiting lists.

Dublin County Council has over 2,000. The Council will build only 55 new homes this year.

At this rate all those currently on the list should be housed by the early summer of 2027 (provided that nobody else goes on the housing list in the meantime!).

Government funding for public sector housing has been slashed since the mid-80s and housing lists have sky-rocketed. Currently 90,000 people live in private rented accommodation which is often cramped and damp.

The vast majority will never have the money to take on the £30,000 mortgages necessary to buy even modest private homes.

Not everybody is unhappy though. Cement Roadstone Holdings, the country's largest construction group, made £62.6 million profit in 1991.

That's enough to build 2,086 houses to the value of £30,000 each.

For the bosses and their puppets in government, property is for speculation, not providing people with homes.

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Date: 1992

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