

# LIBERTY News



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## GUARDED WELCOME FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS PLAN

The Minister for Labour's outline proposals for industrial relations have been given a guarded welcome by Union General President, John Carroll. Although the Minister's discussion document is still rather vague in many areas, John Carroll said there are a number of important and positive proposals that are worthy of further discussion and careful consideration.

The General President told a recent meeting of the Wexford Council of Trade Unions that the ICTU has begun to seek the views of all its affiliated unions on the Minister's discussion paper.

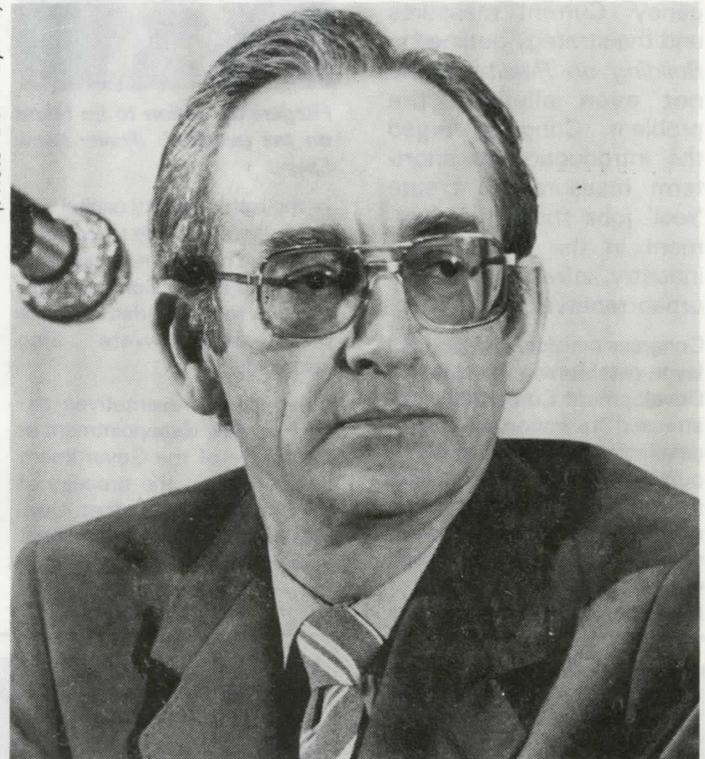
"Already there have been favourable comments and reaction to some of the ideas that the Minister is putting forward", he said, "the least of these being the obligations which would be imposed on the new Labour Relations Commission to have a statutory role in the formulation, development and review of codes of practice, which could include disclosure of information, the protection and facilities to be afforded to workers' representatives in the undertaking, consultation with workers' representatives on proposed collective redundancies, a dispute procedure which would set out the procedural stages to be followed before industrial action is taken and trade

union recognition.

"There are still vague areas in the Minister's discussion document and the trade union movement will want very detailed and ongoing discussions with him and his advisers before committing themselves to throwing out the old bath water, particularly that in which the 1906 Trade Disputes Act reposed.

"One good thing, however, does emerge and that is the Minister's intention, as he has stated it, to state the workers' positive right for strike action as against that aspect of the 1906 Act, which merely sought to offer immunity for certain actions taken in furtherance of a trade dispute.

(Photo: Derek Speirs)



Carroll: 'Minister for Labour's discussion document worthy of consideration.'

"It is too early yet for us to be totally definitive in our reaction to the Minister's ideas but he can be assured of a committed reaction from the trade union movement through the medium of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Having said this, however, and indeed in welcoming the Minister's initiative in the hope that due consultation will finally lead to agreement and not imposition of new legislation, it must be restated that the reform of industrial relations can in no way interfere with nor substitute the right, morally and socially, of the Irish trade union movement to pursue claims on behalf of its membership for improved wage rates and better employment conditions."

## ICTU BACKS DUNNES WORKERS

In a recent statement, the Executive Council of Congress expressed its serious concern at the continuance of the dispute at Dunnes Stores in Henry Street, Dublin, following the refusal of certain of the staff employed there to handle South African produce. The dispute has now lasted over 34 weeks during which time a small group of young workers have shown a persistence and a determination that has won them admiration here and abroad. Their stand on an important moral issue has been commended by politicians of all parties, churchmen and distinguished leaders of our community, and by a number of international figures.

The views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the ITGWU.

# ICTU MEETS GOVT ON ECONOMY

**NO TO LEVY 'RAID'**

Unemployment, taxation and recent developments in the public sector featured high on the agenda of Congress' recent meeting with the Government.

Congress representatives pointed out that the dramatic rise unemployment constituted a national emergency. Current measures and the strategy outlined in *Building on Reality* would not even alleviate the problem. Congress urged the introduction of short-term measures to create 'real' jobs through investment in the construction industry, infrastructure and urban renewal.

Congress criticised the long delay in establishing the National Development Corporation and stressed its important role in developing a dynamic, efficient public enterprise sector in high growth areas and in revitalising existing enterprises. Congress representatives also expressed concern about the problems of a number of State enterprises



**Fitzgerald: 'action to be taken on tax evasion'.** (Photo: Derek Speirs).

— the lack of equity capital and the State's attitude to borrowings. The need to revitalise this sector and the Congress opposition to recent demands for privatisation were also stressed.

Congress representatives expressed their disappointment at the failure of the Government to even begin the process of tax reform in the budget. Congress also criticised the manner in which the changes in income tax were structured, the lack of



**Nevin: 'Govt. abusing youth employment levy funds'.** (Photo: Derek Speirs).

movement on capital taxation, and the refusal to switch tax incentives for companies from capital to labour. They also pointed out the very serious shortcomings of the proposed land tax, and called for a vigorous campaign on tax evasion and avoidance.

Congress representatives expressed their concern about the cut-backs in expenditure on health services, education and local authorities and the operation of the embargo on recruitment in the public services.

ICTU General Secretary, Donal Nevin, has written to the Minister for Labour concerning the recent Government decision to transfer £7 million from the funds raised by the youth employment levy to the Department of Education and to reduce, in turn, the published Estimates of the Department of Education by £7 million as a contribution to the overall reduction of £28.6 million in the 1985 Estimates announced by the Minister for Finance in the Budget.

Congress is opposed to this decision and regards it as a total abuse of the funds available from the levy.

In reply, the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance stated that the recent Budget stuck close to the targets in *Building on Reality*. The Minister for Finance claimed that the effect of the changes in income tax was better than indexation and would improve the motivation to work. According to the Taoiseach, action will be taken on tax evasion and a working party has been established on tax collection and enforcement.

**GENERAL SECRETARY RECEIVES HISTORIC PORTRAIT**

*Union General Secretary, Senator Chris Kirwan, receives a portrait of the late Fintan Kennedy, former General Secretary and General President, on behalf of the National Executive Council from Mr Paddy Moloney of Limerick whose son Tomás painted the portrait.*



(Photo: Kevin Forde.)

The bankruptcy of Government economic policies was sharply criticised by Union General President, John Carroll, at the recent Annual Dinner Dance of the Dublin District Council

# GOVT CLUELESS ON JOBS' CRUX

"When the present Government came to office in December 1982," he said, "they spoke of halting and reversing the growth of unemployment which then stood at 170,000. The actual figure now is over 230,000 and the unemployment rate in the Republic of Ireland at 18% is the top of the EEC unemployment league.

"Late last year the National Executive Council of our Union issued a press release in relation to the Government's economic and social plan *Building on Reality*. In that release we expressed the main areas of our dissatisfaction and we argued that the Plan did not in any way deal with the specific and particular issues of the day, the major one of unemployment taking pride of place.

"We could find nothing in that document, and I confess we can find nothing in the pronouncements in relation to the recent Budget, which can convince us that jobs will be created now or over the next year or two in sufficient numbers that will make any marked impact on the unemployment situation. If anything, all the Government's pronouncements to date seem to confirm that more people will be unemployed in the spring of 1987, which is the end of the Plan's currency, than were unemployed in the spring of 1984.

"Our Union", he continued, "together with the Executive Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, made strong submissions to the Government before the Budget with particular reference to job creation and to a re-

(Photo: Derek Speirs)



**Gardiner Street Employment Exchange 1982. Unemployment has risen by over 70,000 since then.**

assessment of the burden of taxation on the PAYE sector. Congress demanded, and we supported this, that indexing of itself would not remedy the inequities within tax bands nor remedy the eroded value of these bands over the past three years.

"We are all aware of the major problems which have arisen following this Government's decision in the public sector area. Many cut-

backs have been introduced in regard to recruitment of labour, the filling of vacancies and the sourcing of monies for essential services and their development.

"There have been many and loud protests from our side about this and we have also protested loudly, and will continue to do so, at what

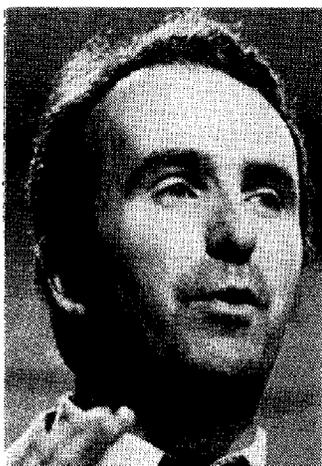
appears to be an attempt by the New Right in our society to develop the concept of privatisation of public services. This particular concept is being preached from many different sorts of pulpits with a very deliberate PR exercise to convince the populace at large that the future development of our country, with the requisite employment possibilities and the requisite living standards, will somehow or other be secured by dependence on the private sector.

"Long experience has established, both in this country and elsewhere, that this is just not so and when we observe the tactics which Governments have pursued during periods of recession throughout the western world, we can detect a sameness or similarity in the type

of offensive tactics that are employed. These tactics use fear, insecurity and instability as a means of undermining the confidence of ordinary people and frighten them into accepting that belt tightening is the only way to a secure future.

"In this process, too, efforts are made to blame the wage increase factor and trade union activity as reasons why industry is unable to compete successfully and why marketing fails to attract orders for industrial goods.

"This philosophy of the New Right is the same song that was sung by the old right except that they sing it in more modern terms and with a much faster beat and that faster beat means that unemployment increases at a faster rate."



**O'Callaghan: 'Govt. action on Cork jobless crisis only cosmetic'. (Photo: Derek Speirs).**

## CORK DEVASTATED

"The Government's absurd obsession with financial rectitude has been responsible for a continuous haemorrhage of jobs" Cork Nos. 7/8 Branch Secretary, Joe O'Callaghan warned recently, "and none more so perhaps than in the city of Cork whose industrial base has been devastated in the last two years. The Government's grudging response to this situation was to create not jobs — but merely jobs for the boys — in the form of a special task force — which in spite of its industrious sounding title has produced nothing concrete for the city.

At the time of its establishment, my Union suggested that the task force would turn out to be little more than a cosmetic exercise and so it has proved.

"The complete lack of urgency on the part of Government to address — never mind tackle — the scourge of unemployment is evident in the Government's so called 'Economic and Social Plan' *Building on Reality*. The trade union movement was prepared to be surprised for once with a document which would outline a strategy to tackle the jobs

crisis. Needless to say, such a welcome surprise was not forthcoming. The 'Plan' contained little that was new; was extremely vague on many of its proposals; and remarkably silent on many key issues. By no stretch of the imagination could it be described as a plan for employment.

"While we accept that there are no simple or automatic cures for unemployment just as there are none for cancer, the Government, it seems, is staking everything on a course of major surgery of such severity that its prospective cure may very well turn out to be far worse than the disease."

# The British Miners' Strike: YOU WERE MAGNIFICENT!

The magnificent response of the Irish working class movement to the plight of the British miners in 1984-85 is now well recorded. Thousands of pounds were raised at national, branch and shop floor levels; food containers were sent; over 400 holidays arranged for children in the summer; toys sent at Christmas; and scores of factory visits arranged for rank and file miners' delegations. Why should there be such a response? What was the role of the ITGWU? Are there lessons to be learned from this sustained and heartfelt solidarity effort?

## DUBLIN 1913, COALFIELDS 1984

When the ITGWU was threatened by the lock out of 1913, the British working class responded through the TUC Dublin Food Fund by sending thousands of pounds. The miners' union was in the vanguard of this action and they sent £1,000 a week for fourteen weeks, (over £47,000 a week in 1985 prices!). The South Wales Miners' Federation were particularly conspicuous in the lists of contributions and this relationship was maintained right through to the 1950's and 60's.

Much attention has rightly focussed on the magnificent efforts of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions' Miners Support Committee, in which members of the ITGWU were active, but the Irish effort was countrywide. Indeed, the first organised public meeting was

that arranged by Tadhg Philpott, President of the Cork Council of Trade Unions, in May 1984 for the delegates of Penrhawceiber Colliery, Mountain Ash. That delegation also visited Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny, Castlecomer, Limerick, Navan, Drogheda and Dublin.

In Dublin they were the first of a number of miners who addressed the Dublin District Council. The Union in Cork were later to arrange permanent office accommodation for resident miners' delegations to work the Munster area, paralleling the ATGWU provision of full time offices in Dublin.

The ITGWU did not confine its action to financial support, however, and Brendan Campbell and ITGWU dock members in Newry were involved in courageous solidarity industrial action for a long number of weeks in the early stages of the strike in concert with members of the NUS. Cork No. 5 and Limerick



*'Blessed are the peacemakers': Easington, Co. Durham, August 24, 1984. (Photo: Keith Pattison, courtesy of the Side Gallery, 9 Side, Newcastle upon Tyne).*

No. 1 Branches were among those who offered solidarity industrial action or who instructed members not to handle 'black' coal or oil at various times. These gestures, or the simple provision of industrial information regarding fuel and energy supply movements, were greatly appreciated and indeed contrasted with the reluctance of some unions within Britain to demonstrate the same conviction.

It would be invidious to name individuals who assisted but it should be recorded that some branches were outstanding in their efforts. Dublin District Council organised a day trip to Brittas Bay for Welsh miners' children in the summer, while Dublin Nos. 9/10 Branches contributed free transport as well as arranging garage and depot collections. Cavan Branch were instrumental in organising a week's holiday for Yorkshire children in August through the local trades council, an effort repeated in Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny and Monaghan. In Kilkenny, Tony Ayton organised various events that generated particular support in villages like Castlecomer that know only too well the tragedy of pit closures.

Money was raised everywhere. The National Executive Council made a large donation that was supplemented by Branches in all parts of the country.

Particularly prominent, in addition to those already mentioned, were Dublin No. 2, Dublin No. 12, Dublin No. 14, Dublin No. 19, Tullamore, Laois, Limerick and Castlebar Branches. Galway linked large activities in the race week and many Branches, such as Kilkenny, held socials and dances. Most money was collected at shop floor level.

John Flannery and the boys in Semperit were outstanding together with other trade unionists in the plant in holding factory gate meetings, collections and finally a special social evening and raffle. Jean Roche, of Dublin Nos. 6/8, and her colleagues in the Dublin rag trade were typical of the many women who collected and identified with the miners and the women's support groups. The DSD staff of the Union took monthly collections and miners proved stimulating and provocative speakers at education and training courses in various centres as members stayed back to hear their case.

## WHERE NOW?

The miners still have a struggle and even at this stage hardship is severe. Any outstanding monies should be forwarded through the Branches. We, as a Union, must build on the sense of solidarity created. For some workers, like those in the ESB and Bord na Mona in the midlands, parallel situations may arise with the threat to their communities as turf burning power stations are eclipsed. For others, the solid rank and file commitment might suggest that effective and forthright leadership would provoke similar commitment for progressive industrial and social policies already in the Union's armoury.

**The real legacy of the miners' strike is that ordinary people can win, can change things, and in discovering themselves, can release the energy that burned so brightly in the hearts and minds of the men, women and children who put our Union before poverty and fear in 1913.**



*'The Cafe', Colliery Club, Easington, Co. Durham, August 1984. (Photo: Keith Pattison, courtesy of the Side Gallery, 9 Side, Newcastle upon Tyne).*

# DEATH OF JOHN BURKE

The sudden death has occurred of John Burke, Secretary of the Union's Dublin No. 4 Branch. A member of the Union since the age of 16, John's entire working life had been characterised by an overriding concern for his fellow-workers in the hotel, restaurant and catering industry. As a hotel porter, John was an active member of the Dublin No. 4 Branch, becoming its President in 1961 and continuing in that office until his appointment to the Branch's full-time staff in June, 1973.

At the funeral service attended by the three General Officers, former Dublin No. 4 Branch Secretary, Mattie O'Neill, said of John Burke:

"John Burke had a long and distinguished career in the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Thirty-five years ago he was elected as a shop steward and became a member of the Branch Committee. From that time until his death he never ceased to work on behalf of his colleagues in the catering industry. During the course of his time in the Union he held almost every position that was open to him in his own No. 4 Branch - Shop Steward, Section Chairman, Branch President and then as a full-time official Branch Assistant and, finally, Branch Secretary.

"Those of us who had a similar background will affirm that John

had not an easy life. He chose a rough and rugged path when he offered himself as a candidate for these offices. It seems to me there is a tendency to regard the work of the part-time or voluntary officer as being much less onerous or exacting as that of the full-time professional. This is not always the case.

"John Burke held the position of Branch President for thirteen successive years - a record, perhaps. For more than half of that time I worked in tandem with him as Branch Secretary. I came to know him as a man who always took his job very seriously. He had a keen sense of responsibility, never flinching when it came to sharing in the making of a decision, even when such a decision was likely, in the short term at least, to incur criticism and abuse.

"He never spared himself in the struggle to improve the life of his fellow workers. Doing his normal work in the Shelbourne Hotel and then attending meetings, conferences and negotiations. This went on day after day frequently involving seven days a week and round the clock commitment. And, indeed, in the end he paid the inevitable price for his devotion to duty in terms of suffering and deteriorating health. It is no exaggeration to say that John Burke gave his all in the course of social justice for his fellow workers.

"It would be easy to list the many achievements in which John played a major part. Improved earnings, shorter hours, better fringe benefits,



John Burke

better training and, perhaps most important of all, the recognition of the dignity of hotel and catering workers and of the importance of their contribution to the social and economic life of this country.

"In terms of character and moral courage, John was one of the strongest men I have ever known. He was not to be intimidated. Employers knew him as a fair but very tough and resourceful negotiator. He was not given to flamboyance or effusiveness but made his case briefly, firmly, inexorably.

"Catering workers have lost a great champion. People of John's calibre are not easily replaced. We trust his example will inspire others to carry on in the fight for social justice.

"As a director of CERT and a member of various tourist bodies, John showed his concern for the long term interests of the industry in general. The many representatives of these bodies, as well as workers, employers and managers from so many hotels and catering establishments in attendance at the funeral is a measure of the esteem in which John was held by all concerned.

## RECENT RETIREMENTS

### DES CORISH

Des Corish retired recently as Wexford County Organiser and Gorey Branch Secretary. A son of Richard Corish - one of the founders of the Union in Wexford and a brother of former Tanaiste and Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Brendan Corish, Des came from a family background steeped in the traditions of the ITGWU. Appointed to the Union's full-time staff in 1974 as Branch Assistant in Wexford, Des Corish was promoted in 1976 to the two positions he held until his retirement.

### CECIL MCAULEY



Cecil McAuley

Lucan Branch Secretary, Cecil McAuley retired recently after twenty-three years' service with the Union. A member of Lucan Branch for almost forty years, Cecil was employed as a storeman at Sheckleton Flour Millers before he took up duty as Branch Assistant in Lucan in October 1962 under Michael Gannon. On the latter's elevation to the position of National Group Secretary as a result of the Union reorganisation in 1965, Cecil became Branch Secretary. With twenty years in that position, Cecil was on his retirement, one of the Union's longest serving Branch Secretaries.

## TADHG BOWS OUT

Tadhg Philpott, Secretary of the Cork No. 4 Branch, retired recently after twenty-six years as a full-time official of the Union. Joining the Union's staff as a Branch Assistant in the old Cork No. 2 Branch in 1959, Tadhg became Assistant in Cork No. 4 following the reorganisation of the Cork Branches in 1965. Eight years later, Tadhg was appointed Secretary of the Branch. Tadhg is currently Secretary of the Union's Cork District Council and President of the Cork Council of Trade Unions.

Born in Barrack Street, in the south of Cork city, he worked early in his career at Thompson's bakery



Tadhg Philpott

Tadhg subsequently worked in England during the second World War with McAlpines and Fords of Dagenham and, when he returned home after an eight-year period, he was with Irish Dunlop and a number of Cork builders before entering

the full-time service of the Union.

Tadhg was a member of Cork Corporation Council from 1967-74 and came close to being elected to the Mayoralty on a couple of occasions.

He has been a member of the Cork Life-Saving Club since 1960 and is a former President of the Leinster/Munster/Connacht branch of the Royal Life-Saving Society. Tadhg is also President of the St. Stephen's Pitch and Putt Club and is also very fond of walking.

The Cork No. 4 Branch has now been amalgamated with Cork No. 1 under Branch Secretary, Christy Hartnett, with the hotels and catering sections being serviced by Cork Nos. 7/8 Branch Secretary, Joe O'Callaghan.

## ICTU BRINGS GOVT. TO EURO COURT

The President of the European Commission, Mr. Jacques Delors, has notified Congress that the matter of the non-implementation of the EEC Fourth Directive on Company Law in Ireland has been registered with the Court of Justice of the European Communities as case No. 16/85 and that further proceedings will take place shortly.

Last September the ICTU lodged a complaint with the Commission President about the failure of the Government of Ireland to implement the Fourth EEC Directive on Company Accounts. The complaint was renewed to the new Commission last month when Congress asked the Commission to initiate proceedings against the Government in the European Court of Justice.

The Directive should have been applied by July 1980 but so far the appropriate legislation even

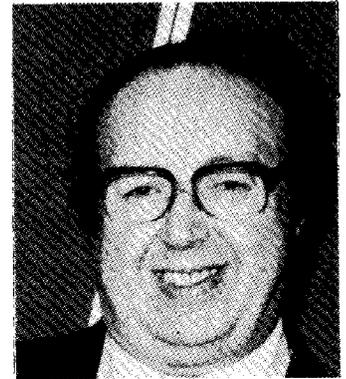


*Delors: 'ICTU case registered with Euro court.'*

has not been introduced despite repeated representations by Congress.

Congress welcomes this decision by the European Commission and hopes that the Government without further delay will introduce legislation that will conform with the EEC Directive and compel companies to make financial and other information available to employees and the public.

## PADDY DEVLIN RETIRES



*Paddy Devlin*

Paddy Devlin, retired from the service of the Union on his sixtieth birthday on March 8th, after nine years as the North Eastern Regional Officer.

Born in 1925 in Belfast's Lower Falls, Paddy first came to public prominence in the 1950's as secretary of the Belfast Branches of the Irish Labour Party. In 1956 he ran for and became a Councillor on Belfast Corporation beating Gerry Fitt for the seat. He stayed on the Council until 1958.

In this year he joined the Northern Ireland Labour Party as he felt it was more orientated towards the problems of workers, reaching across the Catholic/Protestant divide. He was Chairman of the N.I.L.P. by 1968 and a founder member of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association.

His election to the Northern Ireland Parliament at Stormont took place in early 1969 (as an N.I.L.P. candidate). After the events of August, 1969 when

about 700 Catholics were burned out in Belfast as tensions heightened, he saw that the N.I.L.P. neither offered help nor solace to the people affected.

Shortly afterwards, he helped to form the Social Democratic and Labour Party with five other Stormont MPs - Gerry Fitt, John Hume, Paddy O'Hanlon, Austin Currie and Ivan Cooper.

He was elected Chief Whip soon after the formation of the Parliamentary Party and remained so until he was appointed Minister of Health and Social Services when the power sharing Executive was formed in January, 1974.

His period in office as Minister of Health and Social Services has been described as the most exciting of his life. The humanitarianism, for which he is so well known, was given free rein. For this reason, as well as the innovations over the five months of Executive Office, he has been described by political opponents as being the best Minister of Health the North ever had.

Since he became a full-time official of the ITGWU in 1976, Paddy has made substantial efforts to offset the decline in Union membership - as a result of the recession in the traditional areas of docks, clothing and textiles - by extending organisation to new areas like local authority employees and distributive workers.

A prolific writer of books, plays and newspapers articles and an active member of Belfast City Council, Paddy is to devote his retirement to the creation of a new political party of labour in the North - capable of uniting workers across the sectarian divide.

## RECENT RETIREMENTS



*Bernard Connolly*

*Bray Branch Secretary, Bernard Connolly retired recently after fifteen years in the full-time employment of the Union -- and almost thirty years as Branch Secretary in Bray -- having previously served in a part-time capacity before his appointment to the staff of the Union in March 1970.*

*A familiar face at Annual Conference for twenty-eight years, Bernard will retain a family link with the Union through his son Kieran, a Branch Assistant with Dublin No. 1 Branch.*

### WILLIE FLANAGAN

*After fifteen years' dedicated full-time service to the Union, Willie Flanagan retired due to ill-health from his position as Branch Secretary in Laois. Originally Secretary of the combined Laois/Offaly Branch, Willie had the satisfaction of extending union organisation in the Midlands to such a degree that in 1980/1981 the Branch was divided into two separate Laois and Offaly Branches with Sean Sheehan taking over in Tullamore.*

*Before his appointment as Branch Secretary in 1969,*

*Willie had been an active Union member as an employee of Denny's for over seventeen years.*

*A keen Gaelic games enthusiast, Willie has been involved in the GAA both as a player, commentator and latterly as an unpaid administrator for the Laois County Board.*

*Hugh Cox, formerly of Head Office, has taken up duty as Secretary of the Laois Branch in succession to Willie Flanagan*

*John O'Brien, Secretary of the Dublin No. 13 Branch, has been appointed to succeed Bernard Connolly*



*Willie Flanagan*

# INDUSTRIAL CANCER

According to the latest official estimates, about 20% of the world population will contract some kind of cancer before they die. Almost half of the cancer cases, or about 40%, are believed to have been caused by an unhealthy work environment. Today there are about 700,000 chemical preparations in use and around 10,000 new ones are marketed every year. Only 7,000 (or 1%) of these products have been analysed in some way in order to find out whether or not they might represent a cancer hazard.

Out of these preparations, 400 are classified as carcinogenic or cancer causing. At the Cancer Institute in Lyon, France, 272 chemical products have been analysed and 20 of them turned out to be definitely carcinogenic. Moreover, there were strong suspicions that 137 of them may cause cancer. What is frightening is that workers in various sectors are exposed daily to the 20 carcinogenic substances and to 111 of the 137 other substances suspected of being carcinogenic.

While attempts have been made in some countries to at least limit the hazards, if not eliminate them, by introducing legislation and rules which regulate the use of certain chemicals, few countries try to live up to the legislators' intentions. For example in the United States, the present Reagan administration is more interested in protecting employers' hunger for profits

than workers' health.

In the EEC, a proposal to establish a hygienic threshold limit value (TLV) for noise has been the object of so much political bickering and manoeuvring that workers in the ECC can be legally exposed to a noise level of 90 dB(A) in spite of the fact that it has already been scientifically proved that serious hearing ailments may occur at 80 dB(A). The difference between 80 dB(A) and 90 dB(A) is, in fact, considerable.

Even in countries which have traditionally led the way on health and safety issues and which are still considered among those who take these problems seriously, for example, the Scandinavian countries, there are signs that workers' health is beginning to take a back seat. At the present time, the financial implications of any new legislation or regulations must be evaluated before implementation — but not the far-reaching implications for society but only the financial effects on companies. Unfortunately, the cost likely to be incurred by an individual company to protect its workers from certain hazards is too often reckoned to outweigh the

## An International Scandal



cost of public health-care, social security, tax losses and production losses.

In the majority of countries, however, there are no laws or regulations to speak of. This goes for many developing countries which do not possess the required know-how. But there are examples of countries which are very well informed, for example on asbestos or DDT, but continue to use these substances as if nothing had happened. Here we must ask ourselves if the ILO conventions, which are being discussed every year, washed and laundered many times over and then ratified by the governments of the individual countries, are going straight into the dust-bin.

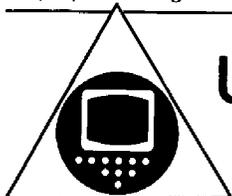
It is precisely through these documents and discussions that the countries lacking the required knowledge can obtain it. What do the delegates do in the ILO assemblies? Why don't they take the knowledge with them when they return home? Or have they slept through the meetings? Is it not the time for the governments of these countries to take the initiative themselves in order to see to it that the ILO conventions and the code of practice are implemented at the work-place?

This is not only applicable to the developing countries. There are highly industrialised countries, such as Switzerland, Italy and France, where one may wonder if they have seen the ILO conventions and regulations at all. Or if they closed their eyes as soon as they had seen them.

It goes without saying that this criticism concerns us as well. As a trade union organisation we have to face the question of our achievements. Have we devoted enough time and resources to this matter or have we forgotten that many of our members are killed and injured every year because of poor working conditions?

With this question pending it would do us all good to start discussing work environment problems again — one of the most important issues for the international trade union movement.

*(IMF Bulletin on Occupational Health and Safety)*



## Unions campaign on VDU safety

The health and safety implications of visual display units (VDUs) were considered at a recent conference held jointly by thirteen international trade secretariats and the ICFTU in Geneva

The conference studied the conditions under which workers in various occupations and industrial sectors use VDUs. It noted that while some

countries have adopted guidelines for VDU use there is no single internationally recognised standard to protect workers against the many possible physical and psychological health hazards which can result.

A draft set of guidelines for use by trade unionists in negotiating collective bargaining measures relating to VDUs was drawn up by the con-

ference. Among the questions considered were radiation caused by VDUs, recommendations regarding their placement, avoidance of glare, and size and type of furniture required. As a first step, it was strongly recommended that no more than 50% of a working day involve intensive use of VDUs and that rest periods of at least 15 minutes every two hours be strictly enforced. A final version of a 60-page guideline is to be jointly published by the sponsors of the conference and will be available through the IUF secretariat. It is to serve as the basis for a world-wide trade union campaign for concluding collective agreements incorporating the proposed standards.

# SOLIDARITY WITH SACTU

"The monolith of apartheid is at last beginning to crack," said General Secretary, Chris Kirwan in an address to the South African Congress of Trade Unions in London recently. "Slowly it is true, but like a bursting dam, what begins as a tiny trickle soon turns into a torrential flood."

Expressing the Union's continued support and solidarity with SACTU, the General Secretary outlined existing Union policy on apartheid as passed by Annual Conference.

"At the heart of our unqualified revulsion for the brutal and barbaric system of apartheid," continued Chris Kirwan, "lies the conviction that this inhuman regime of economic and social exploitation stands in complete and utter contradiction to the fundamental principles of trade unionism which are based on unity, solidarity and democracy, and are epitomised in the old motto, *An*



*Kirwan: 'special affinity between ITGWU and SACTU'.*

*injury to one is the concern of all.*

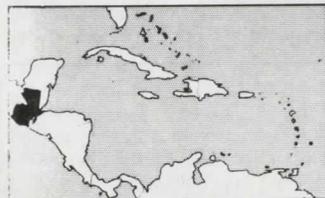
"But beyond that general feeling of traditional trade union fraternity, I believe that a very special affinity binds the ITGWU and SACTU arising out of our common experience in the struggle against colonialism. For while we are both first and foremost trade union organisations — concerned with protecting our members in the workplace — we have both played a significant part in attempting to secure the political independence of our respective countries."

## Union Official tortured in Guatemala

Armando Ramirez Pena, the Secretary of Industrial Relations for the trade union at the Duralux paint factory in Guatemala city, was seized recently by a group of heavily armed men when he was on his way from the factory to the trade union offices to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the founding of the union. He was found beaten and tortured but alive six days later. Armando was one of the lucky ones.

Not so lucky was Santiago Lopez Aguilar, adviser to the independent Guatemalan Trade Union Federation, who was seized by armed men in Guatemala City last year. His bullet-riddled body — obviously tortured — was found a few days later.

The 'disappearance' of trade unionists, community leaders and others has been commonplace in Guatemala for many years. Indeed, the term 'disappearance' itself first entered the international human rights vocabulary from Guatemala, where it emerged as a dramatic and massive problem in the 1960s. The initial



wave of 'disappearances' occurred there as part of a counter-insurgency campaign against the first major guerilla movement to emerge in the country. However, since then, under successive administrations, a sophisticated extrajudicial apparatus has developed over a period of more than twenty years to quell any form of political or social opposition.

## TRADE UNIONISTS IN STATE OF SIEGE

A wave of repression against trade unionists, opposition politicians and other dissidents has swept through Chile since last November when President Pinochet declared a state of siege — which was renewed in February for a further three months. Altogether over 230 people have been sent into internal exile within Chile by the authorities since November.

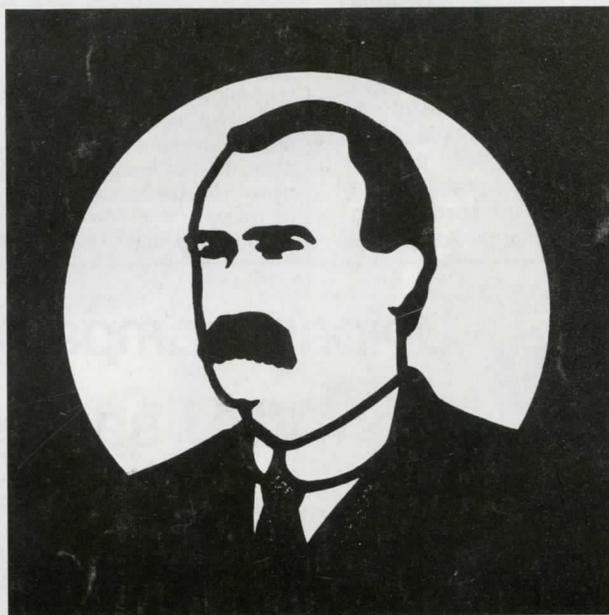


Among the specific provisions of the state of siege powers are the suspension of the right to freedom of association, of the right to freedom to join trade unions and the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The courts in Chile have no right to challenge an Executive decision. Individuals are, therefore, deprived of the right to protection by the courts against unfair punishment.

Among the eleven most recently detained and exiled in this latest wave of repression are Carlos Guerrero Samoza, Antonio Deij and Abraham Rivas, officials of the Construction Workers' Union, Lino Lara and Carlos Lopez, the Presidents of two agricultural workers' unions, and Hugo Tapia, leader of the National Association of the Unemployed.

Amnesty International, the worldwide human rights organisation is encouraging trade unionists to lobby the Chilean authorities to end the banishment order against these men and secure their immediate and unconditional release. Anyone interested in participating in this campaign should contact the AI Trade Union Liaison Committee at Liberty Hall, Dublin 1.

# LIBERTY



Diamond Jubilee Issue

June, 1984

Copies of the 64-page souvenir magazine — celebrating the Union's seventy-fifth anniversary — are still available, priced 75p (or £1 to cover postage and packing) from the Communications Department, ITGWU, 10 Palmerston Park, Dublin 6.

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