

The Irish People

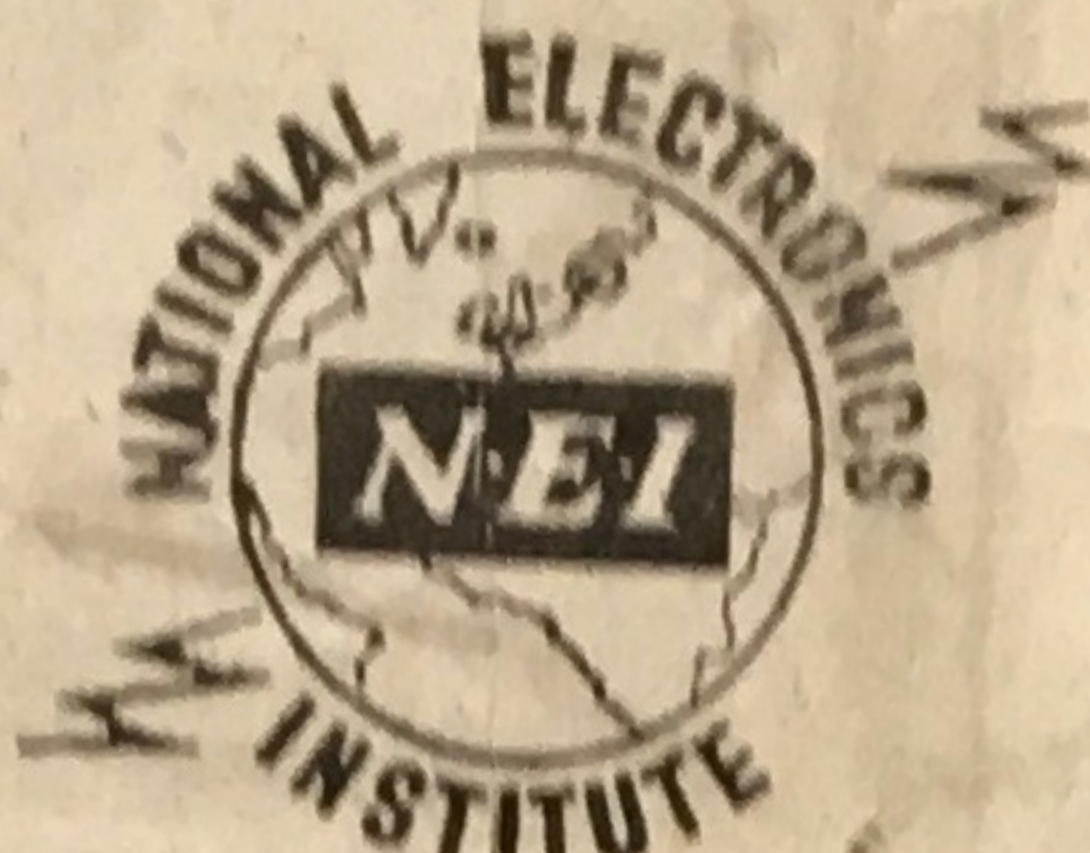
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FRIDAY, SEPT. 5, 1975

IRISH PEOPLE NOW 2p.

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"Guaranteed Careers for Boys and Girls".

"Starting Salaries: Up to £2,700".

The National Electronics Institute of Cork, which lost its previous status as a recognised examination centre for the Department of Posts and Telegraphs over two months ago, is still promising guaranteed jobs at generous salaries to students who enroll in its courses.

The latest advertisement appeared in last week's Sunday Press concerning courses which start on 7 October 1975 and 27 January 1976. It promised qualifications "in the shortest possible time (8 to 18 months)".

"These positions are secure, highly paid, interesting and offer unlimited scope for advancement", the advertisement reads. It continues in bold print: "All our Graduates are Guaranteed Immediate Employment".

However the Union of Students in Ireland called attention to the activities of the Institute in May this year and pressed for stricter control of the Institute which, it said, "offered bogus qualifications allegedly validated by an unknown centre in the U.K." by the Department of Education. They ac-

cused the Minister for Education of "callous indifference" to the plight of the Institute's students in his failure to lay down stricter regulations for the operation of the Institute which, they claimed, was duping school leavers into handing over fees for courses and qualifications which are not recognised by any other profession or educational institution.

Although the Minister replied to these complaints at the time that controlling regulations on the Institute and other such privately run schools and colleges were not possible under the Constitution the Department of Posts and Telegraphs withdrew its recognition from the Institute as a centre for examination for the final part of the Radio Officers Certificate.

The latest advertisement for positions in the Institute puts the large number of current vacancies down to "very rapid expansion". A more likely reason is that the vacancies are due to the fact that over 200 disappointed and disillusioned students have already left the Institute this year.



● Conor Cruise O'Brien: no reply on reinstatement.

NATIONAL STRIKE

CALLED BY

POST OFFICE

WORKERS

Post office workers, members of the Irish Post Office Engineering Union, will come out on a one day national strike on Monday, September 15. The strike has been called by the union executive to bring attention to the dismissal by the Department of Posts and Telegraphs of a temporary labourer and the failure of the Department to reinstate him because he had a police record as a juvenile.

Representations made on his behalf by the union to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Conor Cruise O'Brien, were acknowledged but not acted upon and the union is still awaiting a reply from the Minister's secretary, Mr. O'Nualain, to a telephone communication on 19 August. Mr. O'Nualain had promised to investigate the matter and get in touch with the union.

At a special meeting of the resident executive of the Post Office Engineering Union, called on 22 August, to review the campaign for the man's reinstatement, it was decided that the union would not be prepared to wait indefinitely for a Departmental decision and that a strong line of action was to be taken.

In conjunction with the one day strike union branches will organise protest marches at all branch centres throughout the country, starting at 11 a.m., and protest meetings will be held to outline the case for the Waterford man's reinstatement.

However, it is not the union's intention to disrupt normal work or place pickets. The object of the protests, Mr. J. J. Clarke, Deputy General Secretary, said in a circular to members, is to "direct attention to the plight of the labourer and the victimisation of a member who has paid his debt to society".

The Irish People

RHODESIA

We often wax critical of the activities of the Government or its individual members but this is a time for bouquets. Dr. Garret Fitzgerald, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, has often shown himself to be less hide-bound, more forward looking, than some of his colleagues. He is to be congratulated for his stand on the participation of Rhodesia in the Davis Cup tennis competition, resulting eventually in the withdrawal of that country from the tournament.

Dr. Fitzgerald had advised the Irish Lawn Tennis Association that he did not approve of Ireland acting as host country to Rhodesia or, indeed, of Irish players taking part in a match with that country at all. The Rhodesian tennis team were eventually forced to retire altogether after an alternative venue could not be found.

Of course, Ireland is obliged, under United Nations rules, to observe sanctions against the racially-discriminatory state of Rhodesia, though not South Africa. But by taking the stand that he did Dr. Fitzgerald indicated the moral commitment, on all our parts, to oppose the racial discrimination in South Africa and Rhodesia. He could so easily have tried to avoid open condemnation or ignore the issue completely.

A large part of the credit for this undoubted victory against the influence of racialism must go to the Anti-Apartheid Movement who have done tremendous work in bringing the plight of the oppressed African races to the notice of the Irish public.

One point, however: Could the Minister or his Department make it clear to some of our more prominent newspapers that advertisements for states which practise racial discrimination are not acceptable? They are obliged, under the strict letter of the law, to refuse advertising space to Rhodesia but the spirit of the law should surely make South Africa taboo also?

WORLD POVERTY

There is a prevailing feeling that at all times, regardless of occasional ups and downs, the world is steadily becoming more prosperous, more advanced, etc. It is a fallacy confined to the Western industrial nations. Even the poorest in Ireland, with all our problems, is immensely better off than some millions of people in Asia, Africa and South America.

The enormity of the poverty to which millions are subjected — figures from the World Bank give the per capita income of some 900 million people at 75 dollars per annum — is increasing rather than abating.

Enormous sums like the 43,000m dollars which the World Bank has pledged to contribute won't rectify this trend unless world terms of trade and development funds become more favourable to the underdeveloped world.



• Picketers of Dun and Bradstreets offices in May last.

No change in Thoms strike

No change: that is the verdict on the Thoms Directory strike following talks in the Labour Court last Wednesday.

The ITGWU is still not satisfied with the terms offered by Mr. J. L. Wootton, owner of Thoms Directory, to the girls whom he sacked for joining the union. The girls are demanding reinstatement while Mr. Wootton is offering to take back some of them but is insisting that others, three of whom are the longest serving (and incidentally the highest paid), will not be reinstated.

For those who are not to be taken back he has offered payment ranging from £200 for girls employed from four to five years to £30 for one girl who is there five weeks. This has been rejected by the union, No. 2 Branch, ITGWU, who are fighting for reinstatement and who reason that even if Mr. Wootton wants to get rid of the girls and even if they were willing to accept that (which they are not), he should at least offer adequate compensation for the loss of their jobs. And there the matter rests until a more acceptable offer is made.

The union are willing to discuss the matter at any time and have said that they are prepared to negotiate directly with the FUE, if they wish, in an effort to reach a settlement.

This is not the first case of 'join-the-union, lose-your-job' which this particular union branch has come across. As more and more female clerical workers, a notoriously difficult section of workers to organise in the past, join trade unions the backlash from employers has been sharp and fairly predictable. Possibly the hardline approach is due to the sex of the workers whom employers may think can be more easily bullied into docility but the No. 2 Branch has had a few notable successes in forcing union recognition from a reluctant boss.

Most similar to the present dispute was a strike in Dun and Bradstreet in May last year. Dun and Bradstreet produce a directory of commercial interests somewhat on the lines of Thoms Directory. They also have (or had) the same antipathy to trade unionists on their staff and sacked shop steward Miss Joan Synnot, causing an official strike among the unionised employees.

At the same time a request from ITGWU official, John Swift, for a meeting to discuss a new wage scale for the employees was refused.

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Prior to unionisation girls were not told what each of their colleagues was being paid and wages were below the prevailing rate. The ITGWU sought to regularise the situation with a scale ranging from £15 for a sixteen year old to £47 maximum.

The strike was eventually concluded satisfactorily as was the strike which took place among employees of Credit Finance Ltd., in January this year. Here again the shop steward and union organiser a young man by the name of Eugene Brazil was sacked, allegedly for bad time-keeping, resulting in all thirty four staff joining the union and voting for strike. Scab labour was used extensively during this strike but nonetheless the union members won their point and recognition to boot.

Scab labour, in the shape of Mr. Wootton's family, is also being used in preparing Thoms Directory for publication but no union printers will handle the book while the strike goes on.

A representative of the ITGWU was due to go on Seven Days last Friday night in a televised confrontation with Mr. Wootton. However, due to the death of Eamon De Valera the programme had to be cancelled. In death, just as in life, Labour had to wait!

Landlord should be "tarred and feathered"

He should be "tarred and feathered" Carlow Urban Councillor, Mr. Michael Byrne, said of one Carlow landlord when he finished inspecting a flat which was being rented out to a young married couple in the town. As a lesser deterrent Carlow Urban Council has decided to introduce bye-laws covering the conditions of rented accommodation in the town and containing penalties for non-compliance, including possible closure. The decision in principle was taken by the Council on 26 August and the September meeting is to discuss the enactment of bye-laws more fully.

The motion to introduce housing bye-laws was proposed by Councillor Byrne who told colleagues on the Council that conditions in some of the flats rented by one particular landlord had made him "literally sick" and were not fit for a dog. Such conditions were a serious indictment of public representatives, he said.

A tour by Urban Councillors around flats in the town brought to light shocking cases of extortionate rents for insanitary, often rat-infested, accommodation.

In one case, a group of flats, the sewer (open) was covered over by a flagstone.

Couples were living in danger of contracting disease carried by rat infestation. One child had dermatitis which could not be cured while living in its present home and another had been in hospital with gastro-enteritis on a number of occasions. Yet again, children had had to be hustled out of a building to avoid the rats in a flat which also used to chew their clothing.

One flat was so bad that the tenants were recommended for emergency rehousing; in another the tenants' ESB bill, averaging £2-

£3, had been topped to £21 odd because, they were told, the ground rent was included!

Under the 1966 Housing Act local authorities are empowered to introduce bye-laws setting out minimum standards of ventilation, lighting, heating, sanitary facilities, food storage etc. In rented accommodation. Councils, however, are not allowed to regulate the rents charged for flats.

Trades Councils to merge

Kells Trades Council did not seem to have 'blossomed' the way it had been hoped it would, one delegate to Navan Trades Council remarked at the meeting at which the possibility that the two Councils should merge was discussed. Kells trade unionists had requested the merger when their own Trades Council, set up originally with the help of Navan Trades Council, became inactive. The downturn was no fault of the organisers, Navan delegates noted, and pointed to Navan's stronger trade union tradition as the reason for the strength of the Navan body.

Mr. Thomas Grimes, who had been instrumental in organising the Kells Council, is to be invited along with other Kells trade unionists to the next Navan meeting to go into the matter further.

At the same meeting last week, Navan Trades Council vetoed the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs' proposals for the rebroadcasting of the BBC as the second national channel and opted instead for a second RTE channel. This choice was with some reservations, however, and RTE's present programme material was described by some critics as "diabolical" and "a load of trash".

The motion rejecting the Minister's proposals was put forward by the ITGWU delegate who detailed his own union's reasons for opposition to the BBC. The question was whether it would be better to have a second national channel or rebroadcast BBC, the chairman, Mr. D. Fitzgerald said, adding that the issue involved the possibility of redundancy and there was too much of that already.

What a hope! they've got

Hope springs eternal in the breasts of ground rent landlords and so the Lewis-Crosby Estate still cherished hopes of getting £88.97 back arrears in ground rent from the Trustees of Sinn Fein. Their solicitors, Montgomery and Chaytor, of Ely Place, wrote recently to the political organisation which initiated the anti-ground rent campaign and asked to be paid their annual sum of £35.50 plus two and a half years rent arrears.

Back came the reply that the Party had no intention of paying ground rents or arrears now or at any time in the future — plus a complimentary copy of Ground Rent is Robbery. The solicitors' attention was directed to the following quotation from the anti-ground rent pamphlet which appeared originally in Business and Finance:

"Taken in extremis, the idea of a modern community which does not entirely own the land on which it exists is faintly ridiculous. The fact that the rental is paid into the pocket of some secure Lord whose only claim to fame was that his ancestors won the land by conquest only aggravates the situation. The sooner ground rents are completely abolished, the quicker we will have a rational land structure. Anachronisms of this nature have no place in the Ireland of today."

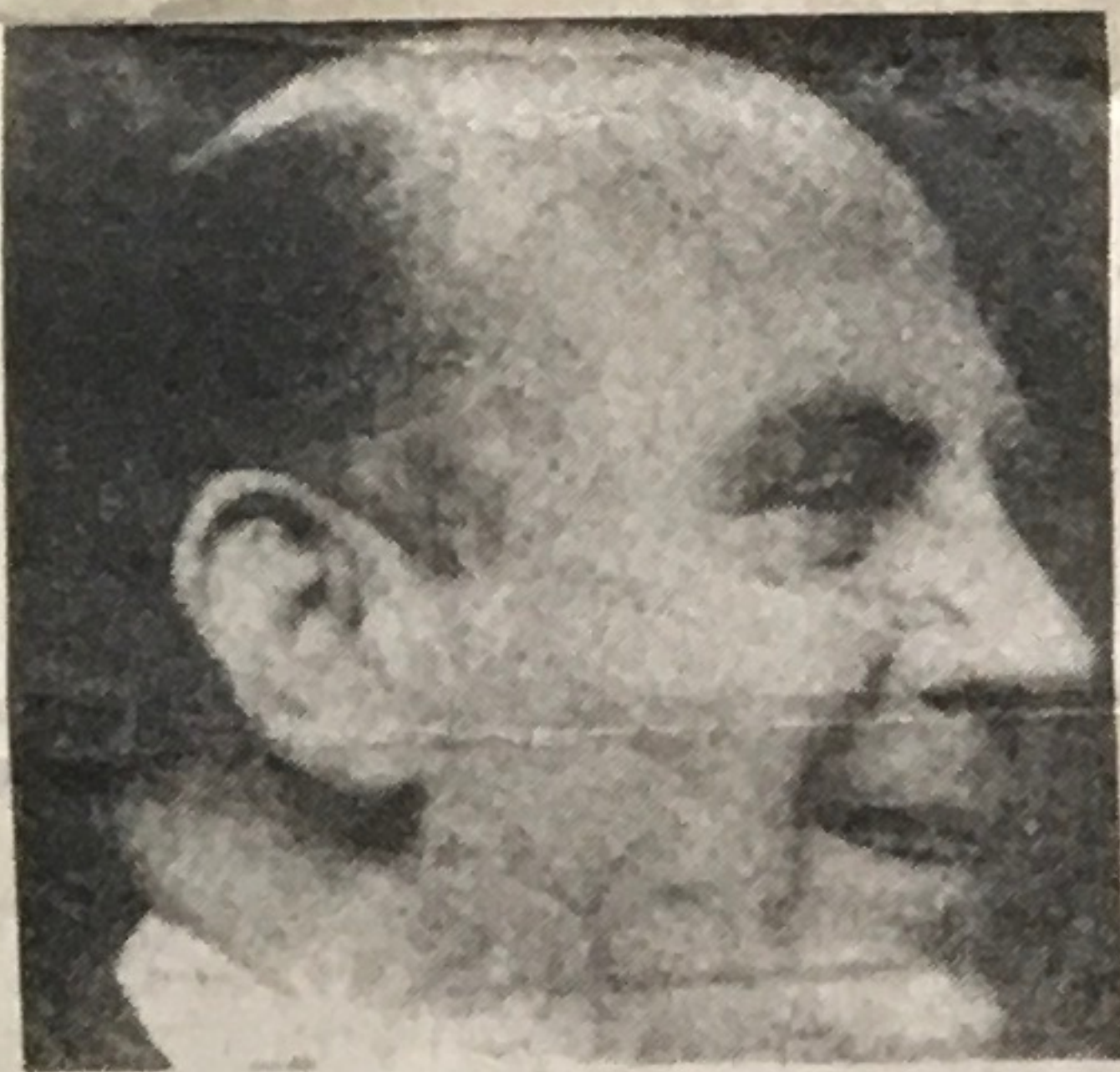
Cautious welcome for fish report

The report of the Inland Fisheries Commission has been given a cautious welcome by the executive of the National Waters Restoration League which said that its findings "fully justify the League's fish-in campaign".

The recommendation that a Fishery Authority be established to develop all aspects of fisheries and to buy out, in some cases, private ownership went a long way towards meeting its demands for national development of inland waters, a statement from the League said.

The League was also pleased at measures to take into public ownership thirteen important fisheries, including those on the Boyne, Munster Blackwater, Nore Corrib, Moy and Ballisodare but 'deplored' any of the Commission's recommendations which would have the effect of reducing the catching capacity of salmon fishermen while increasing that of private owners.

The report justified the demands of Gluaiseacht Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta for popular ownership of the lakes and rivers, the NWRL statement continued. Gluaiseacht Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta have mounted an active fish-in campaign for the nationalisation of certain Connemara rivers in recent months.



John Healy: doesn't like the 'fish-in yobbos'.

As long as "ambiguity as to ownership" remains in certain areas, the League said, casual poaching would "remain the weapon of the dispossessed". However, a crash programme of development, stocking and research was urgently needed to tap the potential employment opportunities of the inland fisheries industry.

The League decided to adopt a "wait and see" attitude to the Government's reaction to the report but said that the basic logic of the report would lead, in time, to full public ownership.

One individual who differed in this from the "fish-in yobbos", as he called them, was well known journalist, John Healy (sometimes known as Backbencher) writing in the Western People. In his view, which was diametrically opposed to that of the League, the essence of the Inland Fisheries Commission report was that nationalisation would be unconstitutional. "The idea that some of the latter day half colonels and majors live high off the hog of the hog-backed Irish Atlantic salmon is, at best, a bit of fiction" he wrote.

"True, they may hold down some rather good salmon waters and may charge five or ten pounds a day for a boat but anyone who thinks that the colonels reap exclusively the benefit of the annual salmon runs is either a Stickle propagandist, hawking the politics of racial prejudice and envy or is a looderamaun, who doesn't know the scene".

"If anyone is getting a living off a salmon or sea trout fishery now it is the poacher as much as the fishery people" he continued.

Mr. Healy was dead against the idea of nationalisation of the fisheries but nevertheless had to confide that "the last thing I'd want to own just now is a private fishery". The fish-in yobbos' must be having some sort of effect.

Irate tenants picket corporation dump

A man was arrested and charged with obstruction after pickets were placed at the entrance to Dublin Corporation's tip head in Ballyfermot last Thursday. Similar pickets were placed at the junctions of Kylemore Road/Le Fanu Avenue, Rossmore Road/Rossmore Avenue and Drumflinn/Rossmore roundabout.

The pickets were not the result of an industrial dispute but were mounted by local residents of Loch Conn, Rossmore and Le Fanu Roads who have a series of grievances over the way things are developing in the immediate area. The pickets centred on three immediate issues: the Corporation's rubbish dump, the failure to provide Gaelic sports pitches and the form that housing development is taking on a site between Le Fanu Road and Rossmore Road.

A leaflet handed out by the picketers explained their actions. The Corporation, it read, have broken all their promises regarding the development of this site. "It was to have been a parkland stretching to St. John's College to the Gaels with a gaelic pitch situated at the St. John's College end."

But, it continued, "The Dublin Corporation have no plans for this as a public park. They have no plans for a GAA pitch although they promised (in writing) to have this ready by the autumn of 1974".

"They said they would build only 20 houses on the site between Le Fanu Road and Rossmore Road."

According to local residents the Corporation have decided instead to build 32 houses on the site. Worse still it would be possible to see into the bedrooms of the completed houses when an adjacent dump, which is being filled in, was completed. The ground level of the completed dump, according to irate locals, would be between 15 to 20 feet in height above road level.

It was decided to place pickets on the chosen sites after Corporation representatives failed to turn up to a meeting called to air local grievances.

According to the accompanying leaflet it is intended to maintain these pickets until work starts on laying out the promised GAA pitches, moves are made to reduce the height of the dump to road level and dumping of rubbish is discontinued at the tip head and a final date set for its completion. In addition the residents want the original figure of 20 houses on the Le Fanu/Rossmore Road site to be adhered to.

Lumpers O.K. with Athy UDC

There is nothing wrong with lumpers as far as the Urban Council in Athy is concerned. Here the bogeyman of the building industry is A. Okey and when one of the Councillors tried to have a motion passed to do away with the lump system on local building sites he could not even get a seconder.

The motion had already been proposed and accepted by Tipperary UDC and called on the Minister for Local Government, Mr. Tully, to insist that housing contracts be carried out by 'local labour' rather than, as its proposer said, have "dozens of sub-contractors and

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out the work in a way that barely meets minimum standards." The County Manager, Mr. T. T. Mullaney, opposed the motion saying that it would tie down the Council. Having argued around the issue on the basis of whether it would cause local unemployment or not Mr. Delahunt, who put the proposal, went on to submit the motion "on the principle of the thing" but got no seconder.

Builder ignores talks to end strike

Tenants who had been allocated houses on a new estate in Rathmullen, Drogheda, have formed an action committee because, they say, a dispute between the builders, McCaughey Brothers, and UCATT members is preventing the completion of their future homes. The McCaughey/UCATT dispute has lasted for over nine weeks without sign of settlement. Would-be tenants now intend to add to the mediating activity of Drogheda Corporation with some activity of their own. They have already threatened to picket every McCaughey building site in an effort to make the company more disposed towards conciliation. This was opposed by the Corporation which saw a hold up on other building sites as only adding to the overall housing problem. So now Rathmullen Intended Tenants' Action Group have named the Minister for Defence, the Minister for Local Government and Mr. Patrick Faulkner of Fianna Fail, all local representatives, as the targets for their picketing. If that fails they plan to walk in uninvited to a meeting between Mr. Tully and Corporation officials and ultimately to squat into the uncompleted houses.



Councillor MacRaghnaill of the mediating committee.

The strike, according to the Action Group, is forcing them to remain in overcrowded, cramped conditions with in-laws or in flats.

Drogheda Councillors are also highly concerned about the strike which seems set to destroy their ambition of breaking the back of the town's housing problem in the space of twelve months and a special Sub-Committee of the Corporation has been formed to try to break the deadlocked dispute.

The Corporation Sub-Committee, comprised of Councillors Bell and MacRaghnaill and the Lord Mayor, Ald. Peter Moore, have already made efforts to bring the two parties to the dispute together but without much success. A meeting in July to negotiate a settlement was attended by everyone "bar the builder".

Present were the Sub-Committee members, the Chairman of Drogheda Trades Council, Mr. Edward Quinn of UCATT, another UCATT official from Dublin and the managing director of the NBA but "no representative of McCaughey's turned up".

Another meeting is to be arranged, with the help of a Labour Court negotiator, between the disputing parties, union officials and the Joint Industrial Council of the Construction Industry.

Pig take-over warning

There is a "possibility" of a take-over of the pig industry by commercial and large farmer interests, the Chairman of the Farmers Defence Association said in a statement recently. Pointing to the appearance of one 1,000 sow unit and several 500 sow units in Counties Cavan and Monaghan, traditional centres of small and medium scale pig producers, Mr. Owen Kirk said. "There seems to be a deliberate conspiracy to push the small man out, a plan which would be in line with Mr. Clinton's advice to a deputation of pig producers to "Get out of pigs" and indeed, the Pigs and Bacon Commission's call for lower prices to the farmer".

The Association had become more worried about the possibility of the smaller farmers being eliminated from the pig industry because of the steady increase in the cost of pig meals in recent months, Mr. Kirk said. "Since March of this year one major feeds stuffs manufacturer has increased prices on four occasions and has recently announced that prices will go up again before September. After the removal of price control in December 1973 there was a massive rise in meal prices. Now the tactic seems to be little and often, an increase per month".

Mr. Kirk went on to say that while profits in the bacon factories rose 35 per cent and the retail price of pig meat 14 per cent last year, the price paid to the pig farmer fell by 12 per cent in the same period. "What this amounts to is surely profiteering in anyone's language".

"The five to ten sow farmer is now being told there is no place for him and in these conditions he surely cannot survive", Mr. Kirk said.

Pumping money into Gouldings

Fitzwilton, the shell holding company, is shedding its interests, if not as rapidly as it acquired them, then at a fairly fast clip. The liquidity situation had become fairly tight with borrowings overreaching assets by some frightening percentage and, of course, inflation wasn't making it any easier to pay the interest bills. But one of the prime reasons behind the scramble for cash is probably to get enough money together to shore up Gouldings, the fertiliser firm which, when times were good, was very good to Fitzwilton's group profits indeed. Now its time to plough the money back in the other direction. The 49 per cent holding in Richardsons, the Northern fertiliser firm, is estimated at from £2m to £3m in value — which would certainly help 'liquify' things — and there's about £9.9m in shares stashed away in the lucrative National Mine Service and of course the £1.1m netted from sale of the 20 per cent holding in New Ireland Assurance to the P.M.P.A. All this cash would be grist to the Goulding Mill — pity it won't bring the men there back to work.

Of course there are some critics who said that the company would never have got into such an awful state were it not for the quality of management — the cult of the gifted amateur being one of Sir Basil's legacies. It would be rather ridiculous to pump in more money if the old management and policies remain unchanged. After all times are hard and even Fitzwilton can't afford to throw that sort of money away forever.

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Farming people

STOP MILKING THE



T. J. is an old hand at milking things.

TAXPAYER - SAYS T. J.

Well, now you've all heard of the 100,000 unemployed, haven't ye? And, we all know about the depressing effects it has on those affected, don't we? And that is why the Government, bad though it undoubtedly is, has raised the social welfare payments. Now, we know that the FUE were opposed to these workers getting this pittance from the Government, they would rather see them starve (the workers, that is).

Well, now they have an ally. Mr. T. J. Maher, no less. Good old TJ came out last week with the call for the Government to stop "wasting" money on improving the health and social services. TJ reckoned it should all be diverted into agriculture but he didn't mention to where abouts.

Of course, TJ himself has no fear of becoming unemployed, being a director of at least four companies in addition to having his wife running the farm down in Tipperary. TJ is against people having to pay

tax, but not all people, mind you; if no one paid tax there wouldn't be any Government funds to talk about, after all. No, TJ only wants some people to pay tax, people like the industrial worker, the small farmer, etc. But big farmers, like TJ, or company directors, like TJ, well, it's almost an impertinence to ask them. In fact, it is a disincentive... to what, I wonder?

And while we are on it, surely it is out of place for people like this to be prominently identified with State and semi-State companies. After all, TJ can number among his directorships... The B & I Shipping Company, Bord Baimne (a semi-State board) and the Sugar Company (a semi-State company).

Who helps to fund these companies? ... who helps to pay directors' expenses? Who but the good old taxpayer.

I have before me the cattle price reports from member countries of the EEC in the week ended 20.8.75. It is similar to reports in the last number of months. It shows the price for adult cattle per cwt in Denmark, for example, as £26.54; in Belgium it is £32.43; in Italy £33. Maybe some of the pro-marketeers can explain these prices when the price reported in Ireland is £18.13. And, don't forget, this is the price of adult cattle. In Ireland, the price of young stores and calves have fallen even further. Such is the EEC bonanza, I'm afraid.

I notice that the Agricultural Science Association, the organisation to which the B.Sc.s (Agriculture) belong, is to hold a seminar, or something like that, on the Common Agricultural Policy. One journalist was so excited by the news that non-graduates will be admitted for the first time that he thought that small farmers should go along. He forgot to mention, or perhaps he didn't know, that the fee for the talk-in is a mere £20, but, of course, that includes the sherry reception. It is bad enough listening to T J Maher at the

best of times without actually paying for the privilege but perhaps the sherry will help.

And did you see Paddy O'Keefe on the "People and Power" television programme? Well, after that I'm expecting a call any day. Paddy, of course, leads a full life. He is a director of the Farmers' Journal, which he edits, the FBD, the Irish Farm Centre, he is also on the RTE Authority and is chairman of the Agricultural Institute, to mention but a few of his interests.

Paddy was very sure about the fate of the small farmer. He defined this, of course, as the man with 15 acres or less. Paddy gave it to us straight from the shoulder... there was no hope for the 'small' farmer (of 15 acres). Some of Paddy's friends probably have larger back gardens. Paddy, of course, was on safe ground; after all, the Institute have produced figures showing that only 12 per cent of farmers are of less than 15 acres. In other words, Paddy had escaped from a difficult position by pulling a red herring over the issue. He'll be nominated for the Fisheries Board next.

He claimed that the farmer of the future, the one that he would favour, was around the 45-acre holding mark. He forgot to mention that in almost all cases the farmers around 45 acres are being classed as Transitional and, as the man says, Transitional to where? Over fifty per cent of farmers have between 30 to 100 acres and most of these will be classed as Transitional. Paddy didn't have to answer why he and the IFA favoured an EEC scheme that would push these farmers out of farming, because he was not asked. I wonder what his answer would have been? But, then, it wouldn't look very good to be embarrassing a member of the RTE Authority on his own channel, would it? And, by the way, I don't cast any blame on the interviewer. When you're dealing with a slippery customer like Paddy you would want to know your subject like the back of your hand.

SEVENTY-FIVE P.C. "UNDERPAID"

Up to 75 per cent of clerical workers in Enniscorthy are underpaid, a District Secretary of the ITGWU, Mr. Willie Martin, estimated in a statement on the local employment situation last week. In one instance, which Mr. Martin cited, a nineteen year old girl was being paid £8 per week! Many employees are afraid to speak about such conditions and are suffering on the union official said, adding that such conditions of employment were putting people, particularly young people, off working altogether.

MANY POLITICAL QUESTIONS

After the First World War most of Europe was in ferment. At the beginning of September 1920 metalworkers in the Italian cities of Turin and Milan, acting to forestall a threat of lock-out, occupied their factories. Within days workers in other heavy industries followed suit. At its height the occupation of the factories involved more than half a million workers in some 600 concerns. Yet it took little more than two weeks for the movement to falter. Socialist and union leaders, failing to respond to the situation, called a convention to put the question of revolution to the vote.

To the relief of many of the leaders the motion for revolution was voted down. After this morale fell among the workers, the occupations fizzled out for want of direction and the way was open for fascist reaction.

This is the background to a play "Occupations", by Trevor Griffiths, which was presented by the Focus Theatre for the first time in Liberty Hall at the weekend and which will continue at the Focus Theatre, in Pembroke Place.

Primarily it explores the relations between Antonio Gramsci and an agent of the Comintern who had been sent to Milan to act as an adviser to the revolutionary leaders. The relationship is explored by contrasting the attitudes of the two men to the situation. It embodies one attitude towards revolution in the personality of Kabak, the Comintern agent, whose attitude is one of total ruthlessness, of using people as tools of history.

BUT FEW ANSWERS

Gramsci, on the other hand, has a more complex and humanistic attitude to revolution. He sees involvement in the revolutionary process as requiring a new type of person: the first paper that he edited in Milan was called the New Order. For Gramsci the educational process was a process of developing the whole person. The revolution demanded new people.

Kabak, on the other hand, although he was a professional revolutionary, was frozen in the attitudes of the old order. His attitude towards his wife, who was dying of cancer, was that she was a piece of excess baggage; his attitude to the maid servant was that, one, she was essential to look after his wife and, second, she provided relief for his sexual needs. For him the revolutionary process was simply a series of techniques for

revolution which were totally lacking in any moral content and people were simply tools to be used.

The political events of the factory occupations were shown as peripheral to the personal relations but Griffiths didn't deal adequately with the relations between the two levels. The author did not succeed in presenting two total characters; both Kabak and Gramsci are too stereotyped in their characterisation to be believable. The historical character of Gramsci was far more complex. Anyone who has read his major work The Modern Prince would fail to recognise the "liberal" revolutionary Griffiths presents him as.

Most of the fundamental political questions remained unanswered in the play. The ideological background to the factory occupations was a strong syndicalist tradition in the Italian Socialist movement. Gramsci himself was later to write that one of the big failings of the factory occupations was that the leaders failed to recognise the need to seize state power. This failure was due to the absence of a revolutionary political party. Gramsci at this time was in the Italian Socialist Party and the historic split in the Leghorn Conference had yet to come. Therefore there was an island of sophisticated workers control in the occupied factories surrounded by a Capitalist state structure. It was this state structure which, when reaction had regrouped, was taken over by the fascists and which was to condemn Gramsci to twenty years in prison.

CORK OIL BOOM SENDS HOUSE PRICES UP

An oil boom offshore means a profit boom for Cork's estate agents and valuers as house prices soar. Executives in firms which hope to profit from the oil exploration programme are prepared to shell out fantastic sums for the right house. An advertisement in one Cork newspaper is offering £30,000 plus for a "good house or bungalow" within commuting distance of the city, for an executive associated with "our oil boom".

Other clients were willing to pay between £18,000 and £25,000 for the right house, the advert continued. And, of course, the agent gets his cut. Seems you don't have to go to sea to make money in Cork these days.

IN GRAMSCI PLAY

Title: The Irish People, Vol. 3, No. 25

Organisation: Sinn Féin [Official]

Date: 1975

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