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An Irish Socialist Review

No. 10

OCT/NOV 1983

GRAFFTON

THE De ROSSA INTERVIEW
COMMUNISTS DURING THE WAR
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO WAGES
CND AND CLASS POLITICS

AMENDMENT CAMPAIGN
THE POST MORTEM

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

What kind of people produce *Gralton*? What kind of people read it? We think the answer to these two questions is the same: those interested in discussing the realities of Irish society and the ways of radically changing it; those who feel that no other publication or organization provides a forum within which the experiences of the past can be assessed and learned from.

Our aim is to promote debate and discussion centering around a number of broad positions.

- that capitalism is not a force for progress and must be replaced by socialism
- that socialism consists essentially of people controlling their own lives in the workplace and the community
- that such a change of system cannot be achieved through parliamentary methods alone
- that this change cannot be brought about by any small elite group but requires the action of masses of people acting consciously together to establish

their own power

- that none of this change can be achieved solely in an Irish context.

But *Gralton* does not simply discuss ideas. We aim to give practical support to the struggles and movements of the day by providing information and analysis of relevance to trade unionists, feminists, political and local activists — and by opening our columns to those actively involved even if we do not share their political viewpoint. There is a close link between activity and the development of ideas and we shall always seek to strengthen it.

Our articles are the responsibilities of the authors alone. Believing that the successful mobilisation of people is itself a political gain contributing more to real social change than does the mere existence of a political party, *Gralton* is independent, broad-based, and non-sectarian in all its coverage. We welcome articles from whatever source which raise

real questions or which provide useful information for the development of the Irish Left. *Gralton* is not a “heavy theoretical journal,” so articles must be written in ordinary English: sexist terminology will be cut.

The overall direction and control of *Gralton* is vested in the *Gralton Co-Operative Society Ltd.*, which consists of all supporting subscribers. The editorial board is accountable to the Co-Operative and is elected from it. We hope as many readers as possible will be active in *Gralton* by taking out supporting subscriptions, by writing for, and by selling the magazine — thereby helping to make *Gralton* an important force in advancing socialism in Ireland.

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The *Gralton* Quiz

TOP OF THE CLASS

BOOK PRIZES for the first THREE correct entries out of the hat.



1. Which prominent PLAC doctor refused the donation of a dialysis machine by his hospital staff because their union executive opposed the Amendment?
2. Where did the reggae group UB40 get its name?
3. Which prominent SPUC member was de-wigged at a Womans' Right To Choose conference in December 1981?
4. In which country during the Second World War were the partisans known as the Kapitanios?
5. Which trade union refused to endorse the Senate candidacy of a member of its executive because he said he would vote against the Amendment if elected?
6. In what year (a) was the ICTU founded; (b) did it split; (c) was it re-united?
7. What was the wording of the Amendment originally proposed and campaigned for by PLAC?
8. After the Battle of the Boyne a “Te Deum” — a song of glory and thanksgiving — was sung in the Vatican. Why?
9. The first public pro-abortion rights demo in the Republic took place in February 1980. What was the occasion?
10. Who in 1972 did for “Woman” what Tom Paine had recently done for “Man”?
11. What was the original profession of PLAC's chairman?
12. Jean-Paul Sartre's trilogy of novels goes under the overall name of “Roads To Freedom”. Name each of the three individual books.

Send your entries to:
GRALTON, 25 Mountainview Court, Harolds' Cross, Dublin 6. To arrive no later than *Monday, November 7th 1983.*

Answers will be published in the December/January issue of *Gralton*.

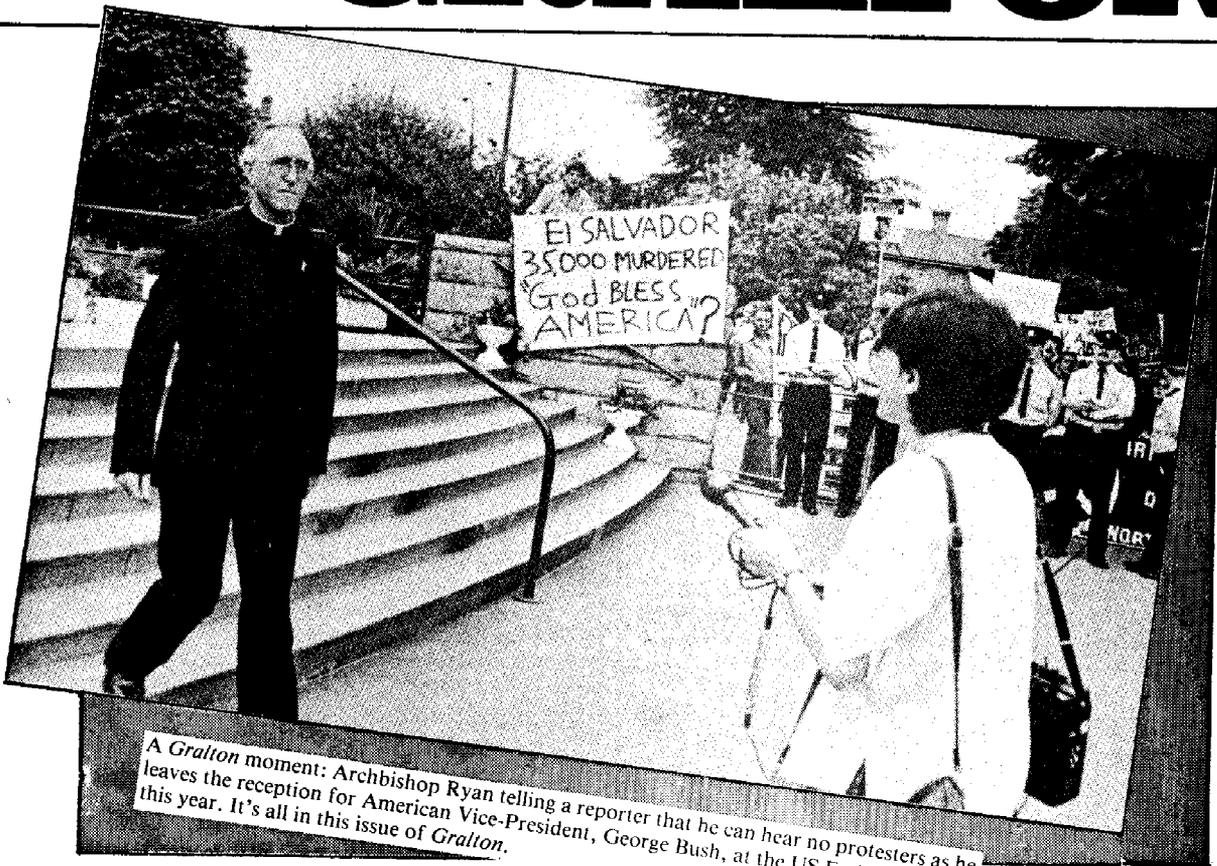
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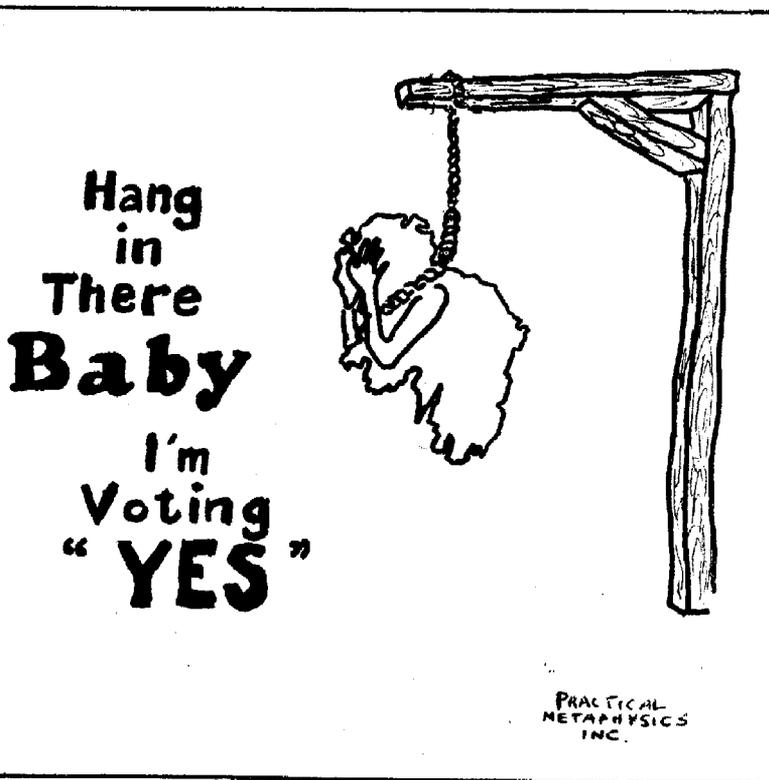
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AMENDING THE DEBATE:

Media coverage of the referendum

LUKE GIBBONS

During the week preceding the Referendum vote, photographs of Bishops appeared twice in a prominent position on the front page of *The Irish Times*. One was a full-length picture of Cardinal O Fiaich, talking to the Chief of Staff of the Irish army: they are on their own, conferring behind the scenes as it were. Three days later, on the Monday before the vote, we were presented with close-up of Bishop Eamonn Casey at Croke Park, looking towards his left in a jocular manner. To his left on the page, in an apparently unrelated photograph, is a similar picture of Charles J. Haughey.

The message here is unmistakable: Church and State are in cahoots behind this whole thing, you can see it with your own eyes. Yet the interesting point is that this message is not explicitly formulated, but is rather implied and insinuated. It is nonetheless effective, however, for being suggested rather than stated. The subtle hint frequently carries more clout than the blunt accusation.

Bias in the media is at its most powerful when it takes this hidden, indirect approach. Often what appears, for example, to be a balanced programme on television in terms of its *content* — time allotted to each speaker, attitude of the presenter, etc. — is in fact heavily weighted on one side because of the *format* of the programme, the way in which it is structured and put together. A case in point would be one of the earliest *Today Tonight* programmes on the Amendment debate.

Here we had what appeared to be a balanced treatment: three experts lined up on each side, ready to deliver their authoritative addresses to the nation.

But while the anti-amendment case was given adequate air space, the *format* in which it was presented belonged to the other side: the prestige of the expert, the cult of authority, the dutiful homage to the professions (law, medicine, etc) which has been such a distinguishing feature of the Catholic bourgeoisie in this country.

This gave the programme the air of an Irish *Mastermind*, with the experts holding forth on their specialist topics (e.g. sex, metaphysics, indeed the meaning of life itself). Discussion was directed through the chair to the point of tedium (‘... John, the d-i-r-e-c-t-

ing of the unborn...’), and only livened up on the few occasions when remarks were addressed across the floor, or when Professor Eamonn O’Dwyer, using his prestige as an eminent gynaecologist, proceeded to lecture his opponents on ‘natural law’ — a medieval notion of morality as relevant to the present day as medieval medicine.

This kind of debit and credit approach to ‘balanced’ broadcasting rules out any possibility of the flow of argument and discussion which such a topic requires. Far from the referendum being a matter of consulting ‘the people’, TV coverage stood the issue on its head, so that the people ended up consulting the experts. It is not as if RTE had no programme format which could lend itself to relatively open discussion and to the participation of people other than experts. Such an approach is the hallmark of *The Late Late Show*.

But, of course, it was precisely the *format* of the Late Late which Fred O’Donovan, Chairman of the RTE Authority, feared most, and which prompted him to sabotage the Late Late programme which was planned on the referendum. The loose structure of Gay Byrne’s programme, in which both guests and panellists are frequently upstaged by members of the audience, and in which mathematical ideas of ‘balance’ are thrown aside, would have spelt disaster for the kind of stilted,

tightly controlled discussion favoured by Mr. O’Donovan.

As it happened, the most successful programmes on the Amendment were those which approximated, unwittingly or otherwise, to *The Late Late Show* format, such as the memorable programme from Cork in which speakers from the audience more or less wrested control from the panel and the chair, and on which were heard the voices of rank and file participants in the campaign for the first time.

Less successful was the unfortunate ‘Great Debate’ held a fortnight before voting day. Though superficially resembling *The Late Late Show*, it was in effect a conventional *Today Tonight* programme, except that there were twenty or more spokespersons on each side rather than three. The audience did not consist of ‘ordinary’ people, but represented rather an extension of the respective panels, to the point where each contribution from the floor was earmarked by a caption announcing the ‘bias’ of the speaker, in case viewers couldn’t make up their own minds.

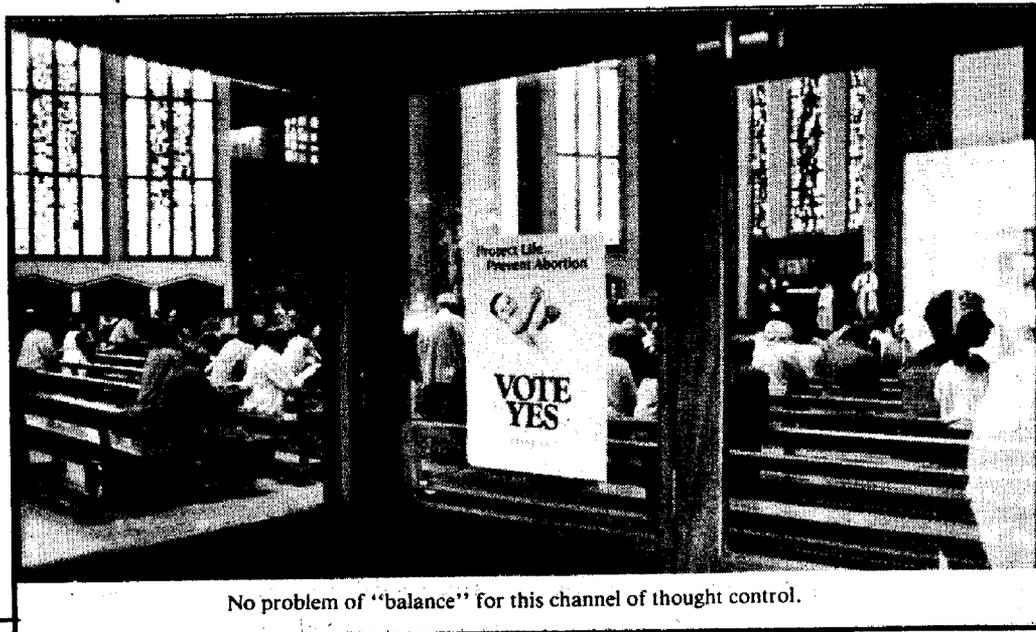
This in itself need not have resulted in mayhem, had those who persisted in harassing and shouting down other speakers been kept off the air (something which the Late Late excels in). Regrettably, Fr. Michael Cleary and Dr. Louis Courtney had only to badger and interrupt an opponent, to find themselves on camera, given the

floor, so to speak.

In one particular sequence, the camera cut several times from Anne O’Donnell of the Rape Crisis Centre, in order to afford Fr. Cleary and Alice Glenn TD an opportunity to indulge in a character assassination of her. To add insult to injury, Ms. O’Donnell’s attempts to hold the floor and answer the charges were abruptly terminated by the presenter, John Bowman, who switched to another speaker in the audience.

Of course, there was an eminently suitable format available to RTE had they wished to balance the *Today Tonight* approach with one that did justice to the anti-amendment position. This is the remarkable programme *Women Talking*, on which ordinary women speak collectively with the only authority that matters in this area, namely, the experience of having lived through women’s issue and problems.

To hear women speaking for themselves rather than having people speak on their behalf would have introduced a genuine measure of balance into the TV coverage of a debate which was, after all, about the status of women in Irish society. It may be that it would be difficult for women to come forward to such a programme. But it is precisely the existence of such an oppressive social climate which makes programmes of this kind all the more necessary.



No problem of ‘balance’ for this channel of thought control.

Derek Speirs (Report)

WAGES: the war of attrition

DES DERWIN takes a look at past and present wage trends and their consequence for "free collective bargaining"

The 23rd wage round will be stretched out over almost the whole of 1983. Although centralised bargaining in the public service has just been concluded the private sector still has many settlements yet to come. So the average level of pay rises under this round cannot be actually measured now. The trend of settlements to date is not a perfect indicator. It has been the subject of hot argument between the unions and the FUE, and of 'precedent' bargaining at local level. While we can have a fair idea of the outcome, the trend so far is not established as a norm — especially with the bosses.

As early as April it was being observed that "the Government's policy of severe wage restraint has been ineffective, with most companies settling to day doing so without either any significant pay pause or low single figure increase over 15 months, as the Government had proposed." (*IRN Report* 20/4/83).

In July the ITGWU reported that "our Union's Research Department has now monitored 410 wage settlements. The average cumulative increase is 11.81% for an average of 12.6 months. This gives an overall effective increase of 0.94% per month, with 148 agreements giving an increase of 1% or more per month" (*Liberty* July '83).

If wage restraint is not as severe as the Government or employers proposed, it does not mean that it is not severe. Paul Sweeney wrote in the same issue of *Liberty*: "1983 will be the first year since 1979 in which average industrial earnings may rise faster than inflation. Our Research Department's survey indicates that the average increase is approximately 1% per month for 12 months. While this does not quite make up for the average price increase of 17.1% endured by workers in 1982, it will exceed expected average inflation of 10% for 1983. Indeed inflation is expected to fall as low as 8.5% at the end of the year. However, in spite of the good work done by union negotiators, the real value of take-home pay fell even more. This was because the tax burden was increased, in spite of our protests. Now with no changes in the rate bands, no changes in the tax allowances and another levy, take-home pay will fall once again —

and by a considerable amount. So by next April, the end of the present tax year, you will be worse off than you are today — in spite of your first gross pay increases above inflation in years."

The public sector pay deal is for an 8% increase over 15 months. Annualised that is 6.2% — a loss even before tax, even if inflation drops to 8.5% this year. And there is no rise to cover the six months from March to August.

A headline offer was made in the ESB: almost 10% over 15 months with a 3 month pause. An analysis showed it to be "less than half the expected rate of inflation. At 0.44% per month it is a long way short of the 1% per month target which unions claim is emerging as a norm in private sector agreements." For 1983 as a calendar year "the ESB offer is in fact 5%, not 10%" (Brian Donaghy, *Irish Times*, 13/6/83). The Minister for the Public Service described this as a "kamikaze" increase!

FORECASTING THE 23RD ROUND

From the economic and banking commentators and forecasters we can get an estimate of earnings for this year, and a rough gauge of the likely scale of the 23rd round. Brendan Dowling refers to "the average level of settlements monitored by the Federated Union of Employers where the annualised increase is 10%". He goes on to say that "overall, the industrial pay bill will rise by little more than 7.5% in 1983 and private sector pay by around 8.5%". (*Sunday Tribune* 17/7/83).

The Central Bank Report for Summer 1983 projects that personal disposable income will decline by 4%, after adjusting for inflation, this year. It expects the non-agricultural pay bill to increase by 9.25% this year, but this estimate does not include the Public Service Pay Agreement. Basic pay in industry, it suggests, will be on average, 12% higher this year than in 1982, including almost 5% carry over.

The ESRI Quarterly Economic Commentary (August '83) expects the public service pay bill (which is not the same thing as the workers' rise this year) to rise by 12.5% and

the basic rates of pay in manufacturing industry to rise by 11% compared with 1982, with overall wages and salaries rising by 10.3%. This figure of 10.3% includes employers' PRSI! Personal income tax is predicted to rise by 25.4% leading to a 3% decline in real disposable incomes.

These projections can only be a rough gauge to the result of the 23rd round. No one — not even our sonorous economists — can see into the future. But apart from that, their figures deal only with calendar years. 1983 includes part of the 22nd round, and the 23rd round spills over into 1984. On the other hand, these projections (and the returns for past years) measure the gain or loss for *living standards* of workers in any one year, taking in the carry-over into the year from the previous wage round and chopping off the carry-over into the next.

It is a much more difficult exercise to judge living standards by the level of pay rounds in themselves, because inflation is measured on a calendar year or quarterly basis. Even when 15 month agreements are annualised, the annualised figure often straddles two years, because the agreement begins well into the year. In the current year, however, there is a remarkable concurrence for wage rates between the projections and the apparent trend of the 23rd round.

The 23rd wage round is emerging as a 10%/11% basic wage rise for 12 months (where it is a free collective bargaining round i.e., excluding the public sector) and the basic pay rise in industry, for '83 compared to '82, is predicted at 11%/12%. With a 10% inflation rate a decline in average real disposable income of 3%/4% is forecast for 1983. The decline would be greater for public service workers, especially those above the "lower-paid" category. If inflation does drop towards 8.5%, the "gains" of the 23rd round would be greater (or, if you like the losses would be less), especially over the whole period of the round.

Another pointer to how the workers are doing is the Department of Finance's Economic Review published in July, which based the following comment on wage settlements which had already been reached, covering one quarter of

private employment in the state. "While these settlements suggest a significantly more moderate development in earnings in 1983 than in 1982, the overall impact on costs is nevertheless in excess of what is

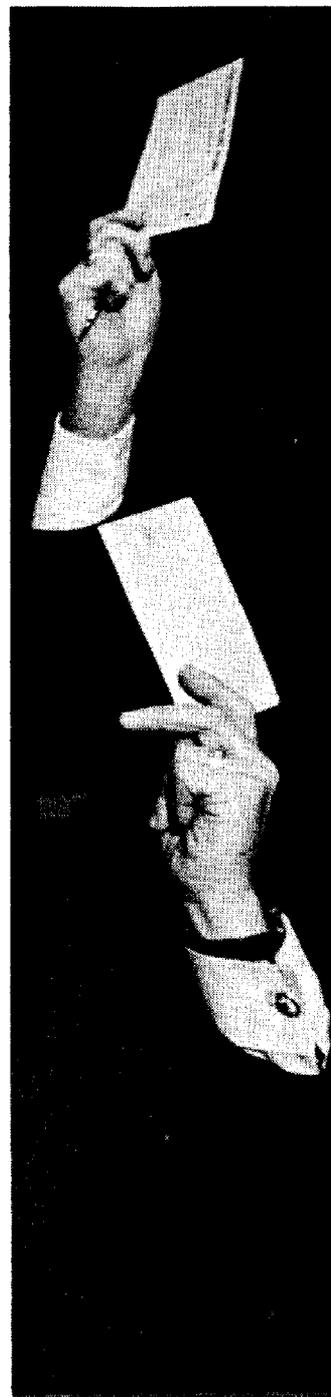


TABLE 1.

PAY AWARD	INCREASE		DURATION (months)	ANNUAL INCREASE (%)	INFLATION RATE (%)
	(£'s)	(%)			
1970	3.57	17.9	18	11.9	11.4
1972	4.98	21.1	18	14.1	11.0
1974	8.40	29.4	15	23.5	30.0
1975	6.12	16.6	12	16.6	16.0
1976	3.29	7.6	7	13.0	9.1
1977	4.37	9.4	14	8.1	13.8
1978	5.15	10.2	15	8.2	12.1
1979	11.69	20.9	15	16.7	22.5
1980	11.59	17.2	15	13.7	21.0

required to bring about the competitive gains necessary to improve employment prospects." One conclusion from this, besides the obvious one that for the Department of Finance employment depends on the unadulterated capitalist logic of competitiveness in the market place, is that while the 23rd round will produce a loss for workers, the loss is not as great as that sought by the Government and the bosses.

We may be losing economically but *politically* (in terms of the balance of industrial and class forces on the wage front) we are standing our ground, and minimising the economic losses through free collective bargaining. Of course, the ruling-class must keep calling for ever greater sacrifices, no matter how many cuts we take, as their way out of the recession. Statements like the Department's are part of the propaganda effort. But they can also reflect genuine irritation at the resistance of the unions to the scale of sacrifice which capitalism requires.

ASSESSING THE 22ND ROUND

The 22nd wage round followed the second and last National Understanding and took off after the collapse of the talks for a new one in November 1981. The round was a sort of transition between national and free collective bargaining. A mini National Wage Agreement covered 300,000 workers (in the public service) and set the norm for the whole of the 22nd round. The PBS deal was for 13% over 15 months, from 1st December '81. Inflation for 1982 alone was 17%.

An *IRN Report* analysis of the 22nd round, appropriately titled "The Free For All That Never Was", examined 440 settlements during 1981/1982. It found that labour costs in 1982 as a result of the 22nd round had risen 11%, and over the life of the pay round basic

rates rose at annual rate of just under 13%.

As regards basic rates the 22nd round fell in right behind — or beside — the PBS increase, although many settlements were for lesser duration than the PBS deal. The PBS came in for further losses when the Fianna Fail Government broke the agreement and refused to pay the full increases due. Eventually, Congress entered into negotiations and the PBS accepted the postponement of the 5% third phase into this year with retrospective payments also postponed.

The CSO's figures for average industrial earnings, published this August, revealed a rise of just under 13% during 1982. Average hourly earnings were up 14.7% but the number of hours worked was cut. Female workers increased their weekly earnings by 14%.

There was a large divergence between the two reports above and the Labour Court's Annual Report published in July, according to which the private sector received average pay rises of 16.5%.

The OECD economic survey for 1981-82 argued that "the level of

wage settlements in 1982 was heavily influenced by the terms of the public service agreement, indicating a slow-down in wage rate increases attributable to centralised or sectoral agreements. Wage drift in the private sector was relatively modest last year (i.e., 1981), though supplementary awards in the public sector were substantial, and while in 1982 the former is again the case the public service agreement is more restrictive" (*IRN Report* 10/9/83)

The general trend for '83 emerges at a 4% fall behind inflation in the PS and about twice that fall in the PBS. This decline does not include the effects of heavier tax and PRSI.

Here's a revealing comment made by the ESRI in August: "Policy should be directed towards translating real income falls into real labour cost declines." A candid admission that our living standards are down is coupled with an admission that — despite all the bumph about wages and competitiveness — it hasn't done any good and, what's more, our sacrifices haven't even brought down labour costs due, as they explain, to the tax system.

WAGES UNDER CENTRAL AGREEMENTS

Prior to the last two wage rounds pay increases were covered by centralised pay agreements. The increases secured under them were as follows in Table 1, taken from *Trade Union Information* Winter '80-'81, with a column for inflation added.

The table shows "the amounts secured by way of standard increases in basic pay under each of the 7 National Wage Agreements 1970 to 1978 and under the Agreements on Pay Policy (National Understandings) 1979 and 1980, by a man (sic) with a basic wage of £20 at the end of 1970, if he had been an 'early starter'".

These calculations do not take into account increases in pay that would have been achieved under other clauses of the national agreements (relativity, productivity etc.). The average annualised increase for the nine agreements was 14%. The ITGWU has calculated that the total increase over the nine awards was 299% for the worker on £20 per week in 1970, while the Consumer Price Index rose by 328%. The total for those on £15 was 355%, a gain. On £25 it was 267% and so on to the £60 elite who got 202%, in so far as these agreements applied to them.

balance account for various reasons: i) increases were also secured through relativity and productivity clauses;

ii) some local bargaining continued alongside the national deals;

iii) unofficial strikes secured increases above the terms;

iv) wage rounds cannot be strictly assessed by comparison with contemporary inflation, as wages are often running-after, not paralleling, inflation;

v) the Consumer Price Index is not an entirely accurate measure of the cost of living for workers;

vi) these figures are for basic rates before tax — it is after tax pay that should be compared to the cost of

TABLE 2. REAL INDUSTRIAL WAGE RATES 1978-82

YEAR	WAGE INCREASE (%)	PRICE INCREASE (%)	REAL GAIN OR LOSS (%)
1979	15.4	13.2	+1.9
1980	18.2	28.2	-0.1
1981	16.4	20.4	-3.3
1982	13.5	17.1	-3.1

living; basic rates do not reveal the decline caused by the increased tax burden in recent years.

From 1970 to 1975 increases in average earnings in industry and the public service were neck and neck. Then in each of the years 1976 to 1978, the percentage increase in pay in the public service was significantly lower than in industry. In 1979 there was a difference of 12% relative to 1970. Public sector militancy gained some catch up, which has been interpreted by the fiscal rectitudinists as a public service pay explosion. Now again, public service workers — far from being neck-and-neck — are getting it in the neck.

The socialist economists who wrote the *Jobs and Wages* pamphlet produced the figures in Table 2 for the past four years, spanning both the central and 'free' bargaining periods. They use slightly different CSO figures than we have used above.

But only after-tax-figures can indicate the true extent of the real loss. From the same source: "Calculations by the ITGWU indicate that the 10.2% decline in real wage rates before tax between June 1980 and June 1982 became an actual decline of 15.5% (for the 'typical' married worker, with two children) when the heavier burden of income tax and PRSI contributions took effect on take-home pay".

THE FREE v. CENTRALISED DEBATE

Drawing comparisons between the years of national agreements and the past two years of 'free collective bargaining' will be part of the debate around any firm proposal to centralise pay deals. There is far more to the choice of bargaining methods than wages alone — issues of democracy, independence and shop-floor vitality in the trade union movement — which we can leave aside here. However, the question of which method best 'produces the goods' for workers is also a primary one. Figures will be produced by both sides from both periods to show how one or other gained us more.

But both periods cannot be simply compared. The economic, industrial and political circumstances behind each wage round must be taken into consideration. The real question to ask is not "which got us more money" but "which could have got us more in the prevailing circumstances". The "gain"

years are in the period of national agreements and there are few years of heavy loss. The severest losses have come in the years from the last National Understanding on. But the underlying pattern belies any superiority claimed for central bargaining.

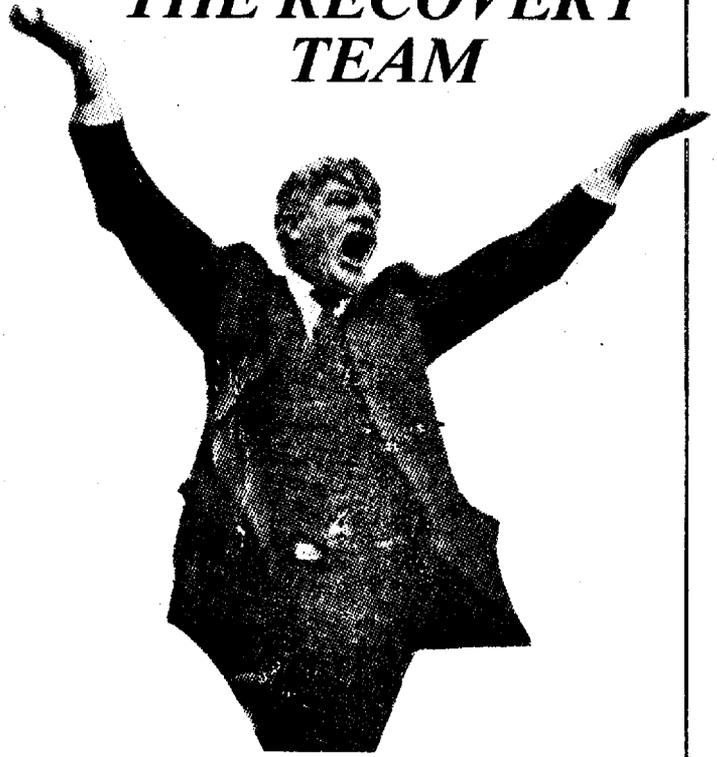
The real gain years, in standard increase terms, are confined to the 1970 and 1972 Agreements, when Irish industrialisation was going full clatter, immediately before the 1973 slump. After that the basic increases keep pace with, or fall a bit behind, inflation. Gains were still made all the time in the Seventies, but through special claims, wage drift and unofficial strikes pushing *against* the agreement as much as with it. The final Agreement in 1980 coincides with the second worldwide slump, and the return of the so-called 'free-for-all' arrives as the Irish economy is at last feeling the full affects of the crisis, which to a great extent it had avoided in the Seventies.

It's a matter of record that it was the employers and not the unions who abandoned national bargaining. They felt that unemployment and recession could secure for them smaller pay rises, at plant and sectoral level, than that which would have to be offered to bind-up a national standard.

In 1970, after the "decade of upheaval" and at a time when industrial expansion and social changes would have brought better living standards anyway, National Wage Agreements were introduced to regulate and contain demands. After the first slump they were used to control wages, and even cut them by tying workers to rises below inflation. They became means of negotiating "cost of living" increases and this defensive stance became Congress's opening shot. Eventually even that assumption was attacked and then national bargaining was ditched altogether.

Few sectors of workers have been prepared to move in either round of the current 'free' bargaining — not because national agreements had never held them back, as some will claim — but because of the slump and, partly, because a decade of centralised bargaining had stolen the initiative from the shop floor. The real test of free collective bargaining will come in an upturn when workers will have confidence and militancy to express wage demands through their workplace committees and union branches. But will the Employer-Labour Conference place the clamps again?

THE RECOVERY TEAM



The history of the Irish working class is seen by conservatives and revolutionaries alike in the workers' movement as a series of heroic and epic struggles — rather less of them in the case of conservatives, rather more of them in the case of the revolutionaries.

Leaders dedicated to the grim business of walking up and down the corridors of power knocking on doors refer to the legacy of Connolly and Larkin in order to establish their own legitimacy. Those leaders' critics within the movement refer — that bit more insistently — to the legacy of Connolly and Larkin in order to establish that the movement has betrayed its founders.

In this respect, as in so many others, the workers' movement reproduces the patterns of the national movement. Cultural nationalism and militant republicanism prop themselves up on frequently repeated historical slogans — "800 years of oppression", "the tradition of Tone, Davis and Pearse", etc.

Five or six separate groups march in military formation each June to the Co. Kildare grave of an Ulster Protestant nationalist rebel in order to re-affirm their commitment to the nationalist faith. The calendar also includes the Liam Lynch commemorations run by the Old IRA/Fianna Fail, the Michael Collins commemoration at Beal na mBlath, run by Old IRA/Fine Gael, and the mass and Church of Ireland service for James Connolly run by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

Can you imagine pictures of Keir Hardie at the conference of the British Labour Party? Or speeches about Tom Mann at a conference of the Transport and General Workers' Union? French socialists don't go on about Lassalle (the man who actually said — except in French — that "the great only appear great because we are on our knees").

Maybe it's their loss and our gain. Maybe — it could be argued — the stronger historical sense of the Irish working class and nationalist movements gives them greater depth.

It's not a very compelling argument. The sad truth is that this historical awareness co-exists with a unique cultural poverty. The nationalist movement repeats the same formulae generation after generation, while deeply committed conservatives and wildly adventurous revolutionaries claim the same heritage.

The workers' movement has, by and large, only the shallowest appreciation of its own past, offers the most superficial responses to the present, and holds the vaguest view of its future. The references to history, do not indicate that the Irish workers' movement is culturally right or intellectually alert. They are elements of ritual which have become largely meaningless.

In this context, the *Irish Labour History Society* has a difficult but also a useful role to play. It recently celebrated ten years of existence with its annual symposium on "Irish Workers' in Conflict",

focused on the 1913 lock-out and the 50-year-history of the Communist Party of Ireland.

With panel discussions at the end of each day's workshops, the ILHS attempted bravely to relate the historical perspective to current concerns. But in the session which followed the lecturers and workshops dealing with aspects of the 1913 lock-out and its aftermath the four panellists took such widely diverging views of their brief that a coherent discussion seemed impossible.

And who would the discussion have reached if it had to take place? In principle, the majority of the trade union membership is involved indirectly in the Irish Labour History Society through the affiliation of 45 unions. But the unions' affiliation at top level rarely, if ever, translates into an active interest among the membership.

The membership of the society, however, is largely drawn from the ranks of trade union activists. The 100-or-so people who attended the weekend symposium were mainly trade union activities. Most, if not all, would have attended several previous ILHS functions. The society has built up a more or less stable audience for whom it has become a principal pastime. The impact of its work on the wider movement is negligible.

Much of that work is entirely creditable. While the society's annual journal, *Saothar*, is often either stodgy or obscure — an unfortunate by-product of its claiming for equivalent-to-academic status — it has done much to encourage individuals to complete and to write up their part-time history research projects and to encourage professional historians to address themselves to a popular audience.

As the society itself recognises in a document written to mark the tenth anniversary, however, it has done little to promote labour-history studies in the universities and colleges. That may not be a matter of great regret to some. But it remains an inescapable fact that for an intellectual pursuit, which is fighting for recognition, to develop and to expand it, needs the full-time attention which students and teachers at university can give it.

The number of students and lecturers doing projects on labour history are to be counted on the fingers of a few hands. This means that the ILHS tends to repeat itself, returning frequently to the same period at the end of the last century and the beginning of this, because it is already the most written-about. The campaign against foreign unions in the 1930s, the war-time restrictions on industrial action in the 1940s, the split between the two trade union congresses in the 1950s would all offer fruitful themes for

research and discussion. The ILHS has not found anybody who is working on them, much less been able to direct anybody to them.

Much of the academic work in labour history is being done by people of working class, or socialist, background. They have generally little difficulty in relating their work to contemporary issues. Sometimes, however, the insistence on correct university form can be tedious. At last month's symposium, Emmet O'Connor, speaking about industrial sabotage between 1917 and 1923, felt it necessary to set out a number of categories for industrial sabotage as "instrumental", "demonstrative", and so on.

He detailed the war-time conditions which affected workers' approach to labour disputes. He related the frequent violence of disputes at that time to the earlier tradition of agrarian "outrages", as they were known. But he really had his listeners' attention when he described how workers blockaded the town of Youghal in response to a lock-out, and took over food supplies coming into the town for

distribution to workers' families.

He touched on the tougher, more physical response of the new Free State government to such actions. When he mentioned the dynamiting of four roads in south Co. Dublin as one rare example of such sabotage in the large urban areas, one of the people at the workshop was able to identify the group of men responsible. From a rather airy generalisation we were down to the specifics of IRA organisation and the availability of dynamite in the quarries in the Dundrum/Sandyford area.

In a workshop on the Irish Citizen Army, which would have done so much to deflate some myths on the Irish Left had it involved a wider audience, the discussion on the politics of the organisation which Connolly briefly led was informed by individuals' conversations with former members of the ICA. The oral evidence, the story you heard from somebody else, the anecdote told by a participant in a struggle, can all count in this process of collectively uncovering our past.

The Irish Labour History Society could do more to promote that process in the broader labour movement, perhaps taking tentative theses to places where those who lived through the events under study can respond and contribute to them, making the society's journal more popular by including interviews, more illustrations and debate, and by organising more day trips and half-day events which allow greater participation than either formal lectures or a full weekend conference.

It seems there is little chance of stimulating much more in the universities, so nothing would be lost by limiting the academic pretensions. The union support seems assured at this stage, so nothing would be lost by taking on a few subjects which cut a bit closer to the bone. A Labour History Society could only be controversial and radical in this society and in this labour movement.

BRIAN TRENCH



INDOMITABLE COURAGE OF DUBLIN MASTERS.

DUBLIN MASTER: 'See, darling, the situation grows more hopeful for us. That striker's child is discovering that its mother's breast is running dry!'

COMMUNIST POLITICS DURING THE WAR YEARS

Reflecting on the Communist Party of Ireland's 50th anniversary celebrations —marked in *Gralton 8* with an article by Eoin O Murchu —MIKE MILOTTE focusses on one chapter in the party's history which raises doubts about the party's claim to have always put working class interests first. Mike Milotte's book, *Communism in Modern Ireland*, is to be published shortly by Gill and Macmillan.

The Communist Party of Ireland's 50th anniversary celebrations this year have helped focus attention on an organisation whose history is shrouded in myth. One myth, that of immense but well disguised strength and influence, was fostered by rightist elements to provoke anti-socialist reaction. This is so transparent that it need not concern us further.

Another myth, however, has been fostered by the CP itself. It has two complementary aspects: the assertion of organisational continuity, embodied in the 50th anniversary celebrations themselves, and the assertion of political purity, embodied in the endlessly repeated claim that the communist movement has always and only put the interests of the working class first.

The myth of organisational continuity is easily dealt with. For thirty years the communist movement in Ireland was partitioned along the lines of the border. Its leaders allowed British imperialism and its Irish capitalist allies to dictate the organisational form of the movement.

The issues of organisational continuity and political principle cannot, of course, be separated. But the second is more difficult to handle if only because the communist movement is always able to justify its own politics — *whatever* they may have been at any given time — in terms of their complete affinity to the "objective" interests of the working class.

The crucial question then is: how have these supposedly objective interests been determined? The answer can be summed up in a phrase: that which serves the immediate interests of the Soviet Union serves also the long-term interests of the Irish working class.

This is not to imply that the CPI is merely the creation of Moscow, nor that its members are the mindless (or conscious) tools of an evil foreign power, but rather to state a single historical fact: successive generations of Irish communists have looked upon the Soviet Union as

a bastion of socialism whose defence and preservation is essential if socialism is ever to become a reality in Ireland (or anywhere else).

Space does not permit a discussion of the social system in the Soviet Union, but what I do want to argue is that the defence of Soviet state interests has had detrimental effect on the CPI's ability to represent the interests of the Irish working class.

COMMUNISTS IN THE WAR

Let us return to World War II when the LCP in the 26 Counties was liquidated after the Soviet Union entered the war in 1941. If, as the CP has always maintained, it consistently stood and fought for the interests of the working class, how did the liquidation of the party *also* serve the best interests of the working class?

The communists' own answer to this seemingly intractable question is this: once the Soviet Union entered the war it was the paramount duty of Irish workers to defend and support it by opposing the continuation of Eire's (as it was then) neutrality and isolation from the Allied war effort.

Eire's entry to the war, it was believed, would be greatly facilitated by the creation of a Fianna Fáil/Fine Gael/Labour coalition government. To speed this development the 26 County communists dissolved into the Labour Party. They hoped to help strengthen that party electorally and enhance its chances of gaining acceptance into coalition.

At the same time, pressure was mounted inside the Irish Trade Union Congress by members of the CPNI for an end to Labour's support for neutrality.

This strategy was not only an abysmal failure; its later consequences were devastating. The All-Ireland Communist Party was destroyed and the tactics adopted by the communists inside the Labour Party, geared as they were to propelling it into a bourgeois coalition,

ensured that they could offer no political support to those militant workers who challenged Irish capitalism's war-time offensive in the form of the Wages Standstill Order and the Trade Union Bill.

Instead of seeking to strengthen the rank and file leadership thrown up in the course of struggle against these measures, the communists urged the official Labour leaders to take hold of the reins and prove their responsibility and readiness to help govern. (It was an ironic coincidence that on the very day the Soviet Union was invaded, 20,000 workers demonstrated in Dublin against the government measures.)

The Labour leaders *did* take over the leadership and, as was to be expected, defused the mass movement by transforming the struggle into a parliamentary campaign for minor amendments to the offending measures. Confused and defeated, their militancy sapped, the working class fell victim to right-wing splitters and wreckers. The resulting disruption of the Labour Movement paralysed the class for the best part of 20 years and this in turn helped ensure that the communist movement in the 26 Counties remained weak and isolated when it finally re-emerged from the morass of its own making.

The communists' insistence that in the interests of anti-fascist unity, the class struggle had to be suspended, had equally devastating consequences in the Six Counties. There, defence of the Soviet Union meant total support for British capitalism's war effort.

The CPNI opposed *all* strikes and, as many party members held key positions in the war industries, they were well placed to act on their policies of explicit class-collaboration. Communist leaders played a vital role in ending the near-general strike that gripped Belfast in 1944. The failure of that strike did much to undermine the previously powerful shop stewards' movement.

The communists refused to mount any political opposition to the Unionist regime, denouncing the IRA as "agents

of Hitler" for carrying on the struggle against partition throughout the war. When the notorious bigot, Basil Brooke, formed a new Unionist administration in 1943 — one specifically designed to woo disoriented Protestant workers back from Labour to the Unionist fold — the CPNI advocated whole-hearted support.

CPNI General Secretary, Billy McCullough, wrote at the time: 'Sir Basil Brooke's record, particularly in relation to the Nationalist section of the population is not good . . . However, we Communists believe that . . . the new Government is committed to a struggle to improve the war effort . . . It is the duty of all to co-operate; and it is the duty of the Labour movement to be in the forefront of this co-operation.'

THE INTERESTS OF THE SOVIET STATE

Such class-collaborationist and anti-republican policies were not simply tactics — however wrong-designed to speed the defeat of fascism. *The were maintained long after the war ended.* The Anglo-US—Soviet agreements for the post-war carve-up of the world helped maintain the British Empire in existence, and, at least indirectly, the partition of Ireland.

The CPNI would never have dreamed of defying the Soviet Union by taking up anti-partitionist policies again. The major political resolution passed at the CPNI's 1945 Congress stated: "The Communist Party would not advocate any changes in the 'constitutional position' but will work for the return of a Labour-Progressive House of Commons in Northern Ireland." This remained the party's position for over a quarter of a century. The CPNI must therefore share responsibility for the debacle of 1968-69 which allowed the IRA to fill the vacuum left by the absence of a *socialist* answer to partition.

After the war the CPNI also argued that prosperity and full employment could be secured for 'Ulster' through a 'planned economy' presided over by a Council of Industry, 'representative of Westminister, Stormont, employers and workers'. Class struggle and socialism were no longer necessary. The notion of "planning" without the working class first seizing power has persisted to today.

These policies were dictated by the CP's overriding desire to help perpetuate the alliance between the Soviet Union and British capitalism. The abandonment of the class struggle, the denial of the need for socialism, the outright rejection of anti-partitionist politics and the liquidation of the CPI itself might well have been good for Soviet state interests. Could anyone with a serious claim to be 'communist' seriously argue that they were also in the interests of the Irish working class?

CHRONOLOGY OF COMMUNIST ORGANISATIONS IN IRELAND

1921-23: First Communist Party of Ireland

Founded when Roddy Connolly, Sean MacLoughlin and others took over the old Socialist Party of Ireland and affiliated to the Communist International (Comintern). Published the *Workers Republic*. Almost exclusively Dublin-based but briefly had branches in Cork, Carlow and Newry. Mainly propagandist; spent most of its time in a futile attempt to turn the anti-Treaty republicans leftwards. Finally dissolved by the Comintern when it became clear that James Larkin (who returned from a long exile in the USA in spring 1923) would neither support nor join it.

1923-32: The Irish Worker League

Led by Larkin; affiliated to Comintern on the dissolution of CPI. Never a genuine revolutionary party, it always took second place in Larkin's work to consolidating the new Workers' Union. Published the *Irish Worker*. Comintern efforts to turn it into a proper communist party failed when Larkin balked at last minute (1925). Continued in being until 1932 but in later years came to life only at election times. Larkin himself had been bypassed by the Comintern before the end of the decade.

1926-27: The Workers' Party of Ireland

Breakaway from IWL led by former CPI members, including Roddy Connolly. Published *Hammer and Plough* (duplicated newsletter). Main centre in Dublin but claimed branches in Westmeath and Cavan. Split when refused affiliation to Comintern which ordered its members back into the moribund IWL. A majority of members rejected the Comintern directive and tried to keep the party going, publishing the *Workers Republic*. Isolated from Moscow, boycotted by the CPGB and constantly attacked by Larkin, it soon collapsed. Unlike the first CPI and the IWL, it was a lively interventionist party with solid working class base.

1930-33: Revolutionary Workers' Groups

Established after direct Comintern intervention by leading CPGB members, Tom Bell and Bob Stewart. Indigenous leaders included Jim Larkin, Junior, and Sean Murray (both "graduates" of Lenin College in Moscow). Published *Irish Workers Voice*. Equally strong North and South of border. Heavily involved in unemployed struggles, particularly Outdoor Relief Workers' strike in Belfast, 1932. Enjoyed considerable

support among Castlecomer miners, organising them in a breakaway "red" union and a long and bitter strike, 1932. Initially worked closely with Dublin IRA with whom it had large overlapping membership. Stalin's "Third Period" policies (which branded all shades of labour reformism as "social fascist" meant that the RWG, failed to consolidate gains. Suffered massively from clerical-inspired backlash which forced many postponements of proposed transformation of the RGW into a fully-fledged CP.

1933-41: Second Communist Party of Ireland

Formed directly out of RWGs in June 1933; a genuine all-Ireland party with an integrated leadership and 32-County programme, initially for a Workers' Republic. However, between its inception and outbreak of World War II moved steadily to the right as the Comintern decreed that the defence of the Soviet Union against the threat of Nazi aggression required communists everywhere to uphold bourgeois democracy and suspend the struggle for socialism. The CPI helped destroy the Republican Congress rather than permit the emergence of an alternative revolutionary party. Later advocated a Popular Front that would include both Fianna Fail and "progressive" Unionists. Following the Stalin-Hitler pact jettisoned the Popular Front overnight, and denounced Britain's war against Germany as "imperialist".

Another somersault was performed when the Nazis attacked Russia and Russia became Britain's ally. Britain's rulers were then seen to be fighting a "just" war. The CPI in the 26 Counties was dissolved and the Irish communist movement partitioned for thirty years (see feature article).

Among the second CPI's publications were: *Irish Workers Voice* (to 1936); *The Worker* (duplicated, 1936); *Irish Democrat* (with remnants of Republican Congress and NI Socialist Party, 1937); *Workers Republic* (1938); and *Irish Workers Weekly* (1939-41).

1941-70: Communist party of Northern Ireland

The Six-County rump of the 1933 CPI (rechristened CPNI) grew rapidly on the basis of support for the British war effort. Led by middle-level trade union functionaries such as Andy Barr, Malachy Gray and Billy McCullough. From 1942 it published *Unity*. Attracted mainly non-militant, pro-Unionist Protestant workers, proclaiming its aim to be "a prosperous Ulster allied and united with a prosperous Britain". Membership, which reached 1,000 or more in the middle years of the war, dwindled rapidly as the Cold War set in. *Unity* collapsed in 1947 and the party was without a paper for 15 years.

Reduced to a handful of Belfast stalwarts, several leading members rose rapidly through the trade union hierarchy when they filled the space left by the absence of a social democratic alternative. Party trade unionists were to the fore in anti-redundancy campaigns of the 1950s and early 1960s, demanding that the British and Six County States provide all the solutions. *Ireland's Path to Socialism* (1962) was despite the title, a programme for

the Six Counties; advocated virtual independence for the North under an "anti-imperialist" government.

In the mid and late 1960s party members were prominent in the emerging civil rights movement, arguing that a democratic Six County state was a *totally unavoidable stage* in the struggle for Irish socialism. When the civil rights campaign was superceded by the struggle to smash the Six County state, communists sought to hold the struggle back.

1948-70: Irish Workers' League/Party

Formed by ex-members of CPI and IRA plus handful of Trinity students. Until 1956 published *Irish Workers Voice*, and from 1961, *Irish Socialist*. Initially anti-partitionist and strongly anti-American (proposing, among other things, censorship of Marilyn Munroe, Johnny Ray and Donald Duck). Largely isolated from organised workers in violently hostile atmosphere engendered by deep split in labour movement, the Cold War (which ensured that defence of the USSR took precedence), and the suppression of Hungarian rising of 1956. Members did lead militant unemployed struggles in 1953 and 1957.

Under pressure from CPNI it diluted its anti-partitionism into defence of 26 County neutrality and 'independence'. The 1962 programme, *Ireland Her Own* offered nationalist-reformist solutions on 26 County basis. In mid-1960s the then IW Party proposed dialogue with Christians co-operation with labour bureaucracy and expressed criticism of USSR, denouncing invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. More traditional Stalinist minority, led by general secretary Mick O'Riordan, remained intact.

1970: Communist Party of Ireland

Re-formed CPI maintained a "two-state" perspective: arguing for the "restoration of 26 County independence" against the influx of foreign capital and for the democratisation of the Six Counties. Although technically unified, the party retains separate "areas" and publishes two papers, *Irish Socialist* in the South and *Unity* in the North. More recently, greater emphasis has been placed on the need for eventual reunification of the country, to be achieved through negotiations involving the governments of London and Dublin and a restored government in Belfast. In 1975 the Stalinist faction regained control of the party and the "eurocommunists" who had been dominant for some time, resigned. The party supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the suppression of Solidarity in Poland, likened by O'Riordan to the "fascist" Ulster Workers' Council of 1974. Once friendly relations with Official Sinn Fein have become open antagonism to, and competition with, Workers' Party. Vitriolic denunciations of the Provisionals have given way to more fraternally expressed hopes that political strategies might predominate over military. The nominal commitment to "left unity" is unfathomable, as the definition of "left" is strictly circumscribed.

Mike Milotte

THE PROINSIAS DE ROSSA INTERVIEW

Can you tell us something of the success of the Workers' Party in Finglas?

It mainly happened as a result of the political campaigns we have been involved in. The main one was the housing campaign, protesting at the bad housing conditions in Finglas South. The base of our strength is still in South Finglas. We are also distributing our paper, the *Irish People*, and of course we have the Advice Centres. We started an ad-hoc Advice Centre in 1973, and opened an office in the Main Street in Finglas in 1975. Our approach to Advice Centres is different to that of other parties. We offer advice and assistance and make it clear to people that we are not in the business of getting them favours to which they are not normally entitled. If the problem involved more than one person we would organise a campaign about it. That is basically how the Housing campaign started. As for getting elected, we knew it would take years of effort. Most people, including myself, were reluctant to put themselves forward. But I had run in the Local Elections in 1967 so I suppose you could say that I was cajoled into running in 1977.

What is the Finglas "Jobs for All" campaign?

About two years ago we conducted a survey on unemployment in Finglas. We found that about 50% of young people between the ages of 15 and 25 were unemployed; there was a high rate of unemployment amongst women, young and old, and quite a high proportion of people were getting no benefit or allowance whatsoever. The Hope Survey last year produced similar results. We produced a pamphlet called "A New Deal for Finglas" based on our survey. Initially we concentrated on the young people, but following attacks on women's place in the labour force we decided to broaden it out. We had an inaugural meeting two months ago.

Is the Party growing in Finglas?

Yes, but it is not a mushroom growth in the sense of having hundreds of people joining and perhaps leaving again. The growth is mainly made up of people in their 20s, who more often than not are married and have come face-to-face with the realities of life. We also have a very active women's group in the area and a youth group. Then there is a constituency association which is made up of people who are not in a position to join the party, but give financial support and lend a hand during our campaigns, such as the Anti-Amendment campaign.

What is the connection between the work you do in the constituency and your role in the Dáil?

I suppose it is a two way process. The work in the constituency derives to some extent from the events and issues which come up in the Dáil. And what I do in the Dáil derives to some extent from the information I get from Advice Centre work. When we get an issue locally, we analyse it and present the socialist perspective on it in the Dáil. For example, in the recent adjournment debate we decided in the Party that I would speak on unemployment, raising the problems we learned from the survey — people with low skills, youth unemployment and so on. And I also attacked the notion that high wages create unemployment, you know, the shit that if a man looks for more money he is doing his son out of a job.

You have earned a reputation for raising hard political issues in the Dáil, such as divorce, El Salvador, the Amendment and so on. What is the political feedback from your constituents on these issues?

There is a problem that with only myself and Tomas MacGiolla in the Dail, we not only have to represent our own areas but also the Workers' Party view on all the major issues as they arise. We made it clear during the election campaigns that we were not putting ourselves forward as better "constituency doctors" than the Labour Party or Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael, rather we were giving political leadership. This is our main priority and we do the constituency work as best we can. Now some people are happy with that, others are not, but by and large the reaction is positive. People are happy to have someone represent them who is not concerned only with the flood at the end of the road, but with wider issues as well.

In an earlier interview in GRALTON, Tony Gregory said that all five socialist TDs were at fault in not getting together as a bloc during the previous Government. However, he laid most blame at the door of the Workers' Party TDs, accusing them of "trying to preserve their political purity". How do you react to that?

Well, on a practical level things were developing so rapidly that there just wasn't time to sit down and work out a proper strategy. But on a political level neither Tony Gregory nor Jim Kemmy had a political party backing them at that time. I'm not so sure that Tony has a clear political idea of how socialism can be achieved in Ireland. It is not good enough to put a label on yourself saying "I'm a socialist", and speak in socialist terms and just plod along in the same rut that radical politics has been in for forty years. What the Workers' Party is about is trying to build a party which will take power in the country and for that reason we would have a different

approach to cooperating with other groups, whatever they may be. So in that sense, if that is what he interprets as 'purity' I suppose it's true.

The Party has been criticised by sections of the Left for running its own separate campaigns at various times. For example on the Anti-Amendment issue, and setting up "Jobs for All" when there is already the Trades Council initiative and the Finglas Unemployment Action Group operating in Finglas. Is it the strategy of building the Party that causes this?

Well, the Party has attracted criticism from various sections of the Left for its political and also its economic positions. And that is fair enough because we would criticise them. But I think that it is reasonable to run campaigns as the Workers' Party because we consider that we are seriously setting about to build a mass working class party. We are looking to get people to join us on the basis of a clearly thought out political and economic position. We are not looking to get people to join Jim Kemmy's party or the IRSP or whatever.

In a recent newspaper article the term "revolutionary party" was used to describe the Workers' Party. What for you is the essence of a revolutionary party?

Basically it derives from our objective of establishing a



"the place to be is in parliament"

socialist democratic republic and it's not possible to do that through a social democratic party like the Labour Party. In defining revolution as the transformation of society — that is where the term "revolutionary" comes from — we are looking to transfer power from the capitalist class to the working class. The Labour Party, taking the other significant group on the Left, have no ambitions, as far as we can see from their declared positions, to transfer power from one class to the other. They are looking for a cooperation or a partnership between the classes rather than a transfer of power.

Is there not a contradiction between building a

revolutionary party and using the methods of the capitalist parties, such as Advice Centres and Parliamentary procedures?

It would be the position of most people on the Left that you can't transfer power without the support of the people you want to transfer power to, namely the working class. It seems reasonable to me to use the tools that are available to us in a democratic, be it a bourgeois democratic, society to win that support. The primary thing is to win working class support for a worked out political position by presenting a marxist analysis to them. And you do that, not by lecturing the people, but by taking the position as it is, pointing out what could be and pointing out the contradictions in the system.

It is not good enough to just contest elections and get into the Dáil. I think we have done it fairly effectively in Dublin North West, for example organising on the family planning issue while highlighting the difference between private and public medicine. We started our own Anti-Amendment campaign because we saw the argument between a secular state and a theocratic state as a political issue. We campaign in the area on these issues, raising consciousness and winning support just for the sake of making a point, but we are articulating a position already understood by our supporters in the constituency and for which we have support.

But is there not a danger of placing too much emphasis on the Parliament?

I think that first of all the Left in Ireland have to accept that we are living in a democratic society with, by and large, no restrictions on how you organise. The parliament is regarded by the people, including the working class, as being the body which runs the country. So the place to be is in parliament. Certainly, from my own experience, the Party's standing in the working class has gained considerably since we entered the Dáil — as much from the fact that we are actually in the Dáil, as from what we may have done or said. And we are attracting new members. So I don't see it as a danger, though there are dangers in it. I think that the accession of the Party to the Dáil has, to some degree anyhow, built the opposition to the Amendment, and in particular contributed to the PAYE campaign.

Assuming that you have politically conscious working class support, do you see socialism coming about simply and smoothly when the Workers' Party achieves a majority in the Dáil? Or do you think that power could only transfer through a major political crisis as predicted by Marx?

It would be nice to think that in five or ten years time power would transfer if the Workers' Party gained a majority. But while we would have general support from the working class, sections of the class might oppose parts of our programme. It is likely that we would have problems with the higher section of the Civil Service. It may be that the Left would come to power in an alliance of a number of parties. So I would expect that there would be a crisis of some kind. The point I'm making is that I can't forecast what way power will transfer but I think from what we know now that parliament will be a key

element in that transfer.

In a recent interview there was mention of a membership target of 40,000 members, from a current membership of 3,000. Now the Party is well known for its discipline and centralism. Do you think that the Party will have to change its structure or to relax its criteria for taking in new members, if it is to grow to this size?

Well, to start with there was no mention of a time scale in that target. Clearly we could not politicize 40,000 people in 12 months. But I would not see difficulties, largely because we recently revised our structures at a special delegate conference earlier this year. We now have a Central Executive Council which has been restructured to have representation from a much broader area of the country, North and South. We have Regional Councils, then Constituency Councils and then the Branches. But also have the Executive Political Committee, the Executive Management Committee and various other committees such as Education, Housing and so forth.

We have revised our constitution, putting into written form what has developed in practice over the years. For example, the Ard Fheis is the supreme decision making body; in between the Central Executive Council is the political decision making body, and when that is not meeting it is the Executive Political Committee which fulfills the role — but only making decisions within the confines of policy already decided at the Ard Fheis. So we have made provision for the development and the growth of the Party in such a way that nobody will feel that they are being left out. The basic unit is the Branch and decisions really start from there.

The question of discipline is a one of commitment to the objectives of the Party, the structure and the centralism of the Party and also the criteria for work. People who apply to join the Party are introduced to the Party through a number of talks on party policy and organisation so that people coming into the party are aware of its aims and of the demands that will be made on their time. They then go through a six month probationary period during which they get involved in activities. After this they become card-carrying members and can vote at Branch meetings. The probationary period and the introductory talks have actually been there since the year dot. We have kept the old structure in as far as they were relevant, added new structures according to our activities and formalised the whole by adding a top structure which is relevant to what is happening on the ground.

Can you tell us about your own political development?

I joined Fianna Éirinn when I was 12 in 1952. At 17 I joined Sinn Féin and was involved in the campaign to elect Tom Mitchell, a Crumlin Road prisoner. They started locking up everyone and I spent 20 months in the 'Joy and the Curragh on internment. I was politically very naive and like most people, then and even now, I was a nationalist. I suppose school had a lot to do with it. I went to an all Irish school in Marlboro St. where we were told that Ireland would not be free until the British left the North.

The Border Campaign fizzled out in 1962 leaving the party at a low ebb. Some re-thinking was going on and

this was particularly boosted by the 1966 celebrations of 1916. Books and pamphlets appeared on James Connolly and everyone started wearing the Connolly badge. The Party began to turn to socialist ideas. I'm not saying that I was involved in this thinking, if anything I had a lot to catch up on, but I was pleased with the developments.

Having absorbed the traditional nationalist ideas when you were growing up, did you not find it difficult, on a personal level, to accept the Party's position of opposing the proroguing of Stormont in 1973?

Yes, I don't deny that obviously on a personal level it was difficult to accept this position. But if you sit down and work out the way forward in a difficult political situation, and that presents you with difficult choices which mean dumping some dearly held prejudices, prejudices you were reared with, well you just have to do it. But I can understand the difficulty for young people in West Belfast in understanding our position.

The young people in West Belfast are on the receiving end of violence from the RUC . . .

Yes, but what do you want? The policing of West Belfast by the Provos and the INLA who are, when analysed, fascist-type organisations? Or do you seek a police force which is politically independent? We have a policy, developed as far back as 1975, of demanding the demilitarisation of the RUC. So we, in fact, give only qualified support to the RUC, with demands that they be reformed, de-militarised, have a complaints procedure etc.

To-day the Party is supporting Prior's Assembly. Can you explain that?

We believe that the working class need to be able to organise on the issues that are most important to them. I don't think that union with the South is important for the nationalists, or that union with Britain is important for the unionist workers except in an intellectual way or when they feel their traditions and culture under threat. There are different traditions in the North because Protestants and Catholics grow up attending different schools, different churches, hearing different stories at home. But we feel that most people mainly want the opportunity to live a full, normal life. So we are trying to create a political level of activity where working class people on both sides can think primarily of the interests of their own class. And in trying to achieve that you have to ensure that there are structures which will allow this kind of political development. So if you don't have a local assembly of some kind you don't have a platform for political expression.

The Party has a policy of demanding a 32 county socialist republic and yet at the same time Tomas MacGiolla's speech at this year's Ard Fheis seemed to imply support for a separate workers state in the North should one emerge. Is this not a contradiction?

The actual term we use is a unitary state. That is the long term objective. If it is necessary at some point, in order to gain the support of the workers in the North, to allow for

a separate state run by the workers in the North in their own interests, then we would support that. I don't see it as a contradiction. It may not be the full shilling, so to speak. But we can never predict how things are going to work out, there are so many forces involved. We have to allow for interim situations. Very few people will see the need for separate states on the island if both are workers' states, and in that case I've no doubt that a unitary state would come about.

In your own speech at Bodenstown this year you spent some time on the neutrality and nuclear arms issues. Do you think that opposition campaigns in a small country like Ireland can have any effect on the big powers?

Yes, because there are a number of connections. For instance, many of the influential people in the States are Irish-Americans. Then there is the connection via the Catholic Church. The Americans were obviously upset by the El Salvador motion in the Dáil. They were sufficiently concerned to have sent George Bush over to

USSR has made a number of significant gestures in recent times, such as their promise not to be the first to use nuclear weapons, and they also offered any country which declares itself a "nuclear-free-zone" a guarantee that they would not be attacked by the USSR. Neither the USA nor NATO have responded to these moves in any positive way. We would like the Irish Government to take a more independent line, for example declaring the 26 County State a "nuclear-free-zone" and perhaps also investigating how we could fit in with the non-aligned countries.

Looking to the future, do you expect further election successes for the Workers' Party?

It is always risky to put figures on things but I would expect us to end up with at least 4 or 5 seats on Dublin Corporation in the next local elections, depending on the issues at the time. I expect that we will pick up seats in the County as well. I know that we will pick up additional seats on Cork County Council and Corporation. We



**The 1982
Ard Fhéis
Top Table**

explain their policy. Mind you I am very unhappy with the weak position taken by both FitzGerald and Barry on the issue of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Britain — arguing that it is none of our business. It is, and that is why it is essential to have grass-roots pressure groups like Irish CND to indicate that while the Government might be saying one thing, the people are not happy with this threatening situation.

You were involved in the "Arms are for Linking" demonstration. Do you think that the USSR needs to be persuaded to disarm its nuclear force?

I think that we have to accept that the USSR has no vested interest in maintaining the deployment of nuclear weapons. My understanding of the situation is that economically they would be better off, better able to develop their own economy, if they didn't have to allocate large resources to nuclear weapons. On the other hand, in the USA there is a vast military-industrial complex which depends on the continual development and production of these weapons. Apart from that the

expect to win in Galway and to gain more seats in Waterford.

As for campaigns, we think the divorce issue will develop an impetus of its own after the Amendment campaign is out of the way. We will continue with the "Jobs for All" campaign and will probably get involved on the water charges issue. I think an issue which will come to the fore is the old question of who controls our resources. The oil find in Waterford will raise that question. Finally, an important issue will be the defence of the state-sector. Despite what Frank Cluskey has said, I get a clear impression from this Government that the state-sector is for the chop. All these issues are there, whichever one comes to the fore will depend on circumstances at any given time.

I've seen, at meetings around the country, a very positive response to the Party — people are recognising that, for the first time, there is a party that is politically different, that is not offering the same tired old clichés, that is not only talking about its politics but is campaigning in support of them.

IS THERE LIFE AFTER THE AMENDMENT?

For over 15 months, through financial difficulties, organisational problems and internal wrangles, the Anti-Amendment Campaign maintained an active opposition to the constitutional amendment eventually winning a larger 'No' vote in the referendum than most people thought possible.

Many of the issues raised during the past year and many of the experiences gained, are still very strongly present. GRALTON asked a number of people who were active in the campaign and who represented different points of view within it to assess the collective and personal experience and to say what future, if any, there is for a similar amalgam of forces.

**VOTE
NO
TO THE AMENDMENT**

PAULA HINCHY, a member of the Dublin 4 Action Group:

From the point of view of our group, the real achievement was to pull in so many people, to get them mobilised and to keep them active. Even after the referendum vote, we have been meeting regularly – and still getting one or two new people. All sorts of issues were raised through the canvass, although everybody was scared of doing this work at first.

We all learned things on the doorstep. We discovered there was a lot to talk about relating to women's health. People told us things which we want to respond to about difficult births, inadequate maternity services, the problems of getting certain contraceptives. We could run an education campaign on any of these things; it would be educational for us too.

On the campaign in general, we felt that the right wing had a strong hold on it from the very beginning, but we were strong enough to resist the effects of that in our group. It did cause some problems at local level, in terms of our relations with the organisation set up to handle the overall constituency. The Labour Party was strongly involved in that; political parties should not be allowed to assert

such domination in a campaign of this kind. As the Labour Party and Young Fine Gael became more actively involved in the campaign, the "right to choose" position was effectively suppressed.

But we refused to tell lies on the doorsteps, to tell people that we were opposed to abortion in all circumstances when we weren't. We knew that eventually we would be going back to the same people on the abortion issue itself. To deal with this, we had to produce our own literature, including a leaflet for women which I think was one of the best pieces of propaganda to be produced within the Anti-Amendment Campaign.

I'm not at all sure that we had to have the broad-based campaign taking in all points of view, but in fact suppressing some, in order to achieve the vote which turned out to vote 'No'.

Personally, I got involved in the campaign by going to the very earliest public meetings and I have become much more conscious of women's issues. Many more people have been made aware of issues of women in society, of relations between church and state. Of course, people will be lost to the campaign itself, but people's awareness has been greatly expanded. And we can build on that.

**VOTE
NO
TO THE AMENDMENT**

CLARE O'CONNOR, activist in the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS) and the Trade Union Women's Forum:

My expectations may have been lower than those of many others but I was very pleased with the result. It has put into figures what was previously only known intuitively – that the Catholic church is losing its sway. Never before has there been such a direct test of their political influence. There was a chance that, if they pulled out all the stops, they could prove that their view of the country as 95% Catholic was valid.

The fact that they didn't achieve a vote anything like that can be put down to the anti-amendment lobby in general – including the *Irish Times* and the Protestant churches, as well as the Anti-Amendment Campaign itself. The late arrival of the Labour Party and the Workers' Party also helped. If there had not been such broad opposition, there might very well have been a landslide for the amendment. In the event, PLAC's clear expectation of an 80% or 85% vote was disappointed.

The AAC's failures were most obvious in organisation outside the main towns, where priests and provincial papers were hardly challenged. There could have been an earlier commitment to establish AAC firmly as a national campaign. Some blame attaches to the in-fighting. It might even be said that the campaign against the amendment went well in spite of the Anti-Amendment Campaign itself, where only in the last weeks people really pulled together.

The differences should not have arisen as they did. If everybody had accepted that the aim was to defeat the amendment there would not have been such argument. But I would like to think that

this alliance could stay together in some form, particularly with the review of the Family Planning bill coming up, which the politicians are bound to make a mess of. And if divorce comes up as an active issue, much the same movement could be re-formed.

There is also a need to monitor the effects of the amendment's passing. Having said throughout the campaign that it was going to have serious implications in law and in medicine, we can't just disband now that it has been passed.

Some of the slogans and the literature on the amendment's potential to damage or kill women may have gone a bit too far but the simple, emotive appeal helped a great deal on the doorsteps in the final phase.

Having been around the left-wing scene for quite a while, I'm happy that we have learned that we can put aside the 20% or 30% we disagree on to work together. We have gained a small amount of cohesion for the Left.

**VOTE
NO**
TO THE AMENDMENT

EDDIE CONLON, member of the Finglas Action Group and a national campaign organiser for the Anti-Amendment Campaign:

We did well to get the result we got. The majority of ordinary people either did not want the change or did not want to vote. And the large proportion of non-voters represented a further rejection of the amendment, as well as general confusion.

The satisfying thing is that we got a significant vote where we were well organised – in Dublin, Galway town, Sligo town, Cork North-Central, etc. We fell down in the rural areas where the other side had a ready-made network. But the Anti-Amendment Campaign did succeed in promoting the debate and building a movement where nothing like that had ever happened before, where there had never been public discussion of women's rights, of fertility, of church and state.

The Anti-Amendment Campaign raised a lot of questions about the church's role and about women's control of their own fertility. One of the major

weaknesses was not to put the issue of abortion forward more prominently. Eventually, the only legitimate position on both sides of the amendment argument was to be totally anti-abortion. We should have said more clearly that the medical exceptions being allowed to different degrees on both sides were, in fact, abortions.

We did win the argument on the availability of contraceptives but we did not win the intellectual argument on abortion – because it was not raised. Those of us in the campaign who support a woman's right to choose abortion accepted the limitations of working inside a broad-based campaign but the minority position was in fact suppressed and the debate on that issue stopped in the past two months as those who believed there was a tactical need to leave abortion out of the argument became virulently anti-abortion – much more so than they really are. It is hard to know what can be done now in terms of pushing the demand for abortion rights.

What we have all learned is never to under-estimate the church, especially the organisation of the church at local level. The other lesson is that the Left should not take responsibility for broad-based campaigns – and should maintain its autonomy inside any such campaign, including the right to publish its own literature.

One unfortunate feature of the campaign was that, by adopting a form of organisation based on constituencies it had no effective mechanism for helping those working individually in the countryside to overcome their isolation. They were never drawn into a full discussion of where the campaign was going. However, it was surprising what could be built in the rural areas. It was always possible to establish some kind of base by providing the facilities. If we had four full-time organisers on the road things would have been different.

In general, the campaign never got significantly beyond the liberal middle class base on which it was set up. In Finglas, we had to produce a separate bulleting in order to get through. When we held a second public meeting with local speakers we did much, much better.

**VOTE
NO**
TO THE AMENDMENT

**VOTE
NO**
TO THE AMENDMENT

JEAN TANSEY, representative of the Labour Party's National Women's Council on the Administrative Council of the party and a member of the AAC's Steering Committee:

It was a very good campaign, which showed a lot of vitality, achieved a high degree of unity, despite the inevitable tensions, and drew a wide range of people. The result of the vote was also very good, considering the issues involved and the expectations we had at the beginning of the campaign.

We won on the legal and medical arguments. Indeed, on the intellectual level in general we won as much as there was to be won. But we did not relate sufficiently well to people on the emotional, even intuitive, level. The campaign was not popular enough.

The other side had very simplistic, but very appealing, messages. While we had an impressive line-up of activists we were not direct enough and forceful enough in arguing the issues relating to women's experience, the hypocrisy of the amendment and the need for a caring society. When we did adopt the slogan "This Amendment Could Kill Women" it was not widely believed. It was too strong, and we ran it for too long.

It would be a pity if the Anti-Amendment Campaign disappeared altogether, but we would not want to maintain it simply because it is difficult to wind it up. I find it difficult to imagine the same urgency and the same degree of co-ordination among the very different people whom the amendment brought together being repeated on some other issue.

The Anti-Amendment Campaign may have helped change the political scene quite a bit. It certainly contributed to the raising of political consciousness. It also drew people into active campaigning who had never been involved in anything of the kind before. In that way, it has been an important and rewarding experience.

VOTE NO TO THE AMENDMENT

MARNIE HOLBOROW, member of the Socialist Workers' Movement and of the AAC's Steering Committee:

The size of the opposition to the amendment means that no bishop, can ever sleep easily in his bed again. A significant minority rejected the church's interference in politics and in their lives. Many others ignored the pulpit and stayed at home, refusing to be conned by what they saw as a diversion from the real issues. Clearly, Rome's rule has been undermined.

The opposition to the church that the campaign against the amendment articulated is the result of people's changing expectations in Ireland over the last twenty years. Women have come to think of themselves as working women as well as mothers. Sections of the Irish ruling class, too, have wanted to move on from "backward, clerical" Ireland as they negotiate grants in Brussels. Both aspects were present in the AAC — on the one hand, the big 'No' votes returned from the working class areas of Dublin, Cork and Limerick, on the other, some Fine Gaelers, and sections of the IFA. The political and class divisions within the AAC were, indeed, some of the sharpest ever seen in a single issue campaign.

The class difference in the campaign revealed the Left of the campaign to be considerably weak. Throughout the campaign, Fine Gael, Protestant Ministers, doctors and lawyers dominated. It was their arguments that were trotted out from every public platform. Never once did we have any ordinary working class women putting their reasons for opposing the amendment. Still less did we have people getting up and saying what many of the campaign thought — that they were in favour of a woman's right to abortion.

Instead of the AAC becoming the confident beginnings of a fighting campaign for women's right to abortion, it ended up at best, a vague campaign for "tolerance" (as the Workers' Party would have it) or at worst, a plea for legal and medical expertise. Few lone voices stood up to the liberal respectable arguments and put forward the need to talk about abortion. Even the much talked about Right To Choose contingent within the campaign gave in to the pressure.

When we in the SWM put forward a resolution at one of the later delegate conferences that the campaign reject the anti-abortion stand of the now blatant vote catching campaign, the resolution fell. That's how bad things had got.

We have to learn a simple lesson from the AAC. The campaign was started by the "extremist" minority — socialists, feminists and radicals. It was they who built up much of the energy and principled opposition to any wording, in the AAC. Yet once the issue became accepted and part of the bourgeois "consensus", the liberals imposed their terms of opposition — anti-abortion and ultra-respectable. The Left had merely served to give a boost to Irish liberalism.

But the AAC opened up an audience amongst working class women. To build on that audience you need to be talking working class politics as well as fighting for women's rights. You cannot attract the mass of working class women without socialist politics.

Those that are fighting for something far more than a pluralist Ireland, who are fighting for liberation rather than liberalism, need to become involved in a revolutionary party that can connect up the opposition to the amendment and the picket lines outside Clery's or CIE. Because it is only the power of workers that can destroy the type of society which relegates women to the legal status of a fertilised egg.

VOTE NO TO THE AMENDMENT

ANNE O'DONNELL, information officer with the Rape Crisis Centre and a member of the AAC's Steering Committee;

The result of the vote is disappointing, in that we did not win, but not surprising given the state of politics and morals in this country and particularly not surprising in view of the Catholic church's late intervention. The result in Dublin, indeed anywhere we were well organised — including rural and small-town areas in Kildare and Wicklow — was good.

We did especially well where we had the co-operation and involvement of the political parties — Labour, the Workers' Party and Fine Gael. They had invaluable political experience and local knowledge to offer. They didn't affect

the tactics or the message but they did understand how to set realistic targets for the local organisation. However, the parties were not uniformly involved and there was nothing we could do about that.

As for the slogans and ideas themselves, we got very mixed feedback about "This Amendment Could Kill Women". Some people thought it was too extreme, others — and particularly older women with memories of a time when pregnancies were often dangerous — thought it was quite appropriate. We may have been too late in with the slogan, "If You Don't Know, Vote No". That related well to the feelings of confusion which many people had.

As time went on and as the campaign attracted an even broader range of people, most of them opposed to abortion, we had to decide whether or not we were going to aim for the biggest possible 'No' vote. If we were going to do that, we had to say abortion was not at issue. I do think, however, that some individuals may have gone over the mark in trying to appear different from what they really are.

As a woman, I often felt angry at the way in which the argument was put in technical legal and medical terms. But that was the way the media decided to play it, putting one set of experts against another. The views and feeling of ordinary women, which were central to the issue, were pushed away.

It was the force of the single issue which made the campaign uniquely broad. The most successful political movements and organisations are often those with the most minimal aims. The divorce issue or contraception could possibly have a similar, wide appeal and bring together similar forces. But it is easier to react than to initiate and the amendment provoked a lot of people who were insensed, as women, about other people presuming to have control of their bodies, or, as non-Catholics, about the imposition of a Catholic point of view.

The campaign showed that an increasing number of people are fed up with being told what to do by the church. It also revealed considerable energies, which must be channelled somewhere.

For me, it was the first time since the mid 1970s to work politically with men, because I had made a decision at that time to work in the women's movement. And I was pleasantly surprised to find that many men had changed for the better in their attitudes to women. Some, of course, were just as bad as ten years ago.

It was also a new experience to work with people of very different background and it taught me just how important it is not to judge people by accent, manner or class. I have to admit I was a bit wary about dealing with middle-aged, male professionals, or Protestants. The campaign helped break down a lot of barriers. ●

THE GREAT ABORTION REFERENDUM SAGA

MARY GORDON and JOHN CANE

Part 1: The Gathering Storm

The summer of 1980. Professor Eamonn O'Dwyer, the "eminent" gynaecologist, is strolling along the banks of the Grand Canal with a colleague, a member of the Irish Catholic Doctors' Guild. The conversation comes around, as it will, to keeping abortion out of Ireland. "I have been turning over in my mind", muses the good Professor, "the question of the constitution and wondering if it could perhaps be strengthened."

Thus it all began. In April 1981 the Irish Catholic Doctors' Guild sets up the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign. Three weeks later it receives unqualified support from Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Two years — and three elections — later, the bourgeois politicians put an Amendment Bill before the Dáil. The PLAC-supported Fianna Fáil version is passed by 87 votes to 13. On September 7th 1983, Professor O'Dwyer stops wondering. The Eighth Amendment passes into the Constitution by 841,233 votes to 416,136 votes against, with a massive 1,101,282 abstaining.

Despite the opposition or indifference of almost two-thirds of the electorate, PLAC have, then, succeeded in their aim of enshrining the "right to life of the unborn" in the Constitution and thereby closing any "loophole" that theoretically existed for the legalisation of abortion in Ireland. Further, the wording of the Amendment has opened the way for legal action against women using common forms of contraception; women going to England for abortions; and doctors aborting a foetus to save a woman's life.

It adds up to a major defeat for abortion rights — and women's rights generally — in Ireland. Yet this victory for reaction is not unambiguous nor was it won easily.

It is not at all certain, for example, that the passing of the Amendment will have an adverse effect on the long-term struggle for abortion rights. This struggle has never been concerned with a direct assault on the law but rather with changing "the climate of opinion" in a country where abortion *in fact*, exists but people prefer to deny it. Also, despite an "anti-abortion" consensus

holding public sway during the Amendment campaign, this was not always reflected on a good number of doorsteps. Hundreds of thousands of women — and men — would, at least, seem to place a higher value on the humanity of women than that of the foetus. That is bad news for the anti-abortionists.

The strength of the opposition to the Amendment has also caused the reactionary forces behind PLAC to have second thoughts on the secondary objective of their campaign: to use it as a springboard to launch attacks on the progressive gains already won in the areas of sexuality and personal and family relations. A "pro-contraception" consensus, for example, was forced on PLAC (almost as a *quid pro quo* for the "anti-abortion" consensus). The "Responsible Society" has had to be put on the long finger.

Indeed, it is possible that the PLAC campaign has, inadvertently, forged a counter-coalition of progressive forces — feminists, socialists, radicals and liberals — that may develop the confidence to push for a further "liberalisation" of Irish society in those very areas that PLAC hoped would be "copperfastened" for reaction. Whether such confidence is justified, and whether such a coalition can — or should — be maintained are, at the moment, open questions. But they are on the agenda.

The Great Abortion Referendum Saga has proved to be the most important political event of recent times. Not only has it direct consequences for the struggle for women's rights but it has also raised the possibility of a general re-alignment of political forces in Ireland. These are developments we would be foolish to ignore.

THE FORCES OF REACTION

PLAC, like the Anti-Amendment Campaign, was always a coalition of forces. It consisted of three main stands. First, the *Irish Catholic Doctors' Guild* (formed in the early Seventies to counter "the decline in ethical values") who,



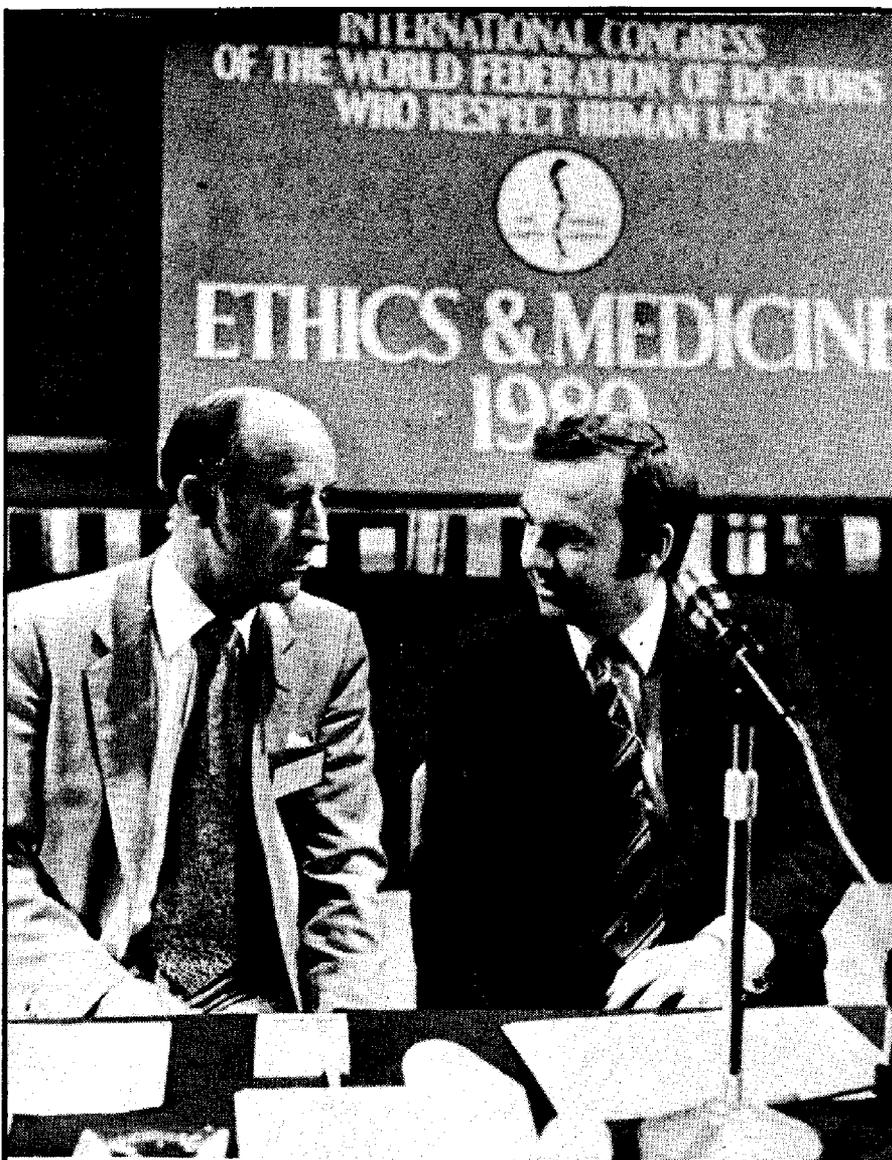
Eamonn O'Dwyer: the man who started it all.

together with the PLAC-created *Irish Association of Lawyers for the Defence of the Unborn*, represented the respectable, professional face of the Campaign. They were always firmly in control.

The second strand was the members of the *Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child* (SPUC) who provided the troops. Set up by the British organisation in June 1980 (around the time Professor O'Dwyer was holding his fateful conversation), within months they had formed branches across the country, held local meetings and got the notorious slide show on its way around Irish schools and church halls. SPUC is a genuine grassroots anti-abortion movement. By the time the Referendum vote arrived their propaganda had been spewing out for three years. SPUC still remains very much in existence.

The third strand was a coalition of right wing (and invariably Catholic) pressure groups around the *Council for Social Concern* (formed in 1978) and the *Responsible Society* (formed in 1980). They represent a rag-bag of reactionary ideology that is waiting in the wings for the time when "the people are ready to return to traditional values". Neither leaders or troops, they played little role in the PLAC campaign as such.

Derek Speirs (Report)



The Forces of Reaction: John Bonner, the Responsible Society (above left); Michael Woods, tomato doctor (above right) and Margaret White, British SPUC (below). All present at a "Medicine and Ethics" Conference in Dublin, September 1980.



Placing this coalition of forces in Irish society is difficult. We cannot say that it represents a particular class or stratum. Though the PLAC leaders were drawn from the professional middle classes, the troops were literally from "all walks of life". Politically, these forces have some base in the old Blueshirt, conservative wing of Fine Gael but also reach into both Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party. Their influence is, of course, greatest within the Catholic Church — largely through the networks of the Knights of Columbanus and Opus Dei. They represent not so much a political as an ideological movement whose project is to re-establish traditional Catholic authoritarianism in social matters, through the existing political structures.

This emphasis on social matters is important. The forces behind PLAC have no economic project. Indeed, there is

often a bad "fit" between social reaction — which usually desires state regulation — and economic reaction — which, currently desires its absence. None of this is to claim that the social reaction represented by PLAC is politically neutral. Such ideology is obviously extremely useful to any ruling class in certain circumstances. Whether such circumstances obtain in Ireland at the moment is highly debatable.

Over-emphasis on the general ideology behind PLAC is perhaps unwise anyway. It can detract from the fact that, in practice, it was a strict single-issue campaign. If elements within PLAC had pretensions to wide the debate, they were soon sat upon in the interests of winning the main issue. And the main issue was *abortion*, nothing else. We must ask why this particular issue at this particular time.

THE BATTLEGROUND

On the face of it, PLAC set itself an extremely obscure task: the closing of a theoretical "loophole" for abortion in a country where it was already totally illegal and no major pressure existed to change that situation. So why bother? Why not a Contraceptives are Evil Campaign or a Close The Gay Clubs Campaign or a No Divorce In Our Time Campaign?

These are not beyond the bounds of possibility of course. But there is a common difficulty for reactionary forces with all of them: there is no guarantee of success. Major opposition could be *expected*. That was not so, or certainly didn't appear so, with abortion. The certainty of overwhelming success was very tempting to people who had over the last two decades seen a continuous "liberalisation" on social matters, however limited.

Campaigns cannot be manufactured out of thin air. It was necessary that the "plain people" of Ireland felt some *need* for an anti-abortion campaign at this time. In the absence of any pressing objective need (no-one was going through any loopholes) a more subjective need was created by introducing the spectre of "the international abortion conspiracy". The campaign took shape as one to protect Ireland *for the future* — which necessitated this obscure constitutional business in the present.

The ground work for the eventual PLAC campaign was started by that Caped Crusader for international reaction, the Pope, in his notorious anti-woman speech at Limerick in 1979. SPUC was formed in Ireland the following year and immediately set to work to persuade the "plain people" that "the international abortion conspiracy" was — *even as we speak* — spreading its tentacles into Gallant Little Ireland. "We Must Act NOW". By April 1981 even the cautious PLAC

doctors and lawyers were convinced: an Eighth Amendment to the Constitution was needed.

The reason this strategy achieved a good measure of success was due to the vast ignorance about abortion in Ireland. Since the 1967 Abortion Act was passed in Britain, Ireland has had no experience of the horrors of "backstreet abortion" — the major reason why other countries have succumbed to the "international abortion conspiracy". Indeed, with Irish abortions happening in Britain, there has been no experience of *any kind* of abortion and the reasons why women choose to have them. The thousands of women that return from Britain are invisible — how can they possibly "share" their experience in a society that even today barely acknowledges that women sometimes get pregnant outside of holy wedlock?

For the anti-abortionists to claim that such a sexually-repressive society is on the verge of legalising abortion was a sick joke. True, a "tentacle of the international abortion conspiracy" was established in Ireland in February 1980: *The Woman's Right To Choose Group*. (In fact, unlike SPUC, home-grown). The great fear this produced in the anti-abortion camp was revealed by Loretto Browne, a leading SPUC member, when she described them as: "a small group, and a very pathetic group". Of course, the sheer brazen effrontery of this score of fallen women must have been very upsetting but to use the existence of WRTCG as evidence of any serious challenge to Irish anti-abortion laws was merely a con-trick.

WRTCG were not the first group in Ireland to call for Free, Legal and Safe Abortion on Demand. It appeared on the programmes of Irish Women United, the Socialist Labour Party and most of the smaller Far Left groups. But WRTCG were the first to publicly campaign for abortion rights in Ireland. That campaigning has always been "low-key". Occasional seminars and speakers at women's and student meetings, the odd magazine article and a pamphlet. Such propaganda was gaining some ground amongst feminists, socialists and radicals but by the time PLAC set up shop in April 1981, their major achievement had really been in setting-up a non-directive abortion referral agency; the Irish Pregnancy Counselling Centre.

There is no doubt, then, that PLAC used many spurious arguments to prepare the grassroots for its campaign to amend the Constitution. But there is also no doubt that those grassroots needed little watering. Anti-abortion sentiments are *uniquely* entrenched in a Catholic Ireland that has "no abortion problem". The project of the anti-abortion campaigners was to keep it that way. To ACT NOW to "copperfasten" this situation before, as they saw it, it was too late.

Too late not just to save abortion but

to save the whole project of re-establishing traditional Catholic Authoritarianism. Because of the reactionary forces behind SPUC know only too well, if complete control over women cannot be maintained in this absolutely fundamental area, then there is precious little chance of regaining such control in other areas. On such fundamental terms was battle joined by PLAC in April 1981. It must be remembered that the original Amendment that PLAC wanted included the phrase: "The State recognises the *absolute* right to life of every unborn child from the moment of conception . . ."

THE FEMINIST RESPONSE

It was some time before feminists responded in any serious way to the challenge of PLAC. There were two reasons for this. The first was that PLAC decided right from the start to adopt a low-key style of campaign. The "respectable" elements were firmly in the saddle and the SPUC zealots were kept away from the media and sent to water the grassroots. Besides, fierce advocacy hardly seemed necessary when within three weeks of setting up, PLAC had gained the unqualified support of both Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. Even Frank Cluskey, then leader of the Labour "welcomed the initiative" on behalf of his party (though this was shortly superseded by a "wait and see" position).

The election that occasioned this despicable politicking, came and went quietly on the abortion front. FitzGerald came into office and the issue seemed to have been put on the long finger — especially when he launched his Constitutional Crusade in September of 1981. Surely that nasty little business of an abortion amendment would now disappear with the advent of this bold, liberal, non-sectarian dawn? So many well-meaning

people thought anyway. It was all very dis-arming for feminists.

But there was a second reason why feminists were failing to react to PLAC, apart from the "phoney" nature of the war at this time. It was due to the fact that, although the vast majority of Irish feminists were personally in favour of a woman's right to choose abortion, only a tiny minority — the WRTCG — were ever in favour of espousing this position. Most considered it too "hard" an issue for Ireland, some even a "diversion" of energy needed for more immediate struggles. As a result, abortion had not become the central, almost automatic, rallying point of the Irish women's movement as it was in other women's movements abroad. When the extremely "fragmented" nature of the current Irish women's movement is also taken into account, it is no wonder that the WRTCG felt somewhat reticent about its ability to get an opposition off the ground.

In December 1981, the WRTCG held an open conference to take stock of itself in the light of the developing PLAC campaign. It was this conference that led to the split in the Right To Choose Movement that later would be extremely important in deciding the direction of the whole Anti- Amendment Campaign. Many had become frustrated with the "low-key" style of the WRTCG. Feeling that the question of abortion was now up for debate in a way it hadn't been before, they wished to confront PLAC (and especially, SPUC) directly with an upfront pro-abortion rights position. In April of 1982 they launched the Woman's Right To Choose Campaign Campaign. They would join with anyone who wished to fight PLAC for whatever reason but *they* were going to do it on a pro-abortion rights basis.

A number of the original WRTCG did not go along with this new militancy.



The First Pro-Abortion Rights Demo: outside the British Embassy in February 1980.

Derek Speits (Report)

They did not feel that abortion was yet up for widespread debate and thought the most they could do in that area was to keep the Irish Pregnancy Counselling Centre open. (This centre in fact closed in 1983 but was superseded by Open Door Counseling.) But they did feel that *something* could be done — and needed to be done — about the PLAC campaign. On the 1st April 1982 five WRTCG members, as individuals, wrote to everyone they could think of inviting them to the Clarence Hotel in Dublin “with a view to launching an Anti-Amendment Campaign.”

And almost “everyone” turned up. Certainly a good number of feminists from most of the “fragments” were there. So were all the main Far Left groups. Also the Communist Party and the Democratic Socialist Party — even a few Labour Party and Workers’ Party individuals. Plus, of course, many independent feminists, socialists and radicals. It was the bones of a Campaign.

Feminists were responsible for the initiative but events off-stage had also played their part in attracting this wide audience. Another election had come and gone and Haughey was back in power. At the end of March he began to pay his political debt to PLAC. He announced that the Referendum would be held before the year was out. Even the Left began to understand that the situation was getting serious. In June the Anti-Amendment Campaign was launched.

THE LEFT RESPONSE

If feminists were slow to respond to PLAC, they at least understood what PLAC was about. Not only was the Left, in the main, far slower to move, but even when it did it was for largely the wrong reasons. If the major parties of the Left

understood that PLAC was launching a campaign against women’s rights, they did their best to keep this knowledge to themselves for a long, long time. Neither the Labour party or the Workers’ Party wanted to campaign on *abortion* in a million years — and if some resistance to PLAC had to be put up, that resistance was going to be something — anything — other than you know what.

There are two major reasons why the Left adopted this attitude. The first is the endemic economism present to some degree in all tendencies on the Irish Left. This is the belief that there are *real* issues — jobs, wages, housing etc — facing the working class . . . and then there are *secondary* issues. A wide and variable list here but always including women’s rights. Which leads us to the second reason. The failure — in practice, and often also in theory — of the Left to integrate feminism into the socialist project. The result is that the *very real* demands of women for control over their own lives are never automatically and unconditionally supported by the Left. Any feminists expecting this kind of support in opposing PLAC were to be rudely awakened.

Of course, the Left did eventually get around to supporting the Anti-amendment Campaign and such support was extremely valuable. Women’s rights may be secondary but they are not *non-issues*. It would also be unfair to lump the whole Left together on this issue, as on any other. There were major differences of approach to be seen as the opposition to PLAC began to grow.

There is simply no point in attempting to analyse the response of the Labour Party, as a *party*, on this issue. The usual undemocratic procedure of the parliamentary leadership deciding the “line” was abandoned shortly after Frank Cluskey” unfortunate *personal* gaffe in

welcoming the PLAC campaign. In its place the leadership contented itself with re-iterating the alleged (it has never been to Conference) opposition of the party to abortion of any kind and then ignoring the issue entirely until it became *real* i.e. was brought up in the Dáil. At the same time, they let it be known that members could do what they want. In an organisation running the gamut from Frank Prendergast to Michael D. Higgins this was, in their terms, an astute move.

The vast majority of party members adopted the same position. For the average Labour member it was simply not an issue until the very last weeks of the campaign. Here economism meshes with a party life-style that eschews campaigning on anything, never mind women’s issues. There were, of course, exceptions. The Prendergast and Co. exception needn’t detain us any more than it will the Labour Party. What of the feminists and the Left?

Feminists are thin on the ground in the Labour Party. Nevertheless, they persuaded the Labour Women’s Council to oppose PLAC and affiliate to the AAC at an early stage. What they couldn’t do was commit higher levels of the party to the same course. They received little help in this project from the Broad Left in the party which — apart from Michael D. Higgins, Ruairi Quinn, Mary Robinson and a handful of Dublin activists — understood the importance of the issue little better than the mainstream membership.

Labour opposition to PLAC, as well as being tiny, was also very loose on the grounds on which to oppose an Amendment. With the exception of Michael D. Higgins, it cannot be said that opposition flowed from an understanding of the overriding importance of defending women’s rights. Non-feminist responses to PLAC were accorded a much higher status. Yet, this Labour support, unlike that of the Workers’ Party, — with which it shared this initial avoidance of the central issue — was in the later stages of the campaign able to change course somewhat. The Workers’ Party stuck to its “line” through thick and thin. The difference lies in the nature of the organisations.

No “do your own thing” for the Workers’ Party. It decided its position through “democratic centralism” and ensured the party spoke with one voice throughout the campaign. No embarrassing Frank Prendergasts . . . but no Michael D. Higgins either — because the position excluded any room whatsoever for feminism as a legitimate response to PLAC.

The Workers’ Party is the classic example of the Left desperately searching for any reason to oppose PLAC other than on PLAC’s own clearly stated grounds. There is a “threat to democracy” from a New Right seemingly merely using PLAC as a front. A self-



Launching the AAC: Anne O'Donnell, Jean Tansey, Noreen Byrne and Maura Woods at the first press conference, June 1982.

proclaimed "marxist" party finds itself bemoaning the "divisions in society" that the Amendment is throwing into relief. Undemocratic, divisive, unnecessary, sectarian, intolerant. Everything but an attack on women. These points are not necessarily wrong, they are simply beside the main point. Devoid of any specifically socialist content, they led the Workers' Party inexorably into the arms of liberalism.

Nevertheless, at least the Workers' Party, as a party, was opposing PLAC from an early stage. The feminists who set up the AAC obviously hoped the WP would join them in common cause — the AAC platform was certainly broad enough to accommodate them. It was not to be. After some initial confusion, the WP made its position clear in no uncertain terms. The following is an extract from an Editorial on the issue in the August 1982 *Workers' Life*, the monthly WP magazine:

"It is vital that a unified opposition (does not make its case) in the language of the rabid, hysterical ultra-left whose words and actions are in fact an aid to the reactionary forces promoting the SPUC campaign . . . Serious unified opposition must ensure that these elements are excluded."

Well, at least there can be no doubt: if the AAC wished to accommodate the WP then other "elements" — those who wanted to oppose PLAC on PLAC's own grounds — would have to go. In fact, the WP let it be known that a simple silencing of these "elements" would suffice. When, shortly afterwards, that was accomplished . . . the WP still didn't join and thereafter pursued their own course. They simply didn't want to be "contaminated" by anyone.

Such aloofness is something the Fairly Far and Very Far Left parties and groups can neither afford — nor reconcile with their socialist principles. All the groups to the Left of the WP opposed PLAC from the beginning and all (except the tiny Irish Workers' Group) joined the AAC and worked within it throughout the campaign.

In general, the positions adopted by this section of the Left were far less tainted by economism than those of the Labour Party and the Workers' Party. The Communist Party and the Democratic Socialist Party have both recently allowed space in their organisations for feminists to explore the elusive integration of socialism and feminism. There was no problem, then, for these parties in allowing a feminist response to PLAC — alongside the non-feminist responses pioneered by the Workers' Party. But this "dual response" position was to come under increasing strain as the campaign progressed.

Those groups even further to the left — Peoples Democracy, Socialist Workers' Movement, Anarchists, Revolutionary



The shape of things to come: SPUC v. AAC at the Black Sheep, Coolock in October 1982.

Struggle and others — would all claim to have achieved the integration of feminism and socialism. That's a large claim — and one many feminists would dispute. What cannot be disputed, however, is that these groups were more than prepared to take on PLAC and SPUC on their terms: abortion rights and women's rights generally. Their insistence on being allowed to advocate this Woman's Right To Choose position from within the AAC was to bring them into conflict with the rest of the Left.

It can be seen, then, that the Left moved into opposition to PLAC in a far from united fashion. Not only did its major battalions arrive late and incomplete, there was also no common approach to the central question: on what grounds is PLAC to be opposed? Such confusion and division was, perhaps, inevitable. If the Left finds it constantly difficult to unite on what it considers *the real issues*, what chance of unity was there on this extremely uncomfortable secondary issue? For a long time most of the Left simply wished they could have been somewhere — anywhere — else.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

But if the Left was confused and divided, so were feminists. Understanding exactly that PLAC represented an attack on women's rights — and thus a *very real issue* — they had arrived earlier and virtually complete to oppose them. But *how* to oppose them was not at all clear. The tactical difference revealed at the December 1981 Woman's Right To Choose Conference flowed over into the AAC. This difference was not — as sometimes thought — between those who believed in the Right To Choose and those who didn't. The great majority of feminists have always believed it. The difference was between those who felt it ought, in some way, to be advocated *now* in response to PLAC and those who, with an understandable lack of confidence in

the popularity of their own beliefs outside the ranks of feminism, felt such a course would be *political* suicide. This division, extending into the ranks of the Left as well, was to become the central dilemma of the Anti-Amendment Campaign.

It would be wrong, however, to portray the fledgling AAC as an organisation fatally crippled by this dilemma from the start. The most important thing was that, despite the divisions and confusions over tactics, the show was on the road. A platform of demands was being hammered out. Democratic structures (potentially capable of resolving the divisions) were being devised. Local groups of activists were springing up. Money was being raised, the media contacted and allies sought. All this was happening because a very large number of feminists, socialists and radicals felt very strongly about one crucial thing: PLAC, for whatever reasons, had to be stopped — and if that wasn't possible, they at least had to be slowed down.

The Anti-Amendment Campaign, in the summer of 1982, launched itself on an unsuspecting public: a public that didn't even suspect there was such a thing as an Amendment — or if they did, suspected that nobody in their right minds would oppose it. Uptil now the Great Abortion Referendum Saga had been existing on the "fringes" of society. A fight between "extremists" that had not yet entered the "real world" of bourgeois politics. That was soon to change. On November 2nd 1982, on the eve of the *third* election during this Saga, Fianna Fáil issued the text of what was eventually to become the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution — the shit hit the fan.

Part 2: The shit Hits the Fan, taking the story up to Referendum day, will appear in the Dec/Jan issue.

Nuclear Disarmament: a classless issue?

John Goodwillie

There are about 50,000 nuclear warheads in the world, enough to kill everybody alive several times over. A nuclear war would probably bring those who survived back to the Stone Age, if humanity could continue to exist at all.

Nuclear disarmament is therefore in the interests of everybody. Yet when you observe those who are campaigning for nuclear disarmament around the world, they are not a precise opinion-poll sample of society. The prosperous middle classes, the Establishment, are under-represented. Those who hold the levers of power in society do not find it so easy to recognise the dangers which face them as well as everybody else.

Nuclear disarmament is in everyone's interest. Pollution-free air also is in everyone's interest, and yet the managers of polluting chemical plants are reluctant to get involved in campaigns against pollution, even though they themselves may die from pollution-caused diseases. Women's liberation is in the interests of men, and yet male feminists are comparatively few.

In other words, there is a discrepancy between the long-term interests of humanity, and the short-term interests of particularly privileged groups.

THE MILITARY — INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

In America, whole industries are bound up with nuclear weapons and the manufacture of the missiles and submarines that are to carry them. Military spending, which has nuclear weapons at its centre, is a major component of the economy.

30% of all research and development funds in America go on military projects. The stability of military spending and the centralisation of decision-making (decisions by the Pentagon rather than a multiplicity of decisions in the market place) mean an element of planning in the midst of the capitalist system, thus moderating the economic crises caused by the competitive market system.

A substantial section of American capitalism, then, depends on its customer: the Pentagon. President Eisenhower referred to this grouping as a "military-

industrial complex" which was not under anybody's control. The technology of weapons systems, he said, was becoming so complicated that scientists were being treated as specially wise people who could make decisions for the rest of the nation.

The arms industry, because it spends so much on research, produces a spin-off in more intensive technology throughout industry. Over a couple of decades, this means that workers' productivity was rising so fast that, although workers were getting higher wages, they were producing still higher profits for their employers.

US-based multinationals expect the American government to protect their interests abroad through an aggressive, militaristic foreign policy. To produce greater profits, capital is exported abroad where labour is cheap.

EAST-WEST RIVALRY

The development of nuclear weapons systems by the Soviet Union has, as a historical fact, generally been as a response to American developments. This is because Russia's lower level of industrial developments means that it has to devote a higher proportion of its industrial potential to armaments, thus crippling the rest of its economy.

However, this does not mean that the Russian power-structure is intrinsically peace-loving. Those engaged in military research acquire an interest in preserving their own jobs. Research and design bodies receive regular funding, rather than being created for specific projects. They work steadily on producing new systems to update old ones.

To some extent, the centrality of defence means that it can become a mechanism for changing and mobilising the Soviet economy. In the period 1957 to 1965 the arms industry managers fought against Khrushchev's decentralisation of economic management.

Soviet society is a militarised one in which the pressure of external enemies (in the post-War period of the Cold War) combines with the planned economy which, when democracy is removed, gives power to an authoritarian bureaucracy.

The defence industry receives the best materials and technology: its workers get the highest pay. The civil defence organisation has a key role in training workers in technical skills and in military propaganda.

To some extent, American/Soviet rivalry can be compared with that between rival capitalist firms: each needs to accumulate capital and to safeguard raw materials and markets by military means if economic means are not sufficient. The more closely capital and the state are linked (in the Soviet Union totally, in the West more closely than before the War) the more competition takes a military form.

Because of technical backwardness the Soviet Union competes with the West at a military level first of all. The revival of the Cold War under Reagan has followed the failure of the Russian economy to modernise through openings to the West such as international borrowing. The dependence of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Roumania on the Soviet Union has increased.

I have been attempting to show how, both in the United States and the Soviet Union, privileged groups in positions of power benefit from the arms race and will continue to push it forward, irrespective of the danger to us all. These groups are not a mere handful of people. In Russia, managers are on a low rung of a ladder which leads to power.

The same is true in America. The old-fashioned capitalist who sits with money rolling into his pocket may be a caricature. The man who decides to buy shares in a company making arms is nowadays quite likely to be a salaried manager in an insurance company investing a pension fund. The decisions he makes may not directly affect his own income but he is still aiming to enlarge as much as possible the capital that he is investing; and that is the way that the old-fashioned capitalist behaved.

Stretching down from the decision-makers is a whole transmission belt of managers and professional people whose whole way of life is bound up with the maintenance of capitalism. Journalists provide them with ideas to help their

aims. The arms industry directly employs vast numbers of scientists. Lawyers and accountants often move up into higher management.

THE QUESTION OF PEACE

Let us move back to the fundamental question: how is the world to get out of the slide towards Armageddon? Some people think that we can move towards the establishment of international order by agreement, by creating an international state on the model of the national state.

But the national state was not created by agreement: it was created by force. The Irish state did not come into existence by a treaty between Dublin, Cork etc.: Ireland was unified by British rule. Unless people come from Outer Space to unify us, this way is not open to the Earth.

The United Nations is not a world government-in-waiting, which simply needs to be given more powers. It is nothing more than the sum of its

A struggle to take privilege away from those who, by birth or from favours, are now set up as a group with superior rights to others. A struggle which is in some places an actual war — it would be an insult to the people of El Salvador, for example, to demand in the name of peace that they call a halt to their struggle.

THE MULTI-TRACK STRUGGLE

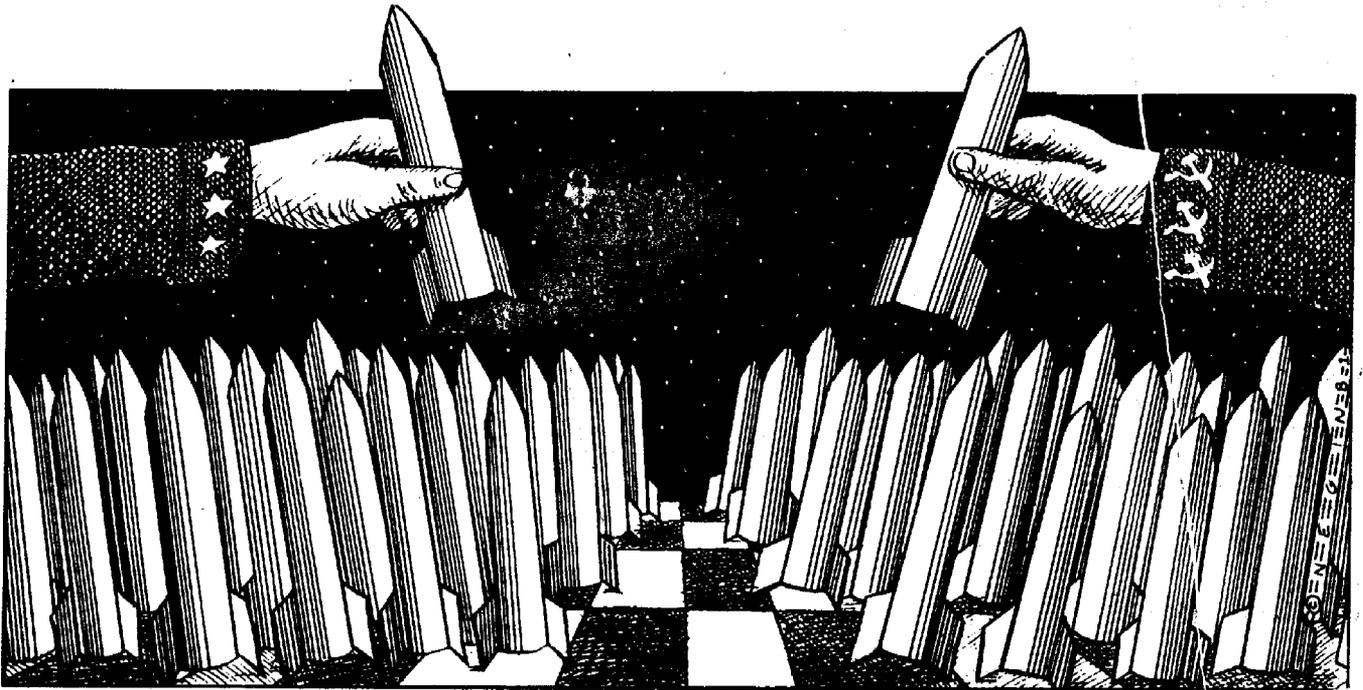
Socialists will see these struggles as the struggle for socialism. but this is not a narrow, one-track struggle. Those who work for sexual liberation, for the protection of the environment, for a secular society, for any cause which increases the control of ordinary people over their own surroundings, are all working in the same direction even though they may not yet recognise the same goal. They are all opposing one or other aspect of that Establishment which is placed on top of the existing society and which can rule only through oppression, through lies, through hatred, through war.

the movements for peace, they can create movements of clear purpose and unstoppable force.

The working class is tied to the Establishment by few links. It is not suffused with the respectability which shies away from mass demonstrations. Even those sections of the working class which are employed by the arms industry can find in planning for the conversion of their industries to peaceful uses a sense of taking control over their own work and their own lives.

None of this is to suggest that a non-working-class background disqualifies anybody from working for nuclear disarmament, any more than it disqualifies anybody from working for socialism. All I am suggesting is that any effective peace movement will be skewed in its composition.

If it includes a high proportion of women, it is at least partly because women have ceased to take political dictation from their menfolk. If it includes clergy and people active in their churches,



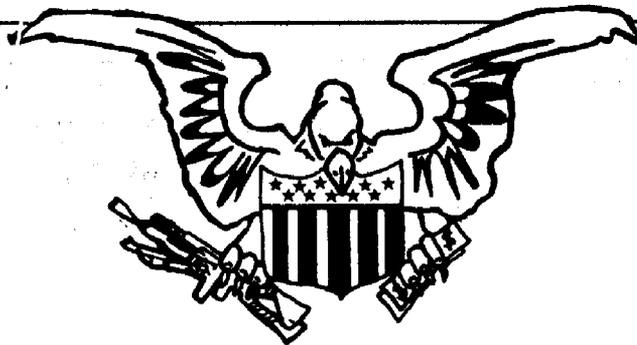
members. It can do useful technical work like exchanging weather information or allocating radio frequencies. It can engage in peacekeeping work only when the Great Powers do not feel that their vital interests are at stake. It can do virtually nothing to keep the peace between the Great Powers, and it cannot get the power to keep the peace unless the Great Powers surrender their sovereignty to their enemies.

Peace, then, is not something which can come to us like manna from heaven. The struggle for peace is part of a great popular struggle to take power away from those who now hold and misuse it.

The Great Powers are driving to war because of the nature of the ruling elites. To expect the elites to come to a lasting rational agreement and disarm is to expect them to dismantle themselves, something which is unprecedented in history. Only the pressure of popular movements, East and West, can force them to do what they do not want to do.

Those popular movements, made up of atomised citizens brought together by a few shared ideas, shared hopes, find it difficult to move as cohesive forces. But if the working people, brought together every day by their work in factories, in offices, place themselves at the centre of

it is not so much that it has won over part of the Establishment, it is more that Christianity is ceasing to be part of the official ideology in most Western countries; the clergy are no longer expected to spend so much time blessing guns and bombs and are freer to remember the inspirations on which the early Church was built. If the movement includes few who are inspired by the massive visions of the Treaty of Rome, it is because the strengthening of Irish neutrality and the building of nuclear-free zones seem a more direct route to peace than the co-ordination of Irish security with the European members of NATO.



THE CARIBBEAN BASIN: A US CREATION TO DEFEND US INTERESTS

Peadar Kirby

President Reagan has at least the virtue of honesty. In his major address to the joint houses of the US Congress on April 27th last he did not seek to evoke any noble-sounding ideals with which to justify US involvement in the Caribbean. "Our lifeline to the outside world," he called it and he went on to explain why: "Two-thirds of all our foreign trade and petroleum pass through the Panama Canal and the Caribbean. In a European crisis, at least half of our supplies for NATO would go through these areas by sea."

Though little recognised internationally, the Caribbean has in the last 20 years become one of the areas of major strategic interest to the United States. While defending their interests in Central America has in recent years been to the forefront of Washington's concerns in the region, arguably the threat posed to those interests by any significant shift in the balance of power in the Caribbean itself would be even greater since it could directly jeopardise their supply lines in a way a Left-wing Government in Nicaragua or El Salvador never could.

The recognition in Washington that significant progressive forces are emerging in various Caribbean states has led the current Administration to invent a new geopolitical term giving the appearance of unity and dependence on the United States to a region up to now lacking these. This term is *Caribbean Basin* made up, its critics point out, of Spanish, French, English and Dutch speaking states, some of them still colonies, and many still maintaining much closer economic and political links to their present or previous colonial powers than to each other.

The major US initiative bearing this new title which just last July finished its tortuous two-year passage through Congress, the Caribbean Basin Initiative, makes no attempt to hide the political motivation of its aid provisions. Not only are the region's Left-wing Governments of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada explicitly excluded, but other conditions for receipt of benefits under the Initiative include agreement on criteria regarding expropriation or nationalisation, having an extradition agreement with the US, not allowing state broadcasting companies use US copyright material without consent and agreement on not providing

preferences to products from other developed countries over and above those provided to US products. Far from recognising the existence of a Caribbean Basin and trying to aid its economic development, the CBI is designed to create such an entity and make it safe for US interests.

THREATS TO WASHINGTON

Ever since the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 the US has maintained a major strategic interest in the Caribbean region. The first serious threat to this was the coming to power of Fidel Castro in Cuba in 1959, a fact to which Washington has never been able to accommodate itself. Military intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 was designed to prevent any similar political moves by that country. Similarly the unique status granted to Puerto Rico in 1952 as the only US Commonwealth state was designed to deflect demands for independence by granting all the benefits of being US citizens while maintaining a large measure of internal self-government. This allowed Puerto Rico to be turned into the largest US military base among any of the Caribbean islands.

But the second factor which has created a new instability in the region began with British decolonisation. From the independence of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962 up to the independence of the last British associated state in the Caribbean, St Kitts-Nevis, last September 19th, nine new independent countries have been created among the islands alone. Linked to the same wave of decolonisation has been the independence of the mainland states of Guyana and Belize from Britain and Surinam from the Netherlands. Furthermore, a strong independence movement on the Dutch island colony of Aruba off the coast of Venezuela, virtually controlled by the two US multinationals, Exxon and W.R. Grace, makes its independence likely in the not too distant future though whether in conjunction with its neighbouring islands of Curacao and Bonaire it is not clear.

The recent cases of Jamaica and Grenada illustrate the threat which Washington feels from this chain of new states. The former Jamaican Prime Minister, Michael Manley, during his eight years in Government from 1972 to 1980 did lead a shift in his Peoples' National party to

Central America and the Caribbean



what he calls "democratic socialism", a rather tame social democratic alternative to dependent capitalism or state socialism as in Cuba. However, moves such as his imposition of a production levy on bauxite, the lead he took in trying to organise a bauxite cartel along the lines of OPEC, his agrarian reform and encouragement of rural co-operatives frightened Washington. As serious in their eyes as the concrete measures he was taking at home was his leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement and his friendship with Fidel Castro.

The last straw came when, after some years of imposing IMF-dictated austerity measures, the Manley Government broke off negotiations with the Fund within months of the 1980 general election. They would find other sources of finance, more sympathetic to the political goals of the Government, Manley said. It is now widely accepted that US funds were used to influence the outcome of the 1980 election and Manley himself has taken the country's only daily newspaper, *The Daily Gleaner*, to court for what he charged was the campaign of slander it waged against him in the run-up to that election. However, the abject failure of the strict capitalist economics of the present Seaga Government to lead any economic recovery, as well as its obvious subservience to Washington, has given Manley back a substantial lead in opinion polls, a factor unprecedented in the first term of any Jamaican Government.

THE CASE OF GRENADA

If Jamaica's next election, due in 1985, may signal a further shift in power in the largest English speaking island state, developments in one of the smallest island

states, Grenada, since the revolution in 1979 have caused grave concern in Washington. This has been most publicly manifested in President Reagan's televised address last March 23rd in which he charged that the international airport being built on Grenada is part of a Soviet-Cuban military build-up in the region. During the same address he produced satellite photographs of the airport site which he described as "declassified" and pointed to the huts in which the Cuban workers helping in the construction live and four large oil storage tanks as supposed proof of his allegations.

What he failed to mention is that Grenada is the only one of the island states not to have an international airport of its own, that plans for the new airport were finalised during the Government of the previous Prime Minister, Eric Gairy, and that the length of the runway, given by Reagan as 10,000 feet which again he alleged was evidence of his charges — is in fact 9,000 feet and as such shorter than that in neighbouring St Lucia, Barbados, Guadeloupe and Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore the production of a supposed 'declassified' photograph of the airport puzzled Grenadians since many inhabitants of the capital, St George's, drive out to the site and wander freely along the runway or through the semi-completed terminal buildings regularly; President Reagan would have got better photographs if he had visited the island and done the same, many said.

The charges about the airport are, however, only the tip of the iceberg. The Minister of National Mobilisation Mr Selwyn Strachan, detailed for me the attempts of the US Administration to block economic assistance to the island. These include blocking World Bank and IMF loans, sending a representative to Brussels to put pressure

on EEC Governments not to attend a conference organised there by the Grenadian Government to get EEC help for building the airport, and efforts to get the Caribbean Development Bank to agree to exclude Grenada from receiving its loans as a condition for receipt of a US grant. While none of these have been entirely successful they have caused difficulties for the revolutionary government in carrying out its ambitious economic and social plans.

Its social advances have included introducing free schooling and health care, developing a regular and efficient bus system throughout the island, giving free milk to all children and carrying out a literacy campaign which has reduced illiteracy from around 11 per cent to 4 per cent. Ms Jeanette Dubois, president of the Grenadian Trade Union Congress this year, told me that even after four years of the revolution the people have begun to take these social services for granted.

The main thrust of the Government's economic plan is to reduce dependence on the island's three traditional crops of nutmeg, bananas and cocoa which, up to the revolution, accounted for 93 per cent of its export earnings. No less than most other Third World countries, the Grenadian economy has been at the mercy of volatile world prices for its few export crops. Thus, even though the revolution stimulated an increase in output of its main traditional export earner, nutmeg, a drop in world demand has meant that the Government has had to store some 7.6 million lbs. whereas its average amount stored is some 3 million lbs. Similarly though output of its cocoa crop has been maintained, world prices have dropped from £2,200 per ton in 1978-'79 down to £950-£1,000 in 1981 and have only risen slightly to £1,300 now.

While Grenada's food exports have been earning less the Government discovered that 70 per cent of the calories in the national diet come from imported food. Therefore it has sought to develop more local production of food for internal consumption, a task facilitated by the lush vegetation of the island and therefore the possibilities of growing more if the land was properly prepared. For the first time also a fishing fleet has been established, helped by the gift of four trawlers from Cuba, and a fisheries school set up. A land reform law has forced owners of idle lands over 100 acres to either farm them or else enter into negotiations to lease or sell them. The state also inherited 27 state farms from the previous Gairy regime which, through more efficient management, have increased their output. State agro-processing plants have been established and a state bank alongside the private banking system to give small and medium farmers and businessmen easier access to funds for development.

Though the Government considers the growing state sector as vital to economic diversification a new investment code had guaranteed the private sector a role in the economy and gives them generous incentives to move from their traditional concentration in importing and marketing into more direct production. The revolution of March 1979 therefore has given an enormous boost to an economy which suffered from decades of effective neglect under the Governments of Eric Gairy who first achieved power in 1951. He appeared more interested in UFOs, on which subject he addressed the United Nations of which Grenada became a member after independence in 1974.

Under Gairy however thousands emigrated, principally to the United States. Their remittances to family members on the island totalled 41 million dollars in 1981. Ultimately the improvement since the revolution can be summed up in the drop in unemployment from 49 per cent at the time of Gairy's overthrow in March 1979 to 14.2 per cent last year and the rising growth rates in the economy which reached 5.5 per cent last year, "the highest in the western hemisphere", according to the Government.

THREATS FROM WASHINGTON

Just as the United States cannot try to overthrow the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua using the same tactics as were used to overthrow Allende in Chile since the Nicaraguan army is a creation of the revolution, so too Grenada's plans to build a popular democracy based upon the highly successful neighbourhood, women's, workers' and youth assemblies all over the island makes it impossible to replace Maurice Bishop in the same way Michael Manley was replaced. Therefore allegations by the Grenadian Government that it has discovered plans for a mercenary invasion of the island instigated by the US are taken seriously by most Grenadians.

The Prime Minister's repeated reminder that Grenada is the only revolutionary state in the hemisphere not to have been subject to some armed subversion orchestrated by the US has taken on greater urgency with plans now well advanced for the creation of a regional defence co-operation pact between five of Grenada's neighbours but excluding the Left-wing island's forces. The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Mr Vere Bird, may have let slip the true purpose of the pact when he said recently that the region "cannot afford to have another Cuba or another Grenada . . . The whole idea behind the defence force is that if you get through today in your island, don't forget there will be forces in all the other islands and you will have to answer to them."

The case of Grenada therefore, apart from charting a new model of development evoking considerable interest among people in its neighbouring states despite extreme media distortion of the Grenadian reality throughout the region, is the single greatest threat to US dominance there since Fidel Castro marched into Havana in January 1959. As such, despite its small size, it does radically alter the uneasy balance of forces that Washington has been forced to live with over the past 20 years. It can be taken for granted that such a shift is already meeting with various responses of which the CBI and the creation of a regional defence force excluding Grenada are only the more visible. As happened throughout Latin America with the growth of the Left in the 1960s it can be expected that defence and police forces in the English speaking Caribbean countries are being trained in the latest counter-insurgency and surveillance tactics. A sign of what can be expected from this is the recent public outcry in Jamaica over a spate of mysterious killings by the police.

Though overshadowed by the situation in Central America, the Caribbean, and especially the small English speaking states which dominate its south east, is being thrust more and more into the growing struggle between an ever more politically aware public on the one hand and an ever more reactionary and repressive US-backed oligarchy on the other.



Derek Speirs (Report)

THE *COUNTRY* AND *CITY* IN IRISH CULTURE

MARTIN McLOONE

The results of the recent Referendum seem to confirm what many people on the left have realised for a long time: that Ireland is a society rapidly polarising into a country and city divide. A lot of theoretical and political energy has gone into rationalising this reality and trying to construct strategies to cope with it.

On the one hand, it is felt that, objectively, progressive and liberal tendencies reside in the towns and cities. Therefore, increasing urbanisation and industrialisation is necessary and progressive, no matter how accomplished. On the other hand, it is felt that Ireland contains a radical tradition outside the cities and towns which, although atrophied by years of economic stagnation and emigration, can still be harnessed to the progressive struggles of the cities to complete the revolution that was betrayed by partition and civil war in 1922.

At the outer edges of this divide one

can detect on one side a "kill the kulaks" mentality and on the other "the workers and small farmers Republic" – with pious union leaders perhaps occupying a tenuous centre ground, declaring that "tax marches are not anti-farmer".

There are a number of points which I think are crucial in the make-up of these attitudes. Firstly, as with so much debate about left strategies today, the battleground is really in history – or, more precisely, the *construction* of Irish history for ideological and political purposes. Secondly, I think that in Ireland not enough attention has been paid, until recently at least, to the *cultural* constructions that have flowed from this – and, more importantly, the political significance of such construction.

Thirdly, there is in Irish history and culture a missing or *secondary discourse* – the discourse of the city and the urban working class whose political and social struggles and cultural life has been

constantly downgraded in favour of the dominant discourse of rural struggles and rural culture. Fourthly, overlaying all this, there has been a tendency, arising out of *nationalist* constructions of Irish history and culture, to view Ireland as unique in its developments – an attitude which reaches its most logical conclusion in the xenophobic nationalism of the Free State and De Valera's Republic, and leading (most absurdly) to "Irish solutions to Irish problems".

This article grows out of a specific field of study: the role and significance of Irish television during two decades of social, political, economic and ideological changes in Irish society. The main area of interest is, in the broadest sense, cultural – though this type of study does not ignore the more fundamental significance, and possibly the primary determinant of social change, of economic factors. The point is worth stressing that this type of cultural study is

more important to the development of left political strategies than is generally recognised in Ireland. It has been more valued in Europe and latterly Britain than it has here.

CONSTRUCTING THE CULTURAL DIVIDE

The fundamental assumption, agreed by commentators of both left and right, is that Ireland has "modernised", "liberalised" and "progressed" more in the last two decades than in the previous fifty years. Whilst acknowledging that the terms used are all relative – depending on one's political position – the second assumption, again largely agreed by both left and right, is that these changes have been the result of increasing urbanisation and industrialisation. And the final assumption is that liberal and/or progressive values are more likely to be found in urban society than in rural society.

On the one hand, the urban bourgeoisie is seen to be the basis for a more vibrant bourgeois liberalism, while on the other hand, the growing urban working class hopes for a more vibrant socialism. In this context, the Referendum result looks both logical and even comforting.

Is it logical to read back into Irish history and assume that this was always the case? Were the Land League and the land wars inherently "non-progressive"? the historical antecedents of Dublin 1916 and the Irish Free State rather than Dublin 1913 and the Socialist Republic. Today's positions on the Irish left are largely dictated by how these questions are answered.

What cultural studies can elucidate is how, at one level, the "lived experience" of Irish society – its ideological construction – was formed in the past and, by extension, how today's "lived experience" has developed.

This leads us back to the country/city divide. Ireland's ideological development is not unique unto itself as is sometimes maintained, usually by conservative nationalist interpretations. Rather, Ireland shows a *culturally-specific inflection* of movements or ideologies that are also apparent in other developed capitalist societies. For example, in the 1970s Ireland reached a significant moment: the change from a largely agricultural/rural society to a largely industrialised/urban society. Britain reached the same moment of change around 1850 and the United States around 1914. In both these countries dominant cultural attitudes to country and city show significant similarities to the Irish experience.

For example, in 19th century English

literature there is a constant attraction, even nostalgia, for a pre-industrial "organic" community, rural in character and traditional in values. In the United States the valorisation of the western pioneer community was done, not in the "Wild West" itself, but in the Eastern cities of New York, Chicago, Boston etc. Even in utopian socialist writing of the period, that of William Morris for example, the Socialist Society was always seen in terms of a pre-industrial (or post-industrial) organic rural community.

This opposition of country and city was largely seen in biblical terms: the rural serenity of the Garden of Eden in utter contrast to the dark satanic mills belching the smoke and sulphur of the cities. Heaven and Hell.

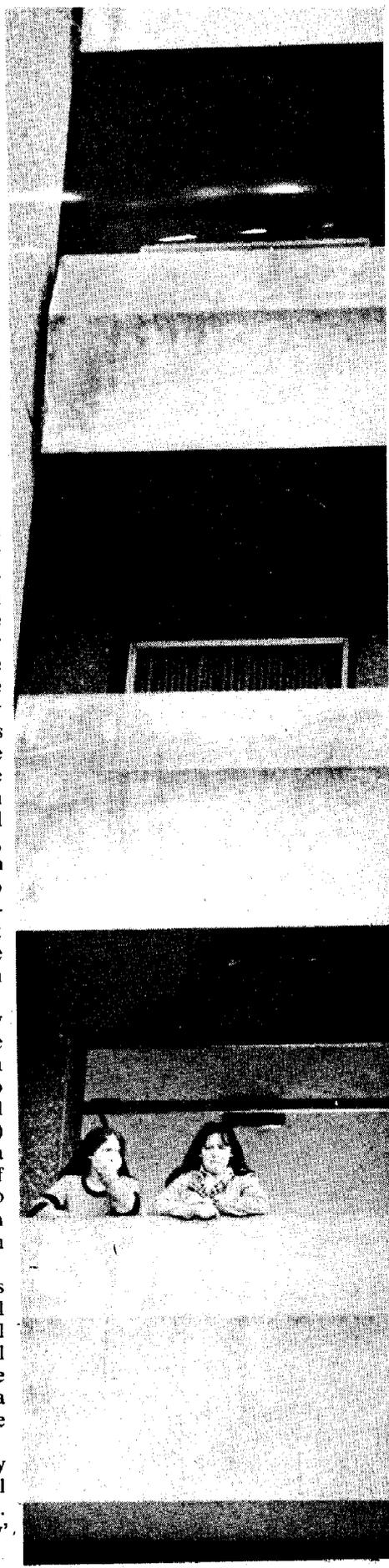
THE PECULIAR IRISH CONTEXT

In Irish culture the construction was the same but the context crucially different. The Garden of Eden construction of Irish rural life is a central element in the Irish cultural nationalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For example, in Yeats's romanticism of the Irish peasant, Gaelic folklore and the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy (rural, if rather large, landowners!) one can detect his utter disgust for the urban bourgeoisie and working class. For all their subtle differences, the same anti-urban "organicism" of Yeats can also be found in Charles Kickham's *Knocknagow*, Somerville and Ross's *An Irish RM*, in Lady Gregory's plays and right down to De Valera's concept of "frugal self-sufficiency". Synge's suggestion that everything in the Garden was not so fine brought the house down in the Abbey in 1907.

The Irish construction of rural society was, however, crucially different in one respect. Whilst "organicism" in Britain and the United States was a reaction to native urban industrial society, in Ireland (a largely non-industrial society anyway) this reaction was overlaid with a nationalist element: the rejection of *British* industrial society. One small step took that into religion: *Protestant* British industrial society. The Garden of Eden was to be Catholic.

The cultural ideology of De Valera's Ireland reflected the protectionist, rural character of his "frugal self-sufficiency". Not only a tariff wall was erected around Ireland to protect the economy from outside competition, but a cultural wall as well to protect the people from foreign cultural competition.

This construction of the city/country divide in Ireland has, then, a historical logic that is thoroughly contemporary. Dublin especially – the 'Strumpet City'



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— was not only the site of base moral values, it had also prostituted itself to the English for centuries (only redeeming itself at Easter 1916). If this sounds outlandish, consider the attitude of Julia Vaughan of PLAC who attributed Dun Laoghaire's emphatic "No" vote in the Referendum to its British allegiances.

In this kind of cultural climate the secondary nature of urban working class struggles in Irish history is understandable, and figures like Larkin and Connolly problematic. A Catholic Truth Society pamphlet, written in the mid-Sixties by Monsignor Peter McKeivitt, on Connolly's patriotism and his espousal of socialism is instructive. McKeivitt summarises:

"To Connolly as a patriot we can all pay tribute and his zeal for reform stimulates us to greater efforts. But to ask us to accept him as a complete guide is to expect more than he can give. The world of 1913 has been left far behind by now, and of the new world, he can have had no pre-vision . . . His death gives us the proof, as it gives us the chance to promote justice without violating justice. He should not be made the instrument of those (Marxist, MM) who would perpetuate the errors he held in good faith. That would be a betrayal rather than a veneration."

Thus for the Catholic nationalist Connolly's Marxism was an error. The drive to expel the unruly urbanites from the national celebration of 1916 in 1966 was an important ideological project for both the Catholic Church and the State.

THE ROLE OF TELEVISION

Television by 1966, had established itself in over 85% of Irish homes, with a slightly higher percentage in urban as opposed to rural households. Indeed, the

fiftieth anniversary celebrations of 1916 were conducted in large measure on television.

The problem of establishing television's role in the changing Ireland of the Sixties and the Seventies is a complex one. On the one hand, the very existence of a national television network was a result itself of deeper structural changes in the economy. On the other hand, it is commonplace to attest the importance of programmes like the *Late Late Show* in raising a wide range of issues like divorce, contraception, abortion and so on.

What I would suggest is that television brought into Irish culture in its most popular form, this secondary discourse of the urban working class, largely ignored or travestied in the visual arts, literature and theatre. This was achieved through a range of different programme formats.

RTE current affairs programmes, for example, brought onto the cultural/political agenda: trade union affairs, the largely unheard Voice of the working class in Dublin, the problems of the inner cities and urban issues like social amenities, housing problems, unemployment and so on. In drama, RTE produced a number of urban serials: *Tolka Row* (Dublin), *Southside* (Cork), *The Spike* and *The Burke Enigma*; also a number of one-off plays: *A Week in the Life of Martin Cluxton* and *Hatchet*.

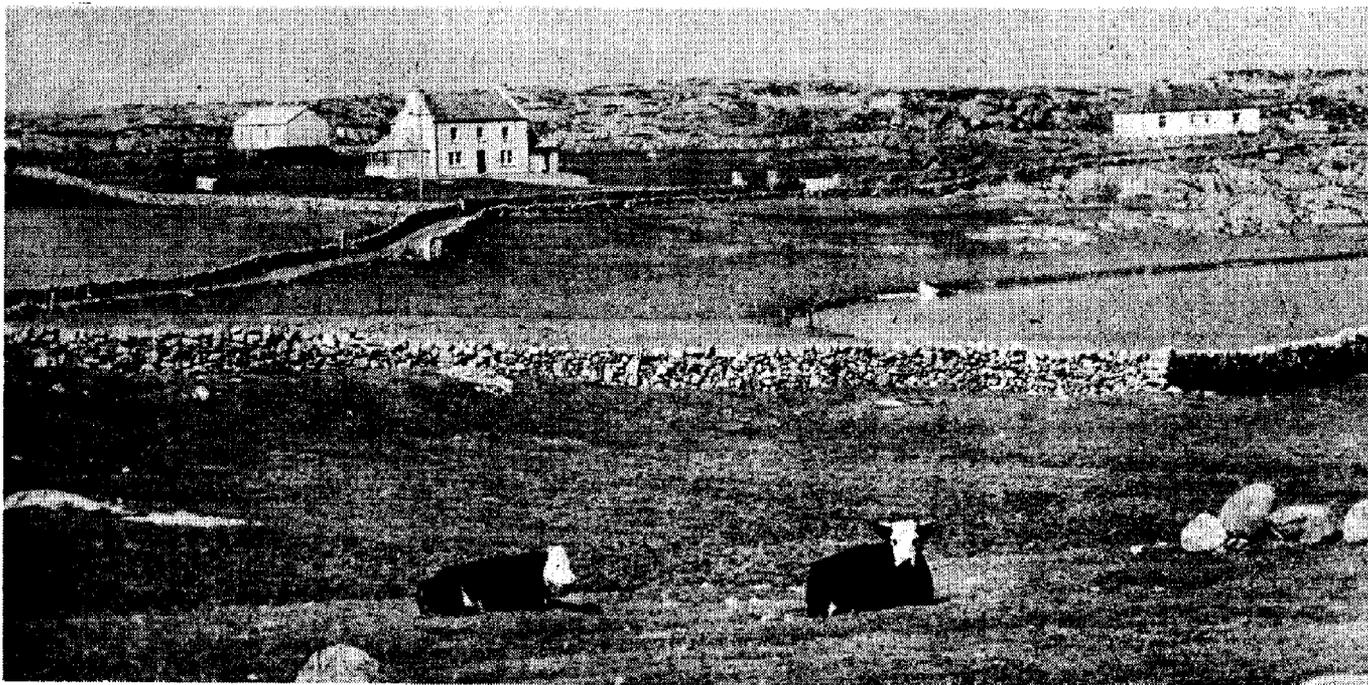
In a visual culture dominated by romantic rural images, these counter images of urban life, no matter how problematic, were of great ideological significance. Of course, they were not always universally welcomed. Sometimes the issues raised hit too close to home for comfort — as in the celebrated case of the *Seven Days* programme on moneylending; or the images of urban life were a little too "realistic" — as in the

case of *The Spike*. On occasion the "traditional values" of Ireland were invoked to condemn the values of RTE programmes. Throughout the Sixties and early seventies there was a tirade of abuse hurled at Montrose and the dangerous Dublin liberals for the undermining of rural values.

It is in establishing and pursuing this urban discourse that television in Ireland has been an important force at the ideological level for progress. However, a very different and much more complicated question is *how* television represents the Irish working class.

It has often been claimed that television is a neutral observer on the real world and that, in documentary or drama, it strives for "realism". What this claim ignores is the fact that television's images and messages, no matter how realistic, are themselves constructions. They are chosen, edited, presented and mediated by a process perfected over twenty years or more by now. Television is a *cultural representation* of reality, not reality itself — and this is as true for *The News* and *Today Tonight* as it is for *Tolka Row* or *The Spike*.

It is, then, no comfort to sit back and hope that by continuing to push urban reality onto the screens television will banish forever the illiberal, conservative ideology of rural Ireland. The Referendum has shown that there is still a long way to go. Though no cultural form has the ability to influence in a profound, fundamental manner, it can be an enormous weapon in achieving change. But one necessary prerequisite is for the Left in Ireland to realise that cultural politics is an area of struggle. Proper engagement with popular cultural forms and the mass media should be an essential part of political strategy.



RECORD REVIEWS

NO FREEDOM HERE

A SENSE OF FREEDOM — Wolfe Tones. Triskel Records.

A group which takes the name of a Protestant nationalist rebel as its own, which sings of Fenian men, the Dublin Brigade and James Connolly, which has records banned by RTE and whose closing performance of the evening almost invariably have people shouting and raising clenched fists in the air, would seem almost by definition to be a progressive, maybe even revolutionary, group.

Twenty years on, the Wolfe Tones are still striving to be seen as such. For this album sleeve they pose in front of the Garden of Remembrance in Dublin, they sing about the fight of the Irish, the Americans and the Argentinians against the British. They close the album with a song about Joe McDonnell, one of the ten H-Block prisoners to die on hunger strike in 1981.

Not only have the sentiments not changed in 20 years, the music has not been touched either. Even the line-up is the same — the same musicians, the same instruments singing the same kind of songs, just a little mellower, occasionally sweetened or softened with wallpaper strings.

The Spinners and Peter, Paul and Mary were on the road when the Wolfe Tones started. They have kept going, too, following an unchanged formula. Nobody would ever think of them as anything but conservative. The Wolfe Tones, whose schedule of summer residences in tourist resorts has occupied the same prominent hoarding in Dublin Airport's arrivals area since the new airport terminal was built are also profoundly conservative. How else would they have Haughey groupie Oliver Barry as manager and Frank Delaney, Liam O'Murchu and Michael Hand (editor of the *Sunday Independent*) as sleeve-note writers?

This album consists almost entirely of new, original songs which are neither new nor original in style and content. All but two fall into the plinkety-plonk-banjo-over-two-note-base-line routine or the fast waltz. Most of the choruses are sung by the four group members in unison, and the passage back to

the verse is marked by a four-bar or eight-bar break on banjo, mouth organ or whistle.

The added strings suggest Brendan Shine. But where he might sing of lovely Leitrim, Limerick or Listowel, the Wolfe Tones sing of manly stuff, of battles, flags, and foes. These once brave warriors, who risked something 20 years ago are now prisoners of their own routine, taking not a single risk. What was once rebel stuff is now only rabble stuff.

The words are forced into the pre-determined musical framework, producing phrases like "they nobly did show", "I found for me a wife", "her poets they were many", and so on. Regardless of the subject matter, the historical setting, or the different attitudes of the songs, they start with "come listen all me true men", or "come boys and I'll tell you a story". The rhymes are taken from a mini-dictionary of rhymes. The compliments are standard: men are "gallant", "bold" and "of great renown"; Ireland is "ancient".

It is that kind of unthinking approach to the music, indeed, the reassurance which the Wolfe Tones give with each album that they will do nothing to upset the routine, that makes of them not just musical conservatives, but reactionaries.

Musically and politically, they spring from, and reproduce, that which is inward-turned and backward-looking in Irish nationalism. It tells us much about the political shallowness of the "current phase of the Irish struggle," as some latter-day separatists in the Wolfe Tone tradition would call it, that its music has been in the restricting tradition of the Wolfe Tones.

Some smart ass recently came up with the phrase that the Moving Hearts are "the political wing of the Wolfe Tones", a phrase often repeated for a laugh in would-be culturally aware circles. It reflects a deeply philistine attitude, both because it shunts conservative nationalism into radical republicanism and because it takes the political content of the music as being the words alone.

A Sense of Freedom closes with the Derek Warfield song about Joe McDonnell, one of the better tracks on the LP with an unusual twist to the melody. It remains crude, mythologising nonsense, starting with "O me name is Joe McDonnell, From Belfast town I came" and going on to plot his course to death on hunger strike through thinking about why "my country was divided" and a



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decision to "shake bold freedom's hand". The height of McDonnell's aspirations is in the line, "I pray to God my life is not in vain".

Compared with *Open Those Gates*, the Moving Hearts' song about Nicky Kelly, it evaporates completely. The Hearts' number has several layers in its arrangement, introduces new part-melodies right through the end, underscores its assertive, demanding lines with a strongly physical, pushy rhythm track. There are many different hooks to hang on to; the listener can participate actively in the song.

And therein lies the key difference. Both in their repetition and in the presentation of individual songs and of their whole programme, the Wolfe Tones demand unquestioning allegiance. They belt it out and they keep it simple in order to command that passive support. They represent not "a sense of freedom" but the authoritarianism of conservative Irish nationalism.

BRIAN TRENCH

NOT YER USUAL DIRGE

**HIT PARADE (EP). Bad
News. Crass Records. 80p.**

Political protest in musical form is an ancient Irish tradition. I don't know whether the people who produced this record would see it as a descendant of such songs as *Kevin Barry*, but it is. I am glad to say, however, that it is not the usual dirge accompanied on a Spanish guitar.

I don't think that those of us who live outside the six counties can ever realise just what it is like to exist under British Occupation. I for one only get occasional glimpses such as being surrounded by troops in riot

gear on a recent Nicky Kelly demo at the Curragh, or an elderly relative "coming down" in fear of the violence on "the 12th . . . and now this record.

This is an angry record. The main male voice chants out words to a rhythmic beat with clever use of tapes of things like Thatcher doing her Saatchi and Saatchi or the RUC informers telephone line.

There are four songs on this EP; *Here's what you find in any prison*; *More faces*; *Bad News* and *H-Block*. The third is to my mind the best but my mum prefers the first, so there you go.

Bad News reminds me of an old Frank Zappa track where he sings about the slime coming out from your video — it must be weird to watch shoot-outs between troops and your neighbours on the telly. The political sentiments are stronger than the music but no harm when one thinks of all the crappy records about. I'd rather have this record than all the Abba albums — never mind Demis Roussos eh!

The EP comes with a most excellent sleeve which folds out into a sheet, itself a hard-hitting bit of propaganda with good layout and photo-montage. One quote I noted was from John Taylor, ex-Minister of State for Home Affairs in the NI government, who, on the 18th of July 1971, said: "I would defend without hesitation the action taken by the authorities in Derry against subversives during the past week or so when it was necessary in the end to actually shoot to kill. I feel that it may be necessary to shoot even more in the forthcoming months in Northern Ireland."

The record costs 80p plus postage with all proceeds going to the Prisoners' Book Scheme and can be obtained from: *Just Books, 7 Winetavern St, Belfast 7*. I don't know whether it's available in any southern outlets but if enough people ask for it it may even be banned by RTE.

NICK PLUMBER

PAMPHLET REVIEWS

Maybe it's just my imagination but there seems to have been something of a dearth of political pamphlets over the last couple of years. Good ones anyway. And that's a pity if, like me, you can afford neither the time or the money for many academic tomes and yet appreciate a more in-depth analysis of an issue than you generally find in the left party papers. Though I suppose there is *Gralton*.

I don't know why there has been this dearth. The economics of publishing anything of only minority appeal is, of course, very dodgy these days but I suspect it really has more to do with the current lack of political ideas on the Left, or at least a lack of confidence in publicly promoting them.

But there are exceptions. The five political pamphlets briefly reviewed here have all been published within the last few months and you will find them in left or progressive bookshops – or failing that you can get them direct from their respective publishers. Together they would cost less than four quid.

JOHN CANE

NOT THE THREE WISE MEN

JOBS AND WAGES. Socialist Economists. Price £1.50. 64 pages.

This pamphlet needs little introduction. Almost unique for a publication of the Left it has received "respectable" publicity. More important, the arguments it contains are already being seized upon by sections of the labour and trade union movements.

And that's all to the good because the central argument of the authors: that wage moderation is *not* the solution to Ireland's economic problems – is both useful and timely for trade unionists. The argument is supported by a wealth of well-presented data on international labour costs, labour costs as a proportion of total costs, the relation of labour costs to profits, jobs and inflation and so on. It's an authoritative slap-in-the-teeth to the orthodox bourgeoisie

economists, personified by the Three Wise Men of 1981 fame, whose "wage rises equal job losses" chorus has held such sway recently.

Left at that this pamphlet would have been more than adequate. But the authors have chosen to tack on a final chapter – "New Dimensions to wages policy" – which, instead of promoting "wage militancy" in opposition to "wage moderation", explores a range of measures whereby Irish workers can help Irish bosses become more efficient and thus more competitive: essentially, wage moderation in return for some role in decision-making.

Now there are arguments for and against this approach. In my opinion, it was unwise of the authors to use this pamphlet to propogate – in an extremely sketchy manner at odds with the rigorous treatment of the central argument – one side of this contentious issue. It deserves another and different pamphlet.

Perhaps we'll get it too. The production of this pamphlet was accomplished by an ad-hoc group of socialist economists from different party-political backgrounds with funding from sympathetic unions. Such an initiative is most rare and most welcome. It should be tried again. Indeed, a permanent independent propaganda and resource service for the trade union and labour movement, along the lines of the British Labour Research Department, should be the long-term goal.

written by ex-SLP economist Roger Cole, is the result – the *only* tangible result – of an experiment called the Socialist Forum. This was an occasional discussion forum for members of the Labour Left, Communist Party, Socialist Labour Party and some independant socialists. It fell apart with the demise of the SLP and is now defunct. That left an agreed "alternative economic strategy" document somewhat up in the air. It has now appeared, by kind permission of the CPI, into a political vacuum – thus the lack of impact.

The document itself attempts to "revise and update" a similar document produced by a similar grouping, the Left Alternative, in 1976 which went under the curious title of "Go To Work, Ireland". Having spent some time at the LSE, I'm not competent to judge the merits of the economic strategy proposed here as a policy to be persued by a future socialist government. The search for the holy AES goes on apace both in Britain and Ireland. This is a valuable contribution and deserves study by those involved.

Too much concentration by Iris socialist economists on blueprints for a majority socialist government might, however, be a little self-indulgent when such circumstances are in the realms of utopia. How about strategies for even holding what we have?

JOBS AND WAGES

The True Story of Competitiveness

Britain
Ireland tops
profitability
league

29%

The highest
return on
fixed capital
investment in
the world

Ireland - the most profitable industrial location in Europe

© Ireland A

Published by socialist economists

May 1983

ANOTHER RED BLUEPRINT

AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR IRELAND. Socialist Forum. Price: 50p. 16 pages.

Same general subject: economics; very different pamphlet. From the glossy and influential to the homely and unremarked: the *real* left in Ireland, god bless us all.

It's not glossy because there is no money behind it. The reason it has gone largely unremarked is more complicated. This pamphlet,

AN INTERIM REPORT

CLONDALKIN: a worker's victory. Communist Party. Price 30p. 20 pages.

One such strategy – resisting closures by the sit-in tactic – has, in fact, now found its way into print – again courtesy of the CPI. This is the story of the Clondalkin saga. It is written by Peter Keating, CPI member and the FWUI official who has played a leading role in one of the most important struggles in recent labour history.

It is, of course, unfortunate that this pamphlet proclaims a *victory* for the workers. Since publication that is again in question with the failure of the government to actually re-start production.

There are not enough "rank and file" experiences in print on the

Irish Left. As a result struggles remain confined to those involved, "lessons" are not shared with others and the biased reporting of the bourgeois media remains the received "wisdom". An "alternative voice" is welcome.

To be honest, this particular pamphlet leaves much to be desired. Concentrating on negotiations with the management and government, it lacks an adequate description of the grass roots organisation. This could have been overcome by the simple device of including comments from the workers themselves. Also, despite a useful checklist of lessons from the struggle, it fails to explore a central question: how special a case is Clondalkin? Nevertheless, as an interim report, this pamphlet is well worthwhile.

IN SEARCH OF A ROLE

TOPICAL ISSUES FOR WOMEN AT WORK.

Trade Union Womens' Forum. Price: £1.00. 44 pages.

The Trade Union Womens' Forum is a body in search of a role. Hesitating to organise women in a campaign to *change* the male-dominated trade union movement, it has often fallen back into being merely a "club" for higher-up trade union women. It has, however, proved extremely valuable in the work it has done defining, researching and propagating "women's issues" within the existing trade union structure. This pamphlet falls within that function.

It is a collection of essays on the topics that TUWF has been interested in recently. There is no overall theme to the contributions yet one does tentatively emerge: that problems associated with "equalisation" as women fully enters the workforce leads to a fundamental questioning of the structure of work itself in a capitalist and patriarchal society.

This is touched upon in the contributions on Part-time workers (largely women) and Night Work (which has recently been opened up to women). It is directly confronted in a stimulating essay on Time versus Money by Rosheen Callender which argues that the total work situation (paid and unpaid) is organised to suit men and that radical changes in working hours, worksharing, community services etc would be needed before a true equality could be achieved.

Rosheen contends that these are "hot, contentious *worker's* issues" rather than "women's issues". Ultimately, yes but it is male workers who *benefit* from the current situation... as well as the bosses. That defines a role for women, as women and workers, in overthrowing the system. Could it not also help define a similar role for the Trade Union Womens Forum?

THE POVERTY LOBBY

POVERTY AND POPULAR PREJUDICE. Simon Community. Price: 60p. 32 pages.

This pamphlet is a very peculiar animal. Again it is a collection of pieces - this time the texts of speeches given at a recent Simon series of public lectures. The common subject of the lectures was poverty and welfare (except for an inconsequential piece on press freedom from Vincent Browne.

The trouble is that there is no common approach to the subject. Anyone, apart from people, actually in poverty or on welfare, who has something to say was invited to say it. As a result, we are subjected to the New Right posturings of John Kelly and the, fortunately brief, waffle of Nuala Fennell alongside the radical accusations of Brendan Ryan and Stanislaus Kennedy. It makes for frustrating reading.

There are some valuable contributions along the way. Michael D. Higgins makes a spirited defence of the necessity for a state welfare system. Tony Brown calls for a political mobilisation to confront the "oppressive structures of an unequal society". Though the point seems lost on his Labour Party sister Eithne Fitzgerald who seems to think that it is important that we "take a systematic look at the loopholes" that allow welfare abuse and only concentrate on those anomalies in the welfare system that "are relatively cheap to deal with".

One presumes that Simon intended this lecture series and the resulting pamphlet to contribute something towards building a radical Poverty Lobby in Ireland. Unfortunately, I don't think it will. Let's concentrate on our own side.

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JIM GRALTON



JIM GRALTON is the only person to have been deported from the 26 Counties for political activity. Gralton was not prosecuted for any criminal offence. His offence was to have helped give the poor, the landless and the unemployed of County Leitrim the confidence to fight for themselves.

In the early Thirties, Gralton devoted himself to establishing a social hall for the people of Gowel, Leitrim. For this heinous crime he was denounced from the pulpits and the hall was eventually burned down. Finally, in 1933, the De Valera government succeeded in deporting him — despite a vigorous campaign on his behalf waged by left wing trade unionists and republicans, unemployed activists and local supporters.

Gralton's name represents a challenge to established authority, a call for people to take their fate into their own hands and an imaginative application of socialist ideas in a difficult environment. For all that, and more, he deserves to be remembered. That's why this magazine is named after him.

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A Grand Catholic Mother

The first death will probably happen something like this — not necessarily, just probably.

People will be waiting for a dramatic intervention — some SPUC nuts running to the courts for an injunction to police the reproductive system of some woman they never heard of. Maybe that will happen — later — but the first death will likely be more low-key. Probably we won't even hear about it until months after it happens. Maybe years, maybe never.

The woman will probably have acute toxæmia — maybe it will be something else, but let's say toxæmia. The woman is 24 weeks pregnant. The doctor tries to get the blood pressure down but can't. There's nothing for it but a termination by caesarian. Sad but necessary. This is a wanted baby, the woman has carried it for months. She agrees, reluctantly, with the doctor that the pregnancy should be terminated.

(Most of us would say this was the direct killing of the unborn and call it abortion and say that it's quite proper. In some quarters, however, such legal abortions are not recognised as such and are called something else.)

At this point someone intervenes. It could be the woman's husband, who desperately wants a child; her father, who desperately wants a grandchild; her brother, who read a SPUC pamphlet. Someone the woman loves, someone close who loves her. Someone who, above all, and for whatever reason, is determined that her mind, her fears, her future, the rest of her body, all will be separated from her womb. Whatever the interests of the whole woman, the womb must be allowed to do its job.

The woman says no, she could die. The husband (or whoever) says wait a week or two, just a week or two, give the wee baby a chance to live.

The woman asks the doctor. He says no, missus, you can't take the chance. The odds are you'll die if...

And the woman argues with her husband.

Up to this point it's an old story. A rare one. Mostly people would take the word of the doctor and that would be that. Following the conflicts between medical people during the Amendment campaign such trust will have been weakened. And other options have been raised. There is now a clause in the Consti-

tution which will give encouragement to those for whom the womb is a mystic thing.

At this point the husband points out that the foetus has a right to life not only in god's eyes but in the eyes of the law. God wants you to wait, to give the wee baby a chance, and so does the Constitution.

During the Amendment debate the legal argument centred on whether the courts would grant an injunction to a SPUCnik who sought to act as a third party to enforce the Amendment against a mother who was having a therapeutic abortion. Of course, the courts needn't enter into it all. The husband/father/brother argues that she should wait — that this is what the church says, what the Amendment (which she probably voted for) says, what the pope says and what god above in his heaven says. And don't mind the doctor, he

That kind of thing can happen any time, given the atmosphere of righteous and abstract morality churned up by the Amendment debate. It makes it a bit difficult to think of the Amendment business in a purely political way.

However, apart from creating the potential for the odd death here and there the Amendment has, on the whole, been a useful political development. An all-out clash had to happen sooner or later and the fact that a strong force held out against the reactionaries — despite them using their highest and most emotive card (they had babies on their posters, for christsake!) — is encouraging.

The practical effects are nil. The fact that abortion is outlawed by the constitution is meaningless. There is no effective lobby for abortion in the Republic. Achieving abortion rights through the courts

the stops, they can't be sure of victory. And defeat in any campaign where the pulpits are used heavily would be disastrous for the authority and the morale of the Catholic church. They have failed to create the moral atmosphere within which they could romp forward in triumphalism on any issue they chose. We have seen their best show — and we can live with it. (Except, maybe, a pregnant woman here and there.)

Another political effect is the forcing of ideological choices on the large political parties. They prefer populism, abstract issues, a politics in which the only thing at issue is who is the most efficient. (Housing — oh, yes, we think everyone should have a house. Education — oh, yes, we're strongly in favour of that. Jobs — oh, yes, our party is fully committed.)

Fianna Fail covered its rural grassroots. And exposed itself in the Dublin suburbs where it desperately needed votes. Within hours of the vote they were out making with the verbals — oh, yes, marital breakdown is a matter of grave concern. Oh, yes, we feeling strongly about the border.

Fine Gael split. The whizz kids are trying to hold the extremes together but Alice Glenn and her fellow saints want Young Fine Gael silenced. Young Fine Gael says openly that it aims to get rid of the Alices and the Oliver Jays.

Anything which pushes the political forces into ideological stances can't be bad in the long run.

The main achievement of the Amendment business was the forging of a liberal constituency on social issues. It's a tentative and dodgy force. Fine on contraception and divorce — but conservative as hell on a lot of issues. That constituency would, for instance, be worse than useless in campaigning against anti-trade union legislation. They would be okay on some civil liberties issues (say, if Kadar Asmal was framed for something) and most of them would come out if someone was going to be hanged. (This is an advance — anyone remember a liberal constituency when the Murrays were for the chop?) However, ask them about Nicky Kelly and you'll get a blank stare.

All in all, one step forward, one step backward and a step sideways. Not too bad. It would be fine, altogether, if we didn't have to keep one ear cocked for bad news from the maternity ward.



was probably one of those abortionists who opposed the Amendment. And, please Mary, *don't force me to go to the courts to get an injunction to make you abide by your Christian duty. You'll make a show of us.*

And the woman — if only to avoid the trauma of having a man she loves going to court to get an injunction against her — decides to wait a week or two. What's the harm, it's only a week or two. A few days later she has a stroke and dies. On the way back from the cemetery everyone is agreed that she was a grand Catholic mother, god rest her.

or whatever, without the political constituency for such a move, would be politically negative, a mere convenience, removing the need for a boat ticket and little more. If abortion was legalised in such a way tomorrow the majority of Irish women who seek abortions would probably still take the boat to England, if only for reasons of privacy. By the time such a political constituency exists the constitution will be in tatters anyway, given the prevailing political winds.

One political effect is that the reactionaries will be very much more careful in future. On a less emotive issue, even pulling out all

By Gene Kerrigan

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