

Independent Socialist

MAY 1978

PRICE 10p.



MAGNIFICANT MAY-DAY!

DUBLIN'S May Day march was one of the most impressive demonstrations of working class strength and solidarity in recent times. It was possible to sense that workers are on the move – and moving in the right direction.

But if that momentum is to be maintained the lessons of recent struggles will have to be learned quickly and well.

The issues behind the Post Office and Aer Lingus strikes were stark and simple – no matter how much the media tried to confuse them.

In both industries management had tried, in effect, to force through productivity deals without consultation with the workers and with no adequate offer of extra pay for extra work.

The history and details in each case were different. But, stripped down to essentials, that's what the disputes were about.

Management – which means the Fianna Fail Government – wanted to give workers in the public sectors a whipping – as a warning to all others.

They wanted higher production per worker – which is a direct attack on the unemployed and emphasises the utter hypocrisy of Fianna Fail's promises to create more jobs.

The fact that the workers fought back is all the more impressive in view of the leadership – or lack of it – which the union bosses provided. In both disputes it was the rank-and-file which made the running.

The refusal of the Post Office engineers to be bamboozled by the first, insulting offer which the ICTU tried to sell them in later March; the magnificent vote against the Labour Court's con-trick by the mass meeting of the Aer Lingus workers – that's what sustained the struggles. Despite the fact that the IPOEU leadership gave no lead at all to members on how they should vote in their ballot. And despite the fact that the WUI leaders were clearly embarrassed by the militancy of their own members.

The Aer Lingus workers voted as long ago as April 10 to apply for an all out picket. Only 13 of 1,350 workers at that meeting opposed the escalation. Yet, as we go to press three weeks later, the WUI is still deferring the application for all-out action.

The Aer Lingus strike could have been won in a week if the union bosses had taken the fight to the enemy and slammed the door shut on every airport in the country. The Post Office dispute, although it didn't end in defeat, could have been a much more positive victory if the IPOEU had from the beginning gone for sit-ins and flying pickets rather than endless games of footsie with Congress, the Government, the FUE and anybody else who wanted to play.

Rank and file trade unionists should study the disputes well. Because there are more and bigger battles to come. And we won't win them if we go into battle blindly behind leaders who are frightened of a real fight.

MASON PUTS BOOT IN ON DEMOCRACY

The RUC/British Army swoop on Provisional Sinn Féin members and associates on April 27 is the most serious and sinister development in the North this year.

When soldiers arrive in armoured cars, smash their way into the offices of an opposition political party and remove, among other things, typewriters and printing equipment it is clear that politics are taking a very perilous path.

When a businessman whose firm prints the paper of an opposition party is dragged from his bed in a pre-dawn raid and taken to prison under armed guard, there is no room for doubt about where all democrats – much less socialists – must stand.

The Provisionals are often accused of intimidating people. And so they do. And among those most intimidated by the Provisionals, and by events involving the Provisionals, are many who call themselves militant but are terrified of taking up a fundamental issue of political freedom lest somebody – anybody – might suspect them of being nationalists under the skin.

We defend absolutely the right of Provisional Sinn Féin to exist, to organise, to publish its papers, to agitate for support for its cause and propagandise for its point of view. We declare our full and unconditional solidarity with them as they bear the brunt of determined repression by British forces in the North.

And we hold in utter contempt the political cretins who allow military assault on a political party to pass by as if it were a trivial occurrence and then clench their tiny fists on a May Day march and try to pass themselves off as serious fighters for socialism.

INSIDE

LOUGHAN HOUSE

H-BLOCK

IR SP TRIAL

P.O. STRIKE

Lessons Of

Antrim Crystal Strike

P.A.Y.E.

the big rip off!

One-quarter of the population of this country is on the poverty line. Whenever they look for an increased share of the nation's wealth they are told "The economy can't afford it". If they persist, an attempt will always be made to turn their fellow workers in jobs against them, using arguments like the following: "This inevitably will lead to further income taxation and workers will not tolerate any more burdens like this".

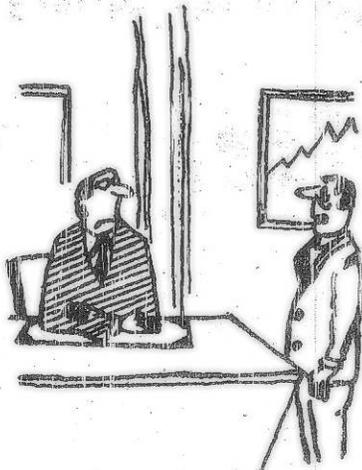
You never hear anyone suggest that the money needed should be raised by taxing the incomes of people other than workers on PAYE. For example, farmers, professional people, landlords and private companies. And it is from precisely these categories that a colossal amount of money could be raised via income taxation in order to make life a little more bearable for our unemployed, our old and our disabled.

True, workers on PAYE are already overtaxed - they suffer possibly the highest tax rate in the EEC. On top of that they contribute a completely disproportionate share of the total income tax collected.

In 1976, the percentage contributions were as follows:

Workers on PAYE	81.1%
Self-employed and Companies	17.9%
Farmers	0.7%

Companies, in practice, pay an average of about 5% of their pre-tax profits in income tax. In 1976 it was estimated by a delegate at the POWU annual conference that self-employed people, members of the professions, traders and landlords had paid a mere £8m. in tax out of an estimated income of up to £180m. "Estimated" is the operative word because nobody knows exactly how much money these parasites make.



Normally I CAN GET ALONG on my PAY Sir, But The ground being frozen, it's difficult to dig for roots AND grubs

But back to that bulwark of private enterprise, our private companies. Colin Rapple, Business Editor of the Sunday Independent, did a very revealing article on this subject on 26 June last. He outlined the inequities of the system which allows companies like Cement-Roadstone to get away last year with a mere £15,000 tax bill out of pre-tax profits of £11,600,000. Yet their

published balance sheet showed an income tax liability of £3,354,000, while their accumulated deferred tax debt was a staggering £22.2m - none of which is ever likely to be paid, he remarks.

How then did they get away with paying one-tenth of one per cent when the rate of company taxation is supposed to be 45%? And how did they get a grant of £4m from the IDA at the same time?

The simple answer is that they are facilitated by the capitalist system we live in. This is how the great risk-takers and entrepreneurs, our capitalists, are encouraged to make handsome profits and provide a few lousy jobs for the fools on PAYE who subsidise their enterprises. Foreign firms attracted here by generous grants and cheap labour pay hardly any income tax. So much for risk and enterprise.

The greatest abuses of all as regards income taxation occur among the farming community. The Coalition Govt. tried half-heartedly to put the screws on them, by dragging more of them into the net and insisting on accounts. The new Govt. has put a stop to all that with the result that hardly any income tax will come from that quarter in the years ahead.

Yet farmers could be contributing well over £100m a year at the moment. If you think this figure is exaggerated, read what the Agricultural Correspondents of the Irish Times had to say on the subject on 25 July last. They gave the farmers the wildest and most improbable concessions when assessing their tax liability - and yet come up with a tax figure of £68.25m. And the IFA - usually quick to contradict - stayed silent.



The Independent Socialist Party

Your first reaction is probably just another group of lefties with a lot of big ideas. Fair enough. Socialism sounds like a big idea, but big ideas don't do anything, far less change anything. Most people would agree that the aim of socialism is to change this society in such a way that those who live and work in it decide how they live and work. That we, that is all of us, control our OWN lives. To some that's an impossible dream. To others it's what we already have; I mean that's what democracy is all about, isn't it? Majority rule and all that. Well let's take a closer look.

This society is a capitalist society. Even the capitalists accept that, although Maggie Thatcher calls it "Free Enterprise". - Freedom for some to exploit and equally freedom for others to suffer unemployment, bad housing and exploitation.

Socialists argue that most of the problems of this society are caused by the way society is organised, that is, caused by the capitalist way of organising society. Capitalists, their politicians and their newspapers however, argue that the problems are caused by the workers who don't produce enough and ask too much for their work. But when the capitalists talk about not enough being produced they mean PROFITS. When WE talk about not enough being produced we are talking about the things needed to satisfy HUMAN NEEDS. It's the difference between talking about producing profits for a few people and producing enough for everyone to live like human beings - not like we do in this society - that is the vital difference between Socialism and Capitalism.

Today it's the capitalists who make all the decisions - how we work, where we work and even if we work. In other words how we live or even if we live at all. Yet WE are the people who do all the work, WE are the working class who produce goods, build the houses, hospitals and schools, who operate them and service them, however we are the very people who have no control over how these goods are shared out, what is built nor where it is built.

So what have we? Less than 10% of the world's population who own and control the Banks, the International Companies, etc. who pay or don't pay our wages, who decide whether or not WE produce the things WE need to live; and the rest, the 90% whose livelihood is determined by the 10%.

This 90% varies from those who work and own nothing to those who are paid by salary rather than wages, pay mortgages and rates rather than rent who consider themselves independent and in control of their lives but (whether they know it or not) the livelihood of all is determined by the 10%. They buy our labour power and pay our wages. The wages or lack of wages determine the workers' life. The State is the way this control is exercised and enforced. It ranges from enforcing their "law and order" to nationalising those industries, like coal and steel, when they are no longer profitable for their owners but must be maintained to serve private industry. The State thus protects the property and ownership of this 10%.

The capitalists, the 10%, own the stocks and shares, but ownership is nothing without control and their control is exercised and backed up by the State. Thus although WE produce the property and wealth.



Bernadette Mc. Aliskey Chairperson I.S.P.

THEY, backed up by the State, own and control it.

And they expect us to believe that this is justice! Why do we need anyone to tell us what justice is? WE have the facts; we know who produces and therefore owns the wealth: yet they try to tell us that justice means we can work and produce but own nothing except the bare necessities of life.

Are we Republicans? No, not in the sense of traditional republicanism. We are struggling for the establishment of a WORKERS state in each and every country ie: a state in which the ownership and control of production is in the hands of the working class, organised as one in the interests of all. Only by organising in the factories, the communities and local areas can workers gain control of every aspect of their own lives.

That is what the ISP means by a socialist society. We are working in the factories, the trade unions, and communities to try and build this type of society, this type of organisation.

But a Socialist society will never come about without the working class struggling for it. History is a history of struggle, struggle between the ruled and the rulers. It is only through that struggle that change has been made and progress won - progress for the ruled. They have only won it by being the so called agitators, rebels and dissidents not by being the "silent majority", the "cream" of society.

The ISP is not only asking awkward questions, fighting for workers' rights defending gains made over a hundred years and more of struggle, but also seeking and finding answers as to why problems exist - organising not only to protect our class against the onslaught of the system but to overthrow the system of Capitalism, to transform society, to establish our own system, the working class system, SOCIALISM.

Courtaulds: building an empire on Govt. grants

When Courtaulds started to build in work-starved Derry there were newspaper headlines and a welcome for the prospect of increased employment. Since that time the factory has been the focus for industrial unrest — the last strike only coming to an unsatisfactory close some weeks ago.

Not that the history of the multinational Courtaulds is reassuring. It has made a practice of establishing factories in regions where unemployment was at a peak and then benefitting from Government assistance to these areas. Evidence submitted by Courtaulds to a House of Commons Committee in 1973 disclosed that of its 400 manufacturing units in the UK

250 were established in areas where Government aid was available. Of the 122,000 UK workers in the company, 80,000 worked in these assisted areas. On average each job created by the company cost the State some £3,500 — Courtaulds received in Regional Employment Premium some £1.54 million p.a.; while taking a period of two years (1968-70) training grants totalled £48,000. On top of this industrial development in N. Ireland warrants special Government aid, it was obvious that Courtaulds would not lose by its appearance in Derry.

To safeguard its large-scale financial assistance from the public sector, Courtaulds, under its Chairman Lord Keaton, has

been remarkably successful in its relationship with politicians and civil servants. The Labour Government made Lord Keaton the first chairman of the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, the 'Government merchant bank' in 1966. On the Conservative side Lord Butler and Viscount Eccles were on the Courtaulds Board before 1970, while well-known Labour politician, Lord George Brown, joined the firm as 'productivity counsellor' after retiring from politics. Added to this political insurance Courtaulds worked hard to maintain its image as an altruistic firm that invested in depressed areas.

Courtaulds announced their plans to invest in Letterkenny Co. Donegal, and Derry at roughly the same time — 1973. The factory in Donegal carried at 50 per cent development grant, which included a grant of £5,000 per job created (as compared to £3,000 in the UK). The company will also pay no tax on export profits for fifteen years. Five years later there is considerable disappointment in Letterkenny at the performance of Courtaulds — the multiplicity of jobs that were anticipated having not materialised. This despite the fact that an hour of labour in Donegal costs only 50p compared to an average of 70 in the UK.

Wage rates in N. Ireland are also only some 75 per cent of those paid in the UK — whilst the

N. Ireland incentives include a 40 per cent capital grant, with £3,500 per job created, plus the usual tax free allowances, free depreciation, regional employment premiums and other subsidies. Courtaulds already had a major plant in Carrickfergus and this was to be linked with those in Derry and Letterkenny — Borders having little relevance to multinationals.

PROFITS

In the 1880's Samuel Courtauld made it clear that he would not tolerate trade unions. Since that time the company has had to modify its approach if not its attitude. Despite the fact that in recent years Courtaulds has consistently achieved record profits it has used the fear of unemployment and the wage agreements to stand firm against Union demands. In a recent industrial dispute in Derry, the Courtaulds management sent personal letters to the strikers pointing out that — "because of the depressed state of the textile market any increases in pay would have to be earned by improved efficiency . . ."

It was also intimated that suitable agreements had been reached with other company plants and that the Derry one was sustaining "cash losses" and was making "inferior goods". A not so subtle threat in a

region of 15-20 per cent male unemployment, where the BSR closure of the mid sixties is still vividly remembered. It was even stated that — "65 per cent of all the operatives we have employed were previously on the unemployment register".

The letter also adopted a company tactic of trying to split the workforce — claiming that the strike was against Union advice and merely at the behest of shop stewards. What the letter omitted to point out was that Courtaulds representatives had told shop stewards that although negotiations could commence company terms would not be disclosed until work was resumed.

THREAT

This high-handed approach to the workforce was backed up by the threat that — "If we are not careful our livelihood will go to people in other countries" — the persistent threat of a multinational concern whose interests go as far as exploiting the apartheid system in South Africa — where Courtaulds has pulp mill interests and garment plants. It is in this multinational context that the Derry strike finished with a resumption of work before negotiations commenced.

The sit-in and the setting up of the short-lived co-op at Antrim Crystal in west Belfast has passed into history. But it is a history full of lessons not just for socialist activists and the workers directly involved, but for workers in every part of Ireland.

The Antrim Crystal events were, of course, closely related to the main personality involved — Paddy Devlin. As most readers will know, Devlin lost his power-base last year when he split from the SDLP. What fewer might know is that he quickly began to build a new base. He built it through the ITGWU's presence in the North — and in west Belfast in particular.

Shortly after his appointment he began to recruit in already-unionised factories — including Antrim Crystal. Allegations of "poaching" quickly followed from other unions. However, since they themselves had never bothered much with west Belfast there wasn't much they could really complain about — except loss of dues. The ITGWU came with promises — and got members.

However, with the membership came enormous problems. Working conditions in the factories weren't exactly 'advanced', nor were wages. And, more important, for a variety of reasons, some of the factories were due for closures or redundancies. Such a factory was Antrim Crystal, one of the State's "welfare" projects.

The Department of Commerce demanded cutbacks in the work force. At the same time, friction in Tyrone Crystal with which Antrim Crystal is associated, spilled over into the Belfast factory. APEX began attempting to recruit in the latter.

CO-OP?

Devlin reacted by locking out the administrative staff and management and by establishing a "workers co-op". This initiative must have surprised many — particularly those who knew anything of the ITGWU and there is no doubt that, at least in principle, an important precedent has been set. However, a closer look reveals the true nature of this 'workers co-op'. Thus, as many of the workers were later to tell, very few workers had anything to do with the "co-operative".

The initiative was Devlin's and was carried out by a small handful of the workers. As one worker said afterwards "Devlin set it all up with the help of a few 'hench men' and co-operated".

Indeed, if one considers the structure of all unions, there is really no other way union bureaucrats can establish a co-operative. If they don't allow and encourage full and direct democratic participation and control by their members, then they can't possibly allow them to control a workers co-op. The threat

Lessons of Antrim Crystal



Paddy Devlin
The Workers' Friend.

would be much too great. If, during the take over, all decisions had been taken at open meetings of all workers, the effect would quickly have penetrated the union itself — Devlin couldn't risk that, nor could the ITGWU.

In fact during the take-over the workforce was split. Some felt it should never have happened, others that the workers should have much more say, and some believed, as Devlin had told them, that this was what their struggle was all about — that this was IT. They had every reason to believe it. All statements issued by other organisations at the time gave them support — all except one from the Workers' Resource Centre which welcomed the precedent set but argued that unless the workers themselves had control of what was — nominally their co-operative, it would collapse as collapse it did.

The Department of Commerce understood the situation and the fragmentation within the factory better than many. It sat back and waited doing little else but issue statements at all the right moments. The ATGWU could not afford to draw in active support from outside — that would have meant a loss of control. Thus, people experienced in the co-operative field who offered to begin discussion classes in the factory were put "on the long finger" by Devlin. Slowly but surely the co-operative began to grind down. The Government won the battle of words in the press, support wasn't mustered by the ITGWU negotiations began behind closed doors. Suddenly management were back and the

workers left to pick up the pieces. But, in picking them up they learned the lessons.

Within weeks, a large section of them had passed a vote of no confidence in Devlin and the union, which, although quickly suppressed, reflected the true position. Devlin effectively withdrew from the factory afterwards with Taggart becoming the ITGWU representative. The relationship between the union and the workers deteriorated fast. The union was no longer interested in them; the workers had no confidence in it. This was to have disastrous effects.

Shortly afterwards, 43 workers in the cutting room walked out in support of a fellow worker who had been dismissed. The following Monday management refused to allow any of the 43 into the factory again. The 43 couldn't turn to the union (Devlin said he "washed his hand of it" in true Pontius Pilot style). They came to the Workers Resource Centre for assistance, principally because of the stance it had taken on the "co-operative" and because of the support it had given other workers in the past.

A 24 hour picket was organised, a lock-out committee elected, statements issued, petitions of support drawn up from neighbouring factories and a press conference held. Support for the 43 grew despite the propaganda of management, Government and union. A lunch-time meeting with the workers inside was held, support was offered but fear of more lock-outs was evident.

Expletives about the union and Devlin flew from one and all, mixed with suggestions of forming "our own bloody union". The picket continued, but in a poor atmosphere. Not only was morale low and fear high in Crystal but elsewhere too. Strathern Audio lost 150 jobs and there were layoffs in Carrington Printers and rumours of closure.

SIT IN

With no union support (in fact with no union), no money in their pockets and management refusing to meet them the workers began to feel they had taken on the whole world. They compromised under the pressure after 10 days continuous picketing and withdrew the picket in return for a meeting with management. The meeting came and went. Management refused to move and, with Government backing and union acquiescence, said they would see the factory closed rather than reinstate the men. Still the union refused to move but offered instead to bring cases of unfair dismissal. The workers saw their situation as even more hopeless and effectively gave up their struggle to return to work.

They turned their attention to the Social Security Office on the Falls Road and, with the help of the Broadway Claimants' Union, held a sit-in which successfully persuaded the Social Security Officials that they were entitled to unemployment benefit. At present some of them are investigating the possibility of setting up their own co-operative — as one of them said "we now know how NOT to run a co-op". In addition some of them took a leading part in organising, along with the Unemployed Action Committee, the unemployed march in west Belfast. Shortly they hope, with the assistance of the Workers' Resource Centre, to publish a pamphlet on Antrim Crystal in the hope that others will learn from their struggle and their mistakes.

Tribunal on Britain's Crimes

An International Tribunal on Britain's presence in Ireland is to be held in London this autumn. The Tribunal will investigate the activities of the British army, the RUC and the Ulster Defence Regiment. It will also examine allegations of torture at interrogation centres, allegations of abuse and assault on Irish

prisoners in English jails, the operation of no-jury courts in N. Ireland, the imposition of solitary confinement in Long Kesh and the question of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. It will review the operation of the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The organisers feel that a certain silence has been drawn around the activities of the British Government in the North. The Press appear to be willing participants in this conspiracy of silence. The International Tribunal will take evidence in spoken, written and photographic form from any person with relevant experience. These will include internees relatives and friends of prisoners, community representatives, lawyers, churchmen, doctors and scientists and politicians: Roy Mason and Merlyn Rees have been invited to represent their government. The International Tribunal will hold its major sessions before the largest and most representative possible body of delegates elected from trade unions and other labour organisations which support the aims of the Tribunal. This body will act as a 'jury' reaching a verdict on the basis of the evidence placed before it. The list of sponsors is very impressive with such names as Jean Paul Sartre, Angela Davis, Pat Arrowsmith, Dr. Noel Browne, Bernadette McAlliskey, Seamus Soroan, Stan Orme MP and many more.

A number of Trades Councils have also pledged support. The organisers will welcome assistance in gathering evidence from organisations and individuals. And while they intend having as many witnesses as possible present to give direct evidence, written testimony in the form of signed sworn statements and photographs will be accepted. Because of the enormous cost of setting up such a tribunal the organising committee are appealing for funds. They can be contacted at: The Committee for the International Tribunal 182, Upper Street, London N1.



Press Hacks

Whip Up Campaign

To

Put Kids

In Prison.

TDs ON RAMPAGE



Fianna Fail hooligans.

Mr. Ben Briscoe, TD, said last night that people who argued that Loughan House should not be used by the prison service simply did not know what they were talking about. Minister for Justice was greatly perturbed at the attacks on the Fianna Fail TD. He was certain that the Fianna Fail TD was a "greatly respected member of the public" and that the Fianna Fail TD was a "greatly respected member of the public".

Gerry Collins Accused

Loughan House protest grows

Vincent Brady, the Fianna Fail hack who misrepresents the people of Dublin North Central, weighted into the Loughan House controversy a couple of Saturdays back. He alleged that the people campaigning against putting children in prison cells were professional agitators, if not downright subversives.

In fact there is a campaign on Loughan House being run by a group of professional, indeed highly-paid, agitators. That is the campaign in favour of Loughan House. It is being run by the Department of Justice and the representatives of the Gardaí and prison officers. And it has the full backing of a number of newspapers, especially the two Dublin evening papers.

The way the press works was well illustrated on April 20, the day after the packed Liberty Hall meeting called by organisations involved in child care and welfare. The meeting was a very respectable affair. The speakers included the insidiously liberal Bishop Birch, Senators Murphy and Farrell, Kadar Asmal, Mary Robinson, Eileen Desmond, with Sean McBride in the chair. A number of the speakers went to ludicrous lengths to prove how moderate they were — praising the Gardaí, saying what a fine job the average screw really is and so on. A bit difficult to dismiss it as a gathering of subversive mischief-makers!

So what happened?

HEADLINE

Next day the *Herald* carried a screaming front-page story under the massive headline: "If you don't believe Loughan House is necessary... MEET THE GODSONS!" There followed a "story", based entirely on Garda sources, giving a scarring account of an alleged crime-wave perpetrated by a small number of young people in Dublin city centre.

It was obvious from the story that the reporter, Michael Brophy, had done no independent research whatever, but simply retailed "facts" supplied by the Gardaí. His article was accompanied by a picture of Fianna Fail nonentity Ben Briscoe an arsenal of hardware — hatchets, crowbars and the like, which Briscoe alleged a priest had claimed to "take off" a group of young people. (They must have been a very timid band of urchins indeed, if having armed themselves with this fearsome

array of weaponry, they meekly handed the lot over when the holy priest asked them).

The same day the *Evening Press* front page howled HUNDREDS JUMPING BAIL IN CITY CENTRE!

This was another piece of cheap, scare journalism, again based entirely on "official" sources. It conveyed the impression that you couldn't throw a stone in O'Connell Street without hitting a dangerous criminal on the run. And it no doubt was of great help in preparing public opinion for Fianna Fail's stated intention of "tightening up" the conditions on which bail is granted.

HYSTERIA

Taken together, the two front pages helped build up a mood of hysteria about "law and order", a mood which would make people more amenable to the idea of putting 12-year-olds behind prison bars.

On the same day both papers carried statements from Stephen Delaney, spokesman for the prison oficers, and Jack Marrinan of the Garda Representative Body defending Loughan House.

What had happened was this. The size of the Liberty Hall meeting, the publicity it generated and the breadth of the platform had frightened all the reactionary elements who want to put the boot in on Dublin's disadvantaged children. So they got to work, contacted their friends in the press and pumped out bilge about businessmen being ruined and teeny-bop terrorists tearing Dublin apart. Then the *Herald* and the *Press* smeared the bilge all over the front pages.

What these people are involved in is agitation. They are desperately trying to agitate the public in order to justify the repression of children.

There is a problem about young people in Dublin's slums. Many of them are wild and on the path towards a life of crime. And indeed something ought to be done about it.

But it is not a law-and-order problem. It is a social problem. And, like all social problems, it has its roots in economics and politics.

But, then, the hired hack on the *Herald* and *Press* wouldn't want to know about that.

CRIME

Sir,—We, the undersigned, are directly involved in child care and we wish to state unequivocally that we agree with the setting up of Loughan House as an interim solution to the current problem of young offenders.

If we could contain these boys we could possibly help some of them, but it is impossible to hold them in an open centre, and their behaviour can have only a detrimental effect on the other boys. It is essential, however, for their own good and the good of the community, that immediate action be taken against the vandals and thugs presently rampant in the central Dublin area, the spokesman said.

'Garda Review' backs Loughan



Jail Gerry Collins

In the first statement issued in July 1977 from the Workers Resource Centre at Broadway, Belfast, the centre was described as "an independent focus for material resources and technical expertise designed to help west Belfast workers and their dependents in their day to day struggles to create the quality of life they are entitled to as the producers of all the benefits of society".

To the members of the Belfast branch of the Independent Socialist Party, who were among those who started the centre, the project meant much more. It gave us an opportunity to test in practice our slowly developing theory about methods and approach of revolutionaries to the working-class in struggle. Our concept of class-struggle, of the development of the Party and its strategy and tactics, and of the real conditions of class struggle, had been the subject of endless discussion and debate and of continuing analysis for most since long before the public announcement of the ISP. The Resource Centre experiment was a logical development from eternal polemics on the Left to revolutionary praxis.

STRATEGY

Through the work of the centre party members could tactically apply the strategy of the Party, critically reflect on the continuing experience and develop individually and collectively, both organisationally and programatically.

In the "Introduction to the Independent Socialist Party" we outlined our main task as the building of a revolutionary party, rooted in the working-class movement, and with a firm Marxist ideology. And we stated clearly that such a party

Belfast Workers' Resources Centre

could not be built in isolation from the day-to-day struggles of workers - the best way of telling is doing.

The experiences of nine months' work in the Resource Centre have been exactly that for us. It has been both a teaching and a learning experience which is slowly, but positively, producing results.

In the particular conditions of west Belfast we have created the opportunity to participate and indeed initiate struggles along with sections of the working-class previously untouched by the revolutionary left. Through the centre we had a point of contact with workers' struggles on many fronts which, given our small - if growing - presence, we would not otherwise have had.

SUPPORT

The benefits were reciprocal. For the first time workers in west Belfast began to receive immediate tactical support in their fights with the bosses. The trade union bureaucrats were forced to act much

more positively than they had ever done in the area and, in the midst of yells of "subversives" and "outside trouble-makers" there has been at least a small shake-up in the corridors of power. And undoubtedly there will be a much greater one in the not too distant future. The organising work of the centre in local communities has resulted in hysterical attacks from various politicians.

Among some of our more public activities have been the organising of the first mass picket in west Belfast at the time of the Eastwood's strike; the organising, along with local workers, of the first workers' march, in protest against the systematic use of torture in the North; our agitation at the August visit of the Queen of England to Belfast; and, last month, the organisation of the first march on unemployment to leave west Belfast for 40 years - indeed the first march to reach into Belfast's centre from the ghettos. Work in the early part of the year was done in support of the Coalisland RAC's

CONFIDENCE

This to us, is the basis for our future. Its the long, frustrating, unglamorous work helping to build confidence on torture.

As important to us as the public image of the work of the centre is the increasing use being made of it by workers. Outside of our public activity, workers and unemployed workers and their dependents are more and more making use of the facilities of the centre for advice or support in particular fights with the bosses or with some established bureaucracy.

The confidence of the class, participating with them in their organisations, establishing a presence among them as part of them, that will ensure our growth numerically, our consolidation organisationally and our development theoretically. It is vital that we continually and critically analyse our activity and our development. The centre, through its non-sectarian approach, allows us to benefit from the criticisms of

comrades in other organisations and in none. It allows us to draw into the struggle individuals and sections of the class who would otherwise be by-passed. We have tried genuinely to ensure the centre is not, and is not seen as, an ISP office. Sometimes in this we have failed out in general we feel that the approach through the centre has been of practical benefit in encouraging the breakdown of the petit-bourgeois sectarianism which has bedevilled the revolutionary left for so long.

IMPORTANCE

At present the centre houses a Claimants' Union, a Legal Advice Centre and is host to myriad groups from a local Housing Action Group to an embryonic Socialist Economists' Committee. It is used as a postal address by a number of organisations and individuals. In its short history it has been actively involved in five strikes in the immediate area and, according to the workers, has been of crucial importance in the winning of the majority of them.

We have made many mistakes in our work through the centre and, hopefully, have learned from some of them. Undoubtedly we will make many more before we can adequately reflect on a fuller analysis of our experiences.

Our biggest mistake would be a refusal to share with comrades in struggle in other organisations, and in none, our view of the benefits, and contradictions, of class work at the level at which we are engaged. Many will refuse to listen, but that should not prevent us from listening to their criticisms and evaluating it in the light of known results and concrete conditions.

The S.L.P.

The Socialist Labour Party represents a significant development in twenty-six county politics. For years the liason of the left had been battling away within the Labour Party but held on in the hope that when election day would come they could get a few left wing nominations for Labour Party Dail candidates and elect a few left wing TD's to the Dail. It was when they found out the extent to which the Labour Party would indulge in all sorts of bureaucratic tricks to prevent candidates like Noel Browne and Matt Merrigan going up under Labour Party banners that they started thinking about a new party - significantly it was the one prominent labour liason personality in Dublin who did get an official Labour Party nomination - Pat Carroll - who stayed within the Labour Party fold, prevented by the bureaucratic manoeuvring of Halligan, Carroll and Co. from going forward as Labour Party candidate despite being widely supported within Labour Party branches in their areas Browne and Merrigan went forward as 'Independent Labour' candidates. They attracted a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of politically homeless left-wing activists found an outlet for their energies. Later a conference was held and from there it snowballed. The Socialist Labour Party has been fairly unsuccessful in winning away people from the Labour Party but on the other hand it has attracted many socialists who were previously unaligned or members of small left-wing groups.



Matt Merrigan

responding to the terms of argument set by the bureaucracy) or trying to build a Socialist Party. This is the difference between two concepts of politics. From the idea that politics is about sending people to Dail Eireann every five years to do things for you a whole pattern emerges which smothers every socialist initiative. The alternative is to renew James Connolly's attempt to popularise Marxism within the working class. This will mean getting involved in mobilising direct action against repression and in economic struggles - through for example support for the Dublin Right Unemployment Committee and the follow through from the Coalisland anti-repression conference. What is needed is a campaigning party. Left phraseology and genuflections to Connolly are not enough. The road the SLP will take is not yet decided. One index of which direction it is going will be the extent to which it is willing to co-operate with those who like the ISP have a concept of socialist politics that focuses not so much on getting a few socialist TD's elected to the Dail (go and all as that would be) but on trying to link today's fight for the direct political and economic needs of the oppressed and exploited in Irish society to the unfolding of the revolutionary process and 'socialism'.

WHICH ROAD?

The Socialist Labour Party is still in the process of formation and at the moment it could develop in different ways. The leadership of the party is still learning the difference between concentrating on the fight to remain as a political leaders within the Labour Party (in which one was always

Health - Right or Commodity?

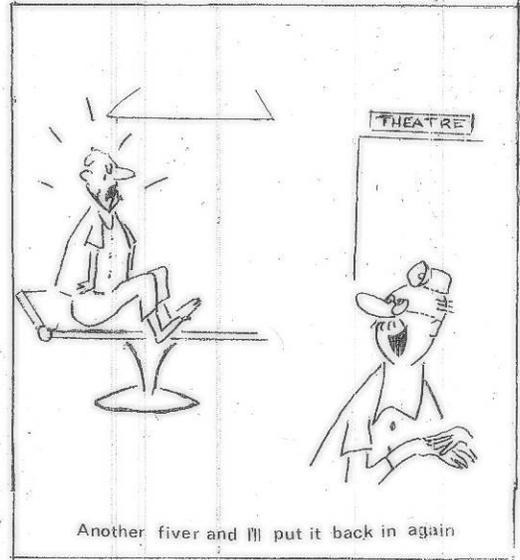
The right to health, fought for by generations of working class people, continues to be threatened. An alternative to the National Health Service in the form of a private clinic, at present being constructed in South Belfast, presents such a threat. The clinic brings to the fore the contradiction between private 'initiative' and social need.

This private initiative entails investment of £1.2m mainly by business interests and doctors. Such investment will of course qualify for tax relief and the site will be exempt from rates as the hospital will be registered as a 'charity'.

The clinic will be the first private hospital in Northern Ireland to cater for acute medical care. However, one wonders just how much demand there is for this clinic, since in 1976 private patients occupied only just over 10% of the 415 beds available for private use in National Health Service hospitals in the North. The memos recently circulated to Housing Executive staff inviting them to join BUPA, a private health insurance company, provide an indication. Demand for private medical care will in fact be created.

The clinic raises several other problems about our system of medical care. Many doctors support the clinic which makes one wonder about the level of support among the profession for the future of the national health service. In itself it will drain resources from the NHS in the form of ancillary services, medical staff trained by the state with public money, and of course competing demands on consultants time between public need and lucrative private practice.

Most significantly the clinic presents a threat to what the National Health Service stands for since, despite inequalities in provision and conditions, we have, at least in theory, the right to health. The private initiative provides a lever for those who are even now, saying that a national health service is not



variable and that only those who can prove exceptional need should be entitled to free provision.

The reality of the great American alternative advances, where health like everything else in capitalist society is a commodity to be bought and sold on the open market.

The health service unions COHSE and NUPE and the NUJ have openly opposed the clinic yet ICTU have refused to comply with COHSE's attempt to block the construction of the clinic. But in issues of this significance it is not only organised labour which is concerned for it is vital that the consumer has a voice. The conflict between private capital, the state and the unions must not lead to the needs of the community being ignored.

These needs are being neglected by both public and private interests. It is ironic

that while this small clinic of 40 beds is being supported by the profession, many areas in the North are struggling unsuccessfully to retain their own small national health service hospitals. The centralisation of services in large high technology hospitals is causing as much concern as this private initiative.

These needs are central to standards of health. While the mortality rate is still highest amongst working class people because of their living and working conditions, contemporary medical care is geared towards high technology medicine more and more divorced from the prevention of the conditions which create disease. But even given the capitalist form of health care, working class people are now faced with the prospect of competing for that care on the basis of wealth.

"Always remember", mumbled Marlon Brando in his Oscar-winning portrayal of *The Godfather*, "that the lawyer with his brief case can steal more in half a day than an armed gang in a whole year".

Actually, Don Corleone didn't know the half of it. He should have come to Ireland and met some *really* crooked lawyers. Like the Law Society in the North, for example. Or the Incorporated Law Society in the South.

Last month the Law Society put out a statement in Belfast claiming that virtually none of its members had clients who had been ill-treated by the RUC. The statement was greeted by whoops of glee from the British press and smirks of satisfaction on the faces of RUC torturers and their political masters.

TORTURE

Within a week, however, a tiny piece of the truth managed to surface in the North's Appeal Court. On three successive days Catholic youths had sentences quashed when the Appeal judges ruled that the confessions which originally convicted them had been extracted by torture.

Freeing Matthew Bradley (23) of Ballymurphy Drive, for example, the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Robert Lowry, said that the verdict of the trial judge had been "unsafe and unsatisfactory".

"I cannot reconcile police evidence with the evidence of medical experts which had shown that Bradley had sustained 52 bruises to his body", said Lowry.

In other words, the cops tortured Bradley and then perjured him into prison.

Matthew Bradley was just one of literally hundreds of young Northerners jailed on the basis of tortured confessions. Every lawyer who has ever stood

in a Northern court during a political trial knows that. So how come the Law Society got it wrong?

The Legal Society

In fact what it had done was to circulate its members with a very brief questionnaire about brutality. The document was sent in a thick bundle with other circulars and correspondence. It could very easily have been overlooked. Many solicitors to whom it was supposedly sent say they have no memory of receiving it.

It was sent around the time when Amnesty had an investigation team in the North

— and when the RUC bully-boys had, temporarily, adopted a softly-softly approach in an effort to con the investigators. Coincidence? Or political cunning?

ALLEGATION

Moreover the Law Society produced no written report of its "survey".

But the final, and most disturbing, factor is the allegation by one solicitor in the North that *not every solicitor* was sent the original questionnaire. And that among those left off the mailing list were some who were most involved in handling cases of torture.

CLOSED SHOP

In a word, the whole operation stank.

Which is not to say that lawyers in the South are any more sweet-smelling. The Southern Incorporated Law Society operates the tightest closed shop in this island. And last month they tried to bolt the door even more securely. The new school through which solicitors must pass will take only 150 law students a year.

This is, quite simply, an effort to keep down the number of solicitors and ensure that as few people as possible get a share of the loot which solicitors squeeze out of the system.

CLASS

Already you have to be rich in the first place to go on and become a solicitor or barrister. You have to pay college fees, university fees and then a lump-sum whack to a solicitor to take you on as an apprentice.

You could be a budding Perry Mason — or Seamus Sorohan — but unless your old man has a rake of the readies to shell out you haven't a hope in hell of ever earning that wig. Only the right class of person gets through.

Which goes a long way towards explaining why the country is coming down with company law, property law and tax law experts — but laws covering the family or landlord-tenant relationships — laws that workers have to worry about — are almost totally ignored, apart from the excellent work of the over-stretched Free Legal Aid Centres.

No doubt about it, the Godfather knew what he was talking about. The average prostitute is a more honest class of solicitor than the big-wigs of the legal profession.

On the night of Tuesday March 30 1976 a mail train was held up in Kildare and £200,000 taken. In that same week on Thursday April 1st (April fools day) Patrick Cooney the then Minister for Justice made a speech at St. Ann's Church Dawson St. denouncing 'subversion' and 'violent revolutionaries' telling us that for the democratic politician, violence is to be avoided at almost any cost, something for use as a very last resort whereas "For the revolutionary violent and non violent means are merely complementary". He went on to argue that the democratic state "must on occasions use force to defend itself, to be as tough as its opponents".

Two totally unrelated facts? It would seem not, for both can be seen as instalments in a long running saga which is still unfinished. It continues every day in Green Street Courthouse, where, if you are willing to risk harassment, you can see it for yourself.

The State tried to pin the mail train robbery on the IRSP and went to great lengths to do so. There was an amazing succession of arrests, releases and re-arrests. Oscar Breathneach editor of the IRSP paper "The Starry Blough" was detained on March 31st 1976, for example, then released and re-arrested on April 5th 1976. Many other IRSP members were arrested.

Oscar Breathneach, Nicky Kelly, Brian McNally and Mick Plunkett are now being tried for the mail train robbery at the Special Criminal Court.

But what makes the IRSP case particularly important is the question of Garda brutality. The IRSP allege that at least 15 of those detained by the police in the April swoop were tortured — that the notorious 'spreadeagle' method was used, that there were beatings on all parts of the body including severe beatings below the ears with batons, the use of fists, boots, leather

straps and clubs and in one case scraping with a heavy wire brush. These allegations were documented in the 'Irish Times' and evoked such concern that Amnesty International wanted to investigate. The Fianna Fail government has set up a whitewash O'Brian committee with such limited terms of reference that there has been a campaign going on in many Trades Councils to get Rory Roberts (ICTU) to withdraw.

that the special court where they are being tried has no jury and that the only line the state prosecutor can take is to suppose that the IRSP prisoners beat each other up to fake evidence of Garda brutality — about as likely as the one about the prisoner who jumped three stories so that it would be said he was pushed. Even in the trial itself doctors have given evidence of finding extensive bruising on all the defendants.

shattered appearance as a man he saw in Crumlin Road shortly after internment who had been tortured, a shattered appearance that was living proof of Cooney's theory that for democratic politicians (to whom the Garda and especially the special branch are responsible) "violence is to be avoided at all cost".

the special court system in 1972). And in a time of crises that includes quite a number of people (see article on Liffey Dockyard strike for an example of how the net is being widened). Such a campaign would also involve the co-ordination of different organisations like ICCL, ICRA and TUCAR. ICCL has many members but could get more involved in activity (like the march for the IRSP 4 a few weeks ago) ICRA has a fairly restricted constituency of republican politics and TUCAR needs to develop, while having the right approach, doesn't appeal to groups outside the trade unions category who could be drawn in on such a campaign.

The ISP has been involved in the Coalisland Anti-Repression Conference in the North where the case for mass movement methods were discussed. In the South some of the energy and imagination of the civil rights campaign is needed, ten years later if we are to make sure that civil liberties are not destroyed to 'serve democracy'. That is what an American officer obviously schooled in the same 'philosophy' as Cooney ("better dead than red") said after the Vietnamese village of Ben Sue was raised to the ground "we had to destroy it in order to save it".

While Cooney was Minister for "justice" there were five Labour ministers in the cabinet and not much fuss in the Labour Party about their position. At the recent Labour party conference at Wexford a motion was passed condemning the Special Court and condemning all repressive legislation, with only five opposing. Hopefully we can look forward to Labour Party branches participating in the IRSP 4 defence campaign.

Any Labour party member who follows through the logic of such a resolution can look forward to being told that merely to describe somebody being spread eagled or scraped with a heavy wire brush as Garda brutality or institutionalised violence is in itself subversive and so is taking part in an occupation or sit in and of course if one works in the post office or Aer Lingus, one might be an economic subversive.



Green St. Justice

However, that much said about the details of the case, the important question is the usual 64 dollar one — WHAT IS TO BE DONE? The IRSP have been organising a "defend the IRSP 4" campaign in which the ISP has participated. This campaign is important and could develop because it offers an issue around which to co-ordinate civil liberties campaigns, and campaigns against repression. To do so will have to be seen not simply as a matter for the IRSP but one involving all those who might be seen as subversives by the Government (and if Fianna Fail do not articulate the 'philosophy' in the same way as Cooney they act on it nonetheless, it was they who introduced

How this all relates to the current case is simply that the main evidence consists of confessions extracted from the defendants and signed under 'duress'. It is important to note

Indeed one prominent barrister who was representing the Irish Government in the Strasbourg case on British torture in the north has said Oscar Breathneach had the same

Left behind on torture campaign



BLOCK

What is happening in H Block in Long Kesh is a shame. And the people who ought most to be shamed by it are the Irish Left.

Because the Left, who are never slow to snipe and sneer at middle-class liberals for failing to stand up to repression, have themselves stood idly by while up to 300 Republicans have been subject to systematic and savage brutality by the British authorities.

There are exceptions of course. Some of the Left have been active some of the time. But it cannot be denied that the general response from the socialist forces — such as they are — has been pitiful when compared to the importance of the issue.

And the reason is not hard to find. Political status is seen as a "Republican" issue: the property, more or less, of the Provos. And while almost all who call themselves socialists give lip service at least to anti-imperialism, they are scared stiff of somehow being tarred with the Provisional brush.

Aren't we the sensitive souls! What is H Block all about? It is about the demand of the Republican prisoners to be treated differently from "ordinary" prisoners. And about the response of the British Government to that demand. Looked at very simply — and

not very politically — the Republicans' demand is eminently reasonable. They are arrested under special laws, "interrogated" with the use of special techniques, tried in special no-jury courts and given specially long sentences: why then should they not be entitled to special conditions while serving their sentences?

That argument, on its own, ought to be enough to convince anyone who is interested only in logic. But of course there is more to it.

The H Block prisoners are political prisoners — in the sense that the actions which led to their imprisonment were politically motivated. The actions would not have taken place — could not have taken place — had it not been for the political situation.

MOTIVE

And it wasn't just any old political motive. It was an anti-imperialist political motive. That is not to say that these actions are the best way to conduct the anti-imperialist struggle. Or that involvement in the Provos is the best way for working-class people to play a part in that struggle. Certainly not.

But whether we like it or not, for better or worse

(probably worse) the Provisionals are in the front line of the struggle against imperialism at the present time. You don't have to be a deep political thinker to recognise that. You just have to read your daily newspapers and note which organisation in Ireland is the main target — in every sense of the word — of the British establishment and its Irish supporters.

(It would be a far better thing, and there would be an enormously better situation if it was a mass, revolutionary, working-class party which was leading the struggle against imperialism. But that isn't the case. And it is better to relate to the unfortunate reality than waste time wishing things were different.)

The fact is, therefore, that what is going on in H Block — the Republicans' insistence that their political background be acknowledged and the British determination to classify their activities as crime — is itself part of the struggle. It is one front — not the main front, but not an unimportant one either — in the conflict between the British ruling class and the ordinary people of Ireland.

No socialist has the right to be neutral in that conflict. No-one who is neutral in that conflict is a socialist. And if we are not neutral we ought to be playing a full part.

It is about time we started to do it.

Pounds, Shillings & Peace

The Peace People's "Spring Assembly" in Ballymena at the end of last month was described in most papers as a "low-key" affair. In fact it was a disorganised and demoralised gathering of people who have no role to play and no relevance to reality left.

There were only 41 accredited delegates, although McKeown had been babbling on the BBC only a fortnight previously about there being "over 100" active groups in the organisation.

The big news of the weekend was the decision to "open the books" so that the public could see where the money had gone. Plus the decision of the three leaders to stand down from the executive.

In fact the opening of the books only served to confirm suspicions that the Peace People's loot was being used for no good purpose.

As for the standing of McKeown, Corrigan and Williams: all it means is that they won't have to show their faces on the office at all in the future. They made it clear that they won't give up their lucrative globe-trotting. Corrigan and Williams are simply going full-time into the glamour-girl business, while McKeown wants to become editor of the Irish News.

CREDIBILITY

The Peace People have lost whatever shred of credibility they ever had. And two reasons sum up why that happened — Money and Politics.

In the 21 months since they burst onto the Irish scene more than £400,000 has poured into the Peace People. And from the very beginning the leaders' attitude to this money has been very peculiar.

Interviewed by a Swedish reporter in December 1976 (just after they had received the Norwegian £210,000 "People's Peace Prize") Betty Williams said: "Can you imagine, our bank accountant says Mairead and I are fully entitled to keep all the money for ourselves. After all, it is us who are the peace prize winners".

This shows that the idea that they might just pocket some of the bread had occurred to the leaders at a very early stage indeed. And of course, a year later, when they received the £80,000 Nobel Peace Prize, this wasn't just an idea. Corrigan and

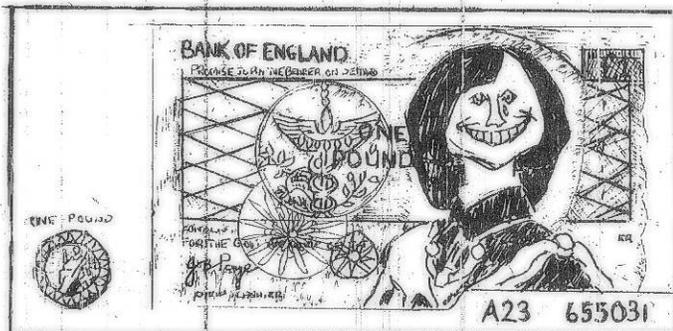
Williams lodged £40,000 each in their personal bank accounts. Corrigan quipped to a reporter: "My mother will be delighted. My mother keeps saying I will never have money or a man".

That incident at the time attracted curiously little comment in the press. But it must have shattered the illusions of many who had previously regarded Corrigan and Williams as almost saintly figures. Other remarks by the two women at the time reinforced the impression that they had begun to see themselves as "stars" entitled to the income, the life-style and the immunity from criticism which "stars" expect. A typical example: asked about a new and reputedly very expensive velvet suit she wore for the Nobel presentation, Williams declared: "Sure we cannot be expected to meet kings and Prime Ministers looking like a couple of Paddies".

She had clearly forgotten that had it not been for the thousands of "Paddies" — and "Biddies" — marching behind them, she and Corrigan would never have been in line for the Nobel prize in the first place. She had also lost sight of the fact that it was precisely because they presented themselves as "ordinary" people, expressing "ordinary" people's feelings that their movement had had such an initial impact.

PREMISES

A breakdown of the Peace People's money shows the following. Total income, about £400,000. About £50,000 was spent buying and renovating their premises on the Lisburn Road. £35,000 has been invested in small industrial projects around the North: note that it has not been given, but loaned out. £80,000 has been kept by Williams



and Corrigan. £72,000 has been spent on publications and literature, of which £9,000 came back in sales. £11,700 was spent "re-settling" families.

The rest — over £200,000 — is in a bank account, gathering interest. It amounts to an awful lot of money lying around. And no substantial proportion of it is being used to alleviate the situation of working-class people in the North. Meanwhile, the middle-rich Williams and Corrigan have each been bought new "company" cars.

VIOLENCE

The Peace People claimed to be campaigning simply for "peace", against all violence, whatever its source. But consider the facts.

Whatever one thinks about the Provos, it is obvious that the war in the North is not one-sided: that the British Army, too, is regularly inflicting violence on people.

Williams, Corrigan and McKeown came to Dublin in February and marched on what they claimed was the Provos' HQ. Last year they also went over and marched in London, where the British Army has its HQ. But did they march there against the British Army HQ? No. They marched against the Provos in London as well

— in the company of members of the British Government!

That fact, on its own, shows that whatever it is the Peace People are engaged in, it isn't opposing all violence in an even-handed way.

INFORM

That emerged very clearly from Corrigan's speech at the sparsely attended rally in Kevin Street in February. The central thrust of the message was "inform, inform, inform". She even urged people to inform on brothers, fathers or sons who might be in the IRA! That's not the attitude of a peace campaigner. It is a straight crib from any RIC hand-out.

To understand what happened to the Peace People you must first look at the root of the Northern problem. The violence in the North stems from the nature of the state, from the built-in sectarian set-up. To demand peace, without suggesting how that set-up can be changed, is to demand peace within the present set-up. It means asking people peacefully to accept the situation. It is like urging the slave not to fight back against the slave-master — in the interests of "peace".

That is they key to why the Peace People, who were initially

regarded by many genuine people as a bright ray of new hope, drifted inevitably into the arms of the British establishment, where they now snuggle comfortably — and comfortably off.

In a phrase, the Peace People leaders have changed their social standing. They are now a different class of people. The peace movement has been the mechanism which lifted them out of the working class and perched them among the propertied elements in our society. And their political attitudes reflect their new standing.

DELUSIONS

It is the realisation of that which has made many thousands of people who do "simply want peace", unwilling to march with them any more. And it will take more than McKeown's Messianic delusions, or William's waspish wit, or Corrigan's talent for instant tears to bring the marchers back.

The Peace People are finished. Another cul de sac has been tried and been shown to lead nowhere. The task of taking an axe to the root of the violence remains.

FIGHT BACK NOW

Why doesn't the Government DO something?

That was the constant cry from employers' organisations and newspaper editorials as the Post Office and Aer Lingus strikes dragged on through last month. Michael O'Leary of Labour and Jim Mitchell of Fine Gael echoed the same point day after day.

The truth is that by standing idly by and refusing to budge an inch the Government *was* doing something. Or at least it thought it was.

It was allowing the disputes to drag on in the hope that one of two things would happen. Either the workers involved would gradually be starved back to work - in which case they and all other workers would be demoralised and afraid of another fight. Or the public at large would eventually become so fed up and sickened by the whole mess that Fianna Fail could introduce swinging anti-union laws and castrate the whole union movement.

Either way, the workers would be weakened and the bosses made stronger.

But the Government's strategy didn't work very well. And one of the reasons for this is that the bosses are divided. Or, to be more accurate, they haven't worked out a common strategy for the next phase in their endless battle to screw the workers.

One section of the bosses would like a head-on confrontation with the workers. These are the people who are forever screaming hysterically about the unions having "too much power" and unofficial strikers "bringing down the country".

Another, perhaps more insightful, section believes that it is possible to keep the economy

going and profit rates high by wheeling and dealing with union leaders and depending on them (the union leaders) to keep the rank-and-file workers in check. These are the people who are endlessly appealing for "good will" and "common sense on both sides" in industrial relations.

Both sections have one aim in common: to keep wages as low and profits as high as possible. But they differ about how to achieve this. The first section wants to have a bash at the trade union movement. The second wants to bribe the leaders and bamboozle the led.

And both sections are represented within Fianna Fail. The bashers, according to whispers in the corridors of power, are led by the smooth-talking, and even smoother-tongued, Martin O'Donoghue. The bribers - wouldn't you know it - include the former import-export magnate, Charlie Haughey.

So while Fianna Fail did dither about how to handle the two big disputes, it was dithering between two equally reactionary and anti-working class strategies.

In this situation trade unionists need to be very clear about where their interests lie. They do *not* lie in taking sides between Fianna Fail factions. Fianna Fail, for all its occasional populist rhetoric, is a fundamentally anti-working class party.

The fact that some of them come at us bare-fisted while others wear kid gloves should not blind us to the reality: that the clear intention of each and every one of them is to batter us into the ground.

What we have to prepare to do is fight back.

MARXISM AND REPUBLICANISM

Marxism is a dialectical method which not only interprets history and analyses modern society but also makes history. Its importance lies in this praxis of theory and action. Marxism is an intellectual weapon which the working class can use to show the historical, ephemeral nature of the bourgeoisie. Thus armed intellectually, the class becomes armed physically.

Marxism is growing in Ireland. Small, but significant groups of workers are beginning to see their oppression, not as isolated phenomena, but as part of a totality. Marxism provides the key to the understanding of man in his environment. With that understanding men take their first conscious steps towards freedom.

Freedom for all mankind is the goal. History defines our task as building a socialist society in Ireland. The movement without a reference to the goal means nothing for the working class. When the movement becomes an end in itself then revolutionary class struggle stands betrayed. In practice this means in whatever struggle socialists are involved in, they themselves are able to see that that struggle, and the demands arising from it, are but a means to an end - that the political consciousness of the class is being continually raised. Always and over questions of

at its most violent?"

What sort of dubious chatter is this? If it had been a 17-year-old girl who had been assaulted, would An Phoblacht have described it as "heterosexuality at its most violent"? Of course not. Because they know that there is no connection between heterosexuality as such and violence. And neither is there any connection between homosexuality and violence.

In Paris in 1797 (real newsy little item, this) Wolfe Tone was passing the time of day with Delaquoix when the latter asked whether Tone could give two priests a lift back to Ireland when the invasion fleet was sailing.

"I would rather that priests were not involved in the enterprise at all", snapped Theobald.

Which goes to show two things. One, what a sensible sort of fellow Wolfe Tone was and, Two, how little of this sense has rubbed off on present-day Republicans and their supporters.

In Derry in recent months members of the hard-working Relatives' Action Committee have been pressing away at the Catholic Bishop Daly to "make a statement" about H Block. Deputations have gone and pleaded with him. Letters in the *Derry Journal* have publicly urged him. Meetings of the RAC have been told that he was waiting for the "right moment" to make his dramatic intervention.

Well, the right moment came on Thursday April 27. (Thursday's always a good day for statements in Derry. The *Journal* comes out on Friday.)

And what did this much-heralded statement say? Well, (yawn, yawn) it called on the Provos to stop their violence, said that there was a "health hazard" in H Block, wondered whether there might not be a case of occasional reviews of security police and (snore, snore) opined that the situation was "depressing".

In other words, he didn't say a damn thing.

Lesson: if people would spend less of their time pleading with and kow-towing to Bishops there might be more time available for constructive action and thought. After all, if old Theobald could see through these chancers the guts of two centuries ago, isn't it about time we all caught up?

power - who rules - are raised - and answered.

Republican validity in so far as it has any validity as a revolutionary creed, is that it has struggled against imperialism. Indeed it seems to have been the main if not the only force to do so. Consequently socialists have been forced into taking positions either for or against defence of Republican armed struggle. But socialists should not confuse strategy and tactics. In principle it is correct to struggle against Imperialism. But that does not mean justification, or defence of the methods used by Republicanism. On the contrary, if socialists believe in what they profess to believe then surely the main task is not abstract defence or criticism of Republicanism but instead positive leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle. Only when anti-imperialism is seen as not necessarily being synonymous

with Republicanism will the masses flock to the anti-imperialist banner and Cook and Belfast workers will stand shoulder to shoulder in common cause.

To say this is not to simply dismiss Republican fighters. On the contrary, we hold these fighters in high esteem. Their self sacrifice, dedication and courage are an example to all revolutionary fighters throughout the world. These fighters must be won away from the dead end of Republican ideology. That cannot be done by side-line criticism or pointing out other methods. Revolutionary socialists have got to do if there is to be any prospect of wooing working class militants towards revolutionary socialism and away from Republicanism. Only by fully participating in the resolving of the national question can the small forces of Marxism hope to win the working class towards socialism.

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WATCH THIS SPACER

What on earth - or indeed in heaven - is happening to the Sticks out in Howth?

This sturdy band of steely-eyed socialists seem to have had a fit of the head-stagers recently and to have become afflicted with a doze of the dreaded religious lunacy. The duplicated Howth Notes - given away with the United Irishman in the area - recently carried a drooling little item about - wait for it - a sponsored walk in aid of parish funds.

Indeed Howth Notes tell us that this money-making stroll was in aid of "our parish funds". Our? Is that not a very funny way for dialectical materialists to be talking about religious institutions.

Howth is setting an ecumenical example to other areas with this interdenominational approach", the article drones on, "so we hope the weather keeps fine".

Oh yeah?

What does Sean "I'm an atheist: myself" Garland think about one of his party's publications promoting religion? Eh? Speak up there, Sean, sure we can't hear you.

Mind you, it's not so long since the Sticks in Derry made a few quid selling portraits of the Catholic Bishop, Edward Daly, around houses in the Creggan and Bogside. Where will it all end? A decade of the Rosary at the Ard Fleis? Prayers for Church unity at Bodenstown?

Joe Stagg, chairman of the Irish Civil Rights Association, is a sound man. If you are in a bit of bother there is no better, or more energetic, man to have on your side. But there's times when he should catch himself on.

At the meeting outside the GPO on April 8 to protest against the Special Criminal Court and the framing of the IRSP Four, he snatched the mike from Mattie Merrigan when Matt began talking about the Liffey Dockyard issue.

Joe reckoned Matt should "stick to the point". If he can't see the connection between repression of the IRSP in the Special Criminal Court and repression of a group of workers through the use of the Forcible Entry Act he is suffering from an acute form of political blindness, and ought urgently to consult a specialist.

We can recommend a highly qualified man, Mr. James Connolly.

Meanwhile, back over in Parnell Square, there was a slight slip of the sexist tongue in coverage of the appalling case of young Gerard Power. He was the 17-year old from Andersonstown sexually assaulted by RUC thugs in Castlereagh.

Rightly, An Phoblacht gave the case strong coverage and denounced the sadists responsible. But the anonymous An Phoblacht writer described the offence as "homosexuality

Title: Independent Socialist, May 1978
Organisation: Independent Socialist Party
Date: 1978

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