



SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

april-may 77 10p

movement for a socialist republic

MAY DAY - LABOUR DAY '77

SOLIDARITY WITH ALL POLITICAL

PRISONERS



nth - defend political status

**sth - defend portlaoise hunger
strikers**

CLOVER MEATS;

Government con-trick to 'save jobs'

During the negotiations leading to acceptance by the I.C.T.U. of the latest NWA, the main carrot held up to workers and enthusiastically dangled before their eyes by the Trade union leaders was the £50million job creation scheme. This was to be operated by government agencies, but details of how the money was to be spent were at all times vague

While the ballot on the terms of the agreement was being carried out in the T.U. movement, the management in the Clover Meats Group announcing plans for rationalisation. The Clover meats plant in Limerick was to close along with the Donnelly's plant in Dublin. and 300 workers were to join the dole queues. Talks between management and unions took place at a fierce rate, with union representatives promising all sorts of concessions including withdrawing from the plans to strike, if only the Clover bosses would keep the plants open—even with a vastly reduced workforce. At the same time the government was keeping an eye on the situation and in March announced that in the interests of saving jobs, it was to grant through

the Agricultural Credit Corporation and the I.D.A. 2.4 million pounds to Clover. One day after this announcement Clover let it be known that they still intended to sell the Limerick and Dublin plants—even with the Government they could not rescue the two plants. Yet we were told by the big farming organisations and the board of Clover that a minority of 4% of the workers at the Limerick plant were responsible for the bad financial position of the company. The main action by the workers which is said to have brought the situation to a climax is a go slow and later an unofficial picket in February. These took place because of Clover's breach of a productivity deal negotiated in 1972, when the then General Manager Micheal Collins issued an ultimatum to the striking pork butchers... "go back to work or I'll close the plant". Yet, when Clover were given total grants of £2.4m they stated they needed at least this amount again if they were to remain viable. Remaining viable in this context entailed closing the Limerick and Dublin plants.

Thus we see that the Government "in the interests of saving jobs" invests a couple of million pounds in Clover. Is an indication of how the £50m allocated to provide jobs is to be used? In this case job provision amounts to a pledge to put over 300 workers on the dole!

If a real job creation scheme is to be developed, it can only be done by the ICTU fighting for the retention of jobs that are threatened

that are threatened such as those in Clover and not by the methods used by trade union officials in this case. To do so would be to accept the implications that "small group of workers are responsible for the crisis".

Clover Meats is renowned even in big farmer circles which are the main suppliers of pigs and livestock for processing, for bad management and inefficiency. The only method which can save jobs is the one which places the trade unions in control of workers jobs. They must examine the situation from the workers interests and not the "firm's viability". If there is not sufficient work available for all those employed, the answer is not to be found in rationalisation... but in the sharing of all work with no loss of pay.

If the Clover Co-operative cannot operate efficiently, then grants being made available should be given to those who are really interested in saving jobs.

LIMERICK BRANCH MSR.

In the academic year 1976/77 as wider layers of students began to feel strongly the effects of Government cutbacks in third-level, the absence of a leadership capable of mobilising students against the cuts, from a more and more apparent. Instead of fighting for united campaigns, the perspective of the U.S.I. leadership leaves the vast majority of students isolated and demoralised amidst growing confusion as to how to take the fight forward. The present dynasty within U.S.I., while admitting the need to fight the cutbacks, provides no coherent strategy for doing this. Their attitude, that defence of students present living standards and conditions means implicit acceptance that they are considered adequate allows them to continue to pose comprehensive financing of education as the central demand at this time.

What does this mean for Student Struggle

Such positions show their complete lack of interest in mobilising students. The method of current officers in USI is that of lobbying public representatives and members of college governing bodies. Student mobilisations are reduced to gestures. A clear example of their approach was the demonstration on the 30th March. This march was a great morale booster for those students who took part in it and could have been a good beginning to an ongoing national campaign. Instead it became the end of the campaign for the majority of students as this mobilisation led to no further initiatives. The apologies at the meeting for the disturbance of traffic, which were the highpoint of the address made by Eamonn Gilmore president of USI's is an indication that for the USI leadership, this demonstration was just one more gesture. So in the long run, the continuing of these type of demonstrations sow the seeds of demoralisation and destroy the confidence of the stud-

students build a fighting opposition



ents in the possibility of successful agitation.

The fruits of this demoralisation can be seen in the results of elections for sabbatical positions in many Student Unions were "non-political" and "anti-political" candidates are sweeping the polls.

Unity is the Key to a Fightback

At the moment the priority for student militants must be the building of alternative leaderships at college and national level. To do this and to break out of their present confusion and demoralisation

by uniting in their own colleges. This process must begin around issues which are relevant to students as students and as part of society. This will mean the setting up of action groups around student issues, opposition to the erosion of civil liberties, defence of women's rights and support for trade union and workers struggles. These are the necessary and sufficient issues which lay the basis on which student militants must unite in order to launch a fightback. This would be the first step towards working out a perspective for opposing the cutbacks and linking the struggles of students with struggles of other sectors in society. Civil Liberties, Women's Rights are issues not just tagged on for appearance sake but are necessary to break the isolation of students which is a necessary pre-requisite for defeating the demoralisation of students and achievement of any victories.

Tasks for Action and a Way Forward.

These action groups must forge ahead to win the leadership of the student movement not by setting themselves up in opposition to existing student organisations but intervening in them and democratising their structures in order to make them capable of mobilising students. While the groundwork for a socialist alternative to the policies and methods of present student leaders need to be built at local level, the groups in various colleges must link up on a national scale. This is vital in order to end the bureaucratically maintained fragmentation of the student movement and provide an alternative leadership.

The coming together of student militants into an united force capable of leading the mass of students in the struggle against the cuts is the way of breaking out of the vicious circle of demoralisation and defeat.

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TURF LODGE —

the way forward

In the last issue of SOCIALIST REPUBLIC we outlined the central developments in the new resurgence of struggle in the Six Counties, pin-pointing the deep crisis of imperialist perspective and the developing response by increasing sections of the anti-unionist masses — **TROOPS OUT!** The exemplary initiatives taken in this call by the people, and in particular the women of Turf Lodge — a ghetto in West Belfast — were given special attention. In this article, we will look a little more closely at the issues raised by that struggle, and how best it can be developed.

Since the previous article appeared, British troops have been expelled from the area on a number of occasions. At the present time of writing, women have formed vigilante groups and are keeping guard over the area night after night. This latest demonstration against the troops was sparked off by the arrival of a new regiment — Queen's Own — to take over from the Paratroopers. Apparently unable to learn any lessons from the experiences of their predecessors, the Queen's Own soldiers attempted to organise an illegal door-to-door 'census', demanding answers to questions about the colour of curtains, or whether the TV was colour or black and white. When the women refused to answer, the Brits tried to make some arrests, and when a few more people came on to the scene, opened up with plastic bullets. A 13 year old boy was struck down, luckily not fatally, at almost the same spot where a boy of similar age, Brian Stewart, was murdered 6 months ago. The Brits hastily withdrew from the area, and the local women threatened to set up permanent barricades if they returned.

SIGNIFICANCE OF NEW STRUGGLES

The present attempt to recreate No-Go Areas in Turf Lodge and other ghettos, is clear evidence that these struggles are not simply angry outbursts against particular instances of British brutality, but represent a deep expression of the militant consciousness of the anti-unionist masses reasserting itself after a long period of relative quiescence. The fundamental tendency of the struggle since 1969 has been the determination of the anti-unionists to separate themselves from the institutions of the Six County state. This determination to decide their own destiny, has never been lost, reflecting as it does the underlying consciousness of the resistance, and is coming to the fore again with its dominant method — mass struggle.

Thus the people of Turf Lodge, who represent the highest development of this tendency since 1972, are repeating many of the tactics used and learnt during the internment swoops of 1971 and the period before Operation Motorman. Bin-lid bashing, whistles, temporary barricades, night-time vigils by bonfires are the most usual. Although on their own, these militants cannot succeed in inflicting a permanent defeat on the British Occupation forces, their struggle so far has been characterised by their ability to constantly try and force the troops out of the area whenever they try to come in again by taking down the barricades.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH 1972

This indicates the degree to which the situation has changed when British troops made their appearance on the streets of the 6 Counties 8 years ago, and in particular since the no-go days of 1971-72. With the total absence of perspectives following the abolition of Stormont 5 years ago, and consequent decline in mass activity, the removal of barricades in Derry's Bogside and parts of Belfast during Operation Motorman, with hardly a spark of resistance, was a definite reverse for the anti-unionist masses, and consequently the Irish working class as a whole, and allowed Britain to proceed to set up Sunningdale and the power-sharing executive. Thus, Motorman was an illustration of Britain's relative political strength and room for manoeuvre in Ireland. Today Britain's room for manoeuvre is much smaller and the rising Catholic militancy, expressed above all in Turf Lodge, presents it with a much greater challenge to its authority. This central factor, combined with the growing ruling-class uncertainty in the 26 Counties, gives great opportunities to the anti-imperialist forces and provided these are taken, gives us optimism as to the future development of the struggle.

NEW PROBLEMS FOR THE MASS MOVEMENT

But precisely because of this, there is areal fear and uncertainty among the anti-unionist masses over how to proceed. In Turf Lodge, the people are fully aware of the tendency of their local struggle — to create a no-go area. There are thus two questions: i) How to accomplish this ii) how to maintain and strengthen it with all its implications to prevent the Motorman experience from happening again.

In fact, both these questions boil down ultimately to one: how and with what organisation and demands can solidarity be built with the people of Turf Lodge in order to generalise the experience? So far these Militants have been left to their own devices, receiving no support from other areas of the 6 Counties or the Republican leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle, or the smaller forces of the revolutionary left. The danger of demoralisation is thus a real one — already the organisation which originally initiated events — the Mother's committee — has collapsed. Although individual militants of the Provisional movement are involved, no initiative at all has been taken by the Provisionals as an organisation. In Republican News (April 2), in an article on 'Anti-Imperialist Unity', Peter Dowling makes the point: "When a struggle erupts like in Turf Lodge, attempts should be made to set up 'resistance' committees broader than the Republican movement itself. In this way, we can take the lead in

making people 'see' the need for such bodies as the People's Assemblies"

ROLE OF THE REPUBLICANS

The problem is of course rather different; whether the Republican movement likes it or not, the people will themselves, spontaneously, out of necessity, set up forms of organisation to direct struggles. It is not up to the Republican movement to determine who should be included in these structures and who should not, but it is absolutely essential that the Republican movement seriously participates with a perspective of building them around a plan of action.

The immediate task, and the only way to reactivate democratic structures in Turf Lodge, is to demonstrate to the people that they are not on their own, that all over the 6 Counties and the 32 Counties there are countless militants who are in favour of driving out British troops. For example, it should be possible, it is certainly necessary, for a support committee to be set up in Dublin to begin rallying the southern masses to solidarity in the Turf Lodge. More specifically, the far-left groups in the newly formed anti-imperialist committee in Belfast must develop a co-ordinated plan of action themselves for Turf Lodge — the first stage in this should be building support in all areas of Belfast and the 6 Counties which were anti-unionist. This article is a continuation of the first one in SOCIALIST REPUBLIC — the next issue of the paper will develop the theme further — the struggle for anti-unionist unity.

MIKE PINTER



PORTLAOISE PRISONERS LEAD THE FIGHT!



On Sunday last, outside Portlaoise Prison, we saw a vicious attempt by the Southern state "security" forces the gardai, to intimidate and smash the strength of a campaign to demand political rights for the hunger strikers. The Coalition recognises only too well that the strengthening of this campaign and its extension to other issues which have been raised on a national level, could pose a potential major threat not simply to their present policies, but to the stability of the Coalition itself.

For Cooney, the police most central has been that of isolating and criminalising the organised Republican movement. In order for the Coalition to maintain and strengthen its collaboration with Imperialism, it has been crucial for them to open wide the rift between them and the southern working class. The cry of relinquishing democracy in order to defend democracy has been loud. Scores of Republicans have been condemned to long prison sentences for "crimes" which have never been proved against them. The Special Criminal Court has done its job well; it has put the seal of legality on a "method of justice" which uses elements of internment without trial. Hundreds of Republicans are now incarcerated in Portlaoise for no other reason, than that their existence in freedom threatens the stability of the Southern state and the wealth and might of British Imperialism.

IMPERIALISM'S JUSTICE

Last week in Belfast, 5 young people 3 men and 2 women were sentenced to a total of 55 years in prison, for possessing a rifle! In the South, of the 20 hunger strikers at present in the Curr Curragh hospital, 2 are remand prisoners 4 more have been imprisoned for IRA membership on the word of a superintendent - all have been found guilty in the Special Criminal Court - which even in bourgeois legal terms is no conviction at all! In one month time 6 members of the IRSP stand trial for a "crime" for which they have clearly been framed by the southern police.

There are at present 1500 men and women in Irish and British jails. North, South and in Britain, the objective of the bourgeoisie has been to pin the label of "criminal" on all active republicans and thereby criminalising in itself the right of the Irish people to organise in the struggle for self-determination.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.

This has been a situation which has repeated itself over and over in southern Irish history, firstly under the British, then under Cosgrave in the 20's and De Valera in the 30's. The objective was then and still is to drive a wedge deep exploiting the weakness of the Republican movement, with suppression, intimidation and violence backed up with

Emergency Powers which do not directly affect the masses... to splinter the organised political movement from the conscious aspirations of the masses for an United Ireland.

The responsibility for the success of this strategy so far in the present phase of the struggle, rests in part at least on the refusal of the Provisional leadership firstly, to fight openly for troop withdrawal within the organised labour movement and secondly in its failure to recognise in the face of a heavy offensive the need for Anti-Imperialist unity in the fight to defend political rights throughout the 32 counties, and thirdly their failure to take account of the growing rift between the organised republican movement and the masses. They should learn as did the militants involved in the Murray Defence campaign that the defence of the basic human rights of republicans in jail, the first step to defending their political rights does not depend on an anti-imperialist consciousness or agreement with the perspective of the provisionals.

TIME IS RIGHT FOR AN OFFENSIVE

The Provisionals have chosen the right time to go on the offensive in defence of political and democratic rights - the potential for a fightback against state repression is greater now than it has been for some time now. But such a fightback does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place against the background of a strengthening resistance in the 6 counties to the troops an extension of the fight for political rights for prisoners throughout the 32 counties.

demand an independent enquiry into all state repression.... to be led by the trade union movement

The political strength of such a fightback is dependant on the ability of the Anti-Imperialist movement to break out of its isolation and as such it is crucial that the Trade Union movement is pressed hard to act on its official opposition to repressive legislation and that the demand to open the prisons to an Independent enquiry led by the Trade Unions, is taken up at all levels within the Labour and Student movement. This must be fought for along with the demand for official support for the mobilisations.

Secondly our task as socialists and republicans is to raise within the different strands of the Anti-Imperialist movement itself, the immediate need for an united offensive on political rights to raise the demands...

FOR AN END TO ALL REPRESSIVE LEGISLATION

END IMMEDIATELY THE 7 DAY DETENTION PERIOD.

RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS

FREE THE MURRAYS....NOW.

DEFEND THE HUNGER STRIKERS.

ABOLISH THE SPECIAL CRIMINAL COURT.

LOTTE PLUNKETT.

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The publication caused a lot of Communist party ialist carried both the March revolver sums up following: "In s

What Role Can The I.C.C.L. Play ?

Socialist Republic has concerned itself with the activities of the Irish Council Liberties, since that bodies inception last year. As an article in our November 1976 issue put it: "This body is of particular interest to the MSR, since we say that the only way to defeat the Government offensive is to launch a mass civil liberties campaign. The question that must be whether the ICCL can do this."

The answer to that question has since become clear: the ICCL could be a major force in launching a mass civil liberties campaign, but its leadership refuses to countenance such a move.

The method of operation of the ICCL leadership is a bureaucratic. The executive has not been elected by the membership, nor has there been any serious attempt to involve the membership in decision-making except for an hour of questions at a recent meeting. Also, the constitution of the ICCL limits its

activities to the twenty-six counties which is not only wrong in principle but has the effect of maintaining the separation of the main anti-imperialist organisations on an area where unity is essential. Supporters of the Provisionals walked out when this clause was adopted while supporters of the Officials were only too happy to see them go, as were other reformists.

That the ICCL could bring substantial forces onto the streets is clear from the support which their public meetings have had. A meeting was held in Trinity College when the Emergency Powers Act passed last August, drew an overflow crowd of more than 400. A meeting on Capital Punishment some months later was also well-attended. A members meeting held recently, drew an audience of 120. A high proportion of those attending have been political activists who, if given a principled lead, could cooperate in the building of demonstrations that would take Cosgraves mind further plans for repression, for some

considerable time.

The leading figure in the ICCL is Kadar Asmal, a senior law lecturer in TCD. Though possessed of personal courage and organising ability, his political perspective is essentially reformist. He co-operated with the S.D.L.P. in the period leading up to the Sunningdale Agreement (see the Fall of the N.I

COUNCIL FOR ACTION ..

Executive by Paddy Devlin p.41)

At a trade union protest last year against the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Bill, he indicated that he would support such a measure in a Sunningdale-type context.

In an article entitled "The case for a Council of Civil Liberties" (Hibernia 27 February 1976), Asmal wrote that he did not wish such a body to be "a discreet lawyer-dominated group which makes polite representations to Ministers and writes occasional letters to the President. Yet, just over a year later, at the March 26th meeting, we find Terence Mc Caughy, a leading ICCL executive declaring that they see themselves as an "intelligent lobby" along the lines of the A.C.L.U. in the USA and the NCCL in Britain. Other bodies can do the protesting he said, conveniently ignoring the fact that no other organised bodies exist. Why must the USA and Britain (where civil liberties are much more secure than here) be slavishly imitated?

At this same meeting, it was pointed out that although reports of Prison Visitors committees are supposed to be available to the public some bureaucratic reason is always given for their non-availability. A revolutionary response to this would be "Right.. lets have twenty people down at Portlaoise jail on Monday demanding to see their report". But, no Asmal's response was: "We'll get a question asked about it in the Dail". Now there is nothing unprincipled about posing such a tactic but such tactics should complement not substitute for militant mass action.

This incident gives a clear indication of the perspective of the ICCL's bureaucratic leadership. Another facet of that perspective is a reluctance to take a stand on unpopular issues, like the Murrays. (At the August 1976 meeting John Mulcahy was the only speaker out of eight, to mention the Murrays - to thunderous applause from the floor.) Rather the leadership prefers less unpopular issues .. the Dalkey SCHOOL project, censorship in the Arts.. all of which are important in themselves but which at that point in time were not the central issues of the day. Repressive legislations and conditions in Prisons were passed off quite quickly and no mention was made of the hunger strike simultaneously taking place at Portlaoise Prison.

As last issue stated: "No one can be under any illusion that the bureaucratic leadership of the ICCL wishes to advance political demand through direct action. All the same many members and supporters of the ICCL do not see Parliament and the courts as the only areas where effort should be directed. It is therefore important to find ways of placing before the supporters of the ICCL, the perspective of public action against the state's repressive policies as opposed to discreet behind closed doors lobbying." This is a major task facing revolutionaries in the period ahead.

AN SEABHAC SIULACH.

OFFICIALS TURN FURTHER RIGHT



that the document presents a two-nationist, economist, version of Irish history typically social democratic in its denial of the importance of the National Question; and so at variance with all that Connolly, in whose name much was written, stood for." We can only say that we concur with this conclusion. But the question must be asked, how have the Officials come to their present position?

EVOLUTION OF A CHANGE.

The officials now seem set to jettison completely all the main elements of their previous strategy. If the "Irish Industrial Revolution" is anything to go by, this "new turn" has breathtaking implications. The farming population are now the "farming class" without differentiation, thus the problem of industrial development in Ireland, involves the elimination of the farming population .. (make them mobile, outwards to use an euphemism among economists) in order to make agriculture more productive. But this solution, (the credit for this brainwave should go to Dr. Mansholt, architect of EEC policy and not Eamonn Smullen) presupposes a classic economic development (eg Britain) and takes no account of how Ireland's subordinate relationship to the British market has warped our agricultural development. It amounts to a crude copy of what every second-rate bourgeois economist has been proposing for years; the elimination of the small farmer and the buildup of the large ranches.

DEEP AND WIDE RANGING IMPLICATIONS

But this vulgar economism does not stop at the question of small farmers: "Our party is not going to join in with the gombeen fishermen in the waving of the Green Flag over Irish waters. We do not accept that those opposed not equipped to fish our seas have a right to ownership of them" The pamphlet continues with a re-assessment of the EEC. In 1971 Thomas Mac Giolla had this to say: "this (the EEC) is the greatest immediate threat which faces the Irish people. It is one which must be defeated if we are to retain the right and the capability of continuing the struggle for

"Amidst all the complexities of the situation in the North, we must repeat again and again that the roots of our evils in the North and the South is the continued interference of Britain and British Imperial interests in our affairs.... it was Britain that systematically destroyed the great native linen industry and left the North dependant on Britain and other foreign industries with no stake in the country". That was Thomas Mac Giolla at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis in October 1971. Sinn Fein, the workers party have come a long way since then. In a pamphlet issued recently, "The Irish Industrial Revolution" the wheel has turned full circle the blame for the underdevelopment of Irish society is now the full responsibility of the Southern bourgeoisie. Added to this gem of historical analysis is the "fact" that the Southern Bourgeoisie took political control of the south in 1829, this being the power which "presided over the famine of the 1840's. But, you may ask, what about the British landlord system?" Well that's no problem because according to the Officials by 1845 the "landlord was of course a Catholic strong farmer" In the whole historical section the effects of British imperialist control of the Irish economy is not mentioned except to tell us that who emigrated in the 1950's knew that "the guilty men were not British Imperialists".

The publication of this pamphlet has caused a lot of controversy; the Communist party paper The Irish Socialist carried a full page review in both the March and April issues. Their reviewer sums up his analysis with the following: "In summary it can be said

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british imperialism - strategy and tactics in northern ireland

There has not been much argument or confusion in recent times over the fact that the British and 26co governments share an unflinching desire to step up the level of state repression. At the same time however, the impression constantly given in the press, T.V. and radio that this is an occasionally over-zealous reaction to the evil paramilitary violence. We will try to show in this article that this is not the case and that the similar false impression is created, based on a series of quarter-truths, that the loyalists are deeply split and only retain support because of the continuing violence.

MASONS MANOEUVRES

The biggest and most dangerous mystification that is put across is that the British government really wants a return to power sharing and that it is trying to use security policy as a lever which can make such a government acceptable to the loyalist base. It is true that at Secretary of State, Mason occasionally makes statements to this effect, particularly when he wants to get Gerry Fitts vote in a crucial House of Commons division or when there is a need to calm down the justifiably nervous Cosgrave quislings. He can however be just as keen, if not keener, to mollify Loyalist complaints. Thus he recently explained to Bill "shot to kill" Craig, that his after dinner statement at Westminster in which he said there would not be a "return to a one party state" was "off the cuff" (!) and that while he wanted agreement between the two northern communities on a future devolved government, he has "frequently emphasised that the government is not going to lay down hard and fast rules about how such an agreement is to be arrived at or what form it should take". (Irish Times Mar. 22). In other words, it is clear that when we strip the humbug and hypocrisy from Mason's argument we find he is saying to the Loyalists: "if we can get the croppies to lie down you can have whatever type of government you want"

WESTMINISTER LOYALISTS PLAY HARD TO GET.

It is "flexibility" such as this which partly explains the differences both between the Westminster Loyalists themselves and the frequent complaints made about their behaviour by their grassroots supporters. This was shown very clearly in the days before the Tory no-confidence motion when the Labour government was saved by a pact with the Liberals and some Loyalist abstentions. Once again we have to cut through the patently false picture painted by the bourgeois press, which first of all played up the promise given by the government to increase Six-co. (i.e. Loyalist) representation at Westminster only to shoot this concession down by saying it was not going to happen until 1984. The commitment to re-structure local government after the coming May elections was either overlooked, played down or ignored.

This is not to say that all the bourgeoisie and its agents have failed to realise what is going on. The British "quality" paper "the Sunday Times" stated in its Mar. 27 issue that "these were already large concessions from a Labour government" but added more ominously "there were other discussions as well". To back these statements, it quoted Loyalist Westminster leader Molyneux as saying "There is not that much difference between what they (Labour) are offering us in private and what the Tories are offering us publicly. In a situation where there has been a pronounced swing to the right in Britain aided and abetted by the Callaghan government and the abject collapse of labour "left" resistance, a return of an extreme right-wing Tory government is almost inevitable by the end of the year.

Already the Liberals are hedging their bets and the Tories have won another bye-election with a swing of over 17%. Their candidates main slogan was "stop immigration" and the fascist National Front gained just under 9% of the vote in an area with a tiny black population. Because of the fact that Labour has prepared the ground for such an occurrence, it would be quite wrong to say that it is only a Thatcher-Neave government that would go all the way for the Loyalists. Any Westminster administration has to find a way to come down on the Catholics, stopping the decline of the S.D.L.P.-which is caused by its tougher security policies and open concessions to Loyalist reaction-and keeping the lid down on the South. In other words, it has to extinguish the aspirations of the oppressed Irish masses in order to bolster the partition settlement it tinkered around with in the 1960's. To cover up these moves to a Loyalist take-over Imperialism seeks to disguise the significance of each concession - a good example is the seemingly harmless proposal to reform local government.



STRENGTHENED LOYALIST LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Since early 1975 there has been a semi-undercover campaign conducted by loyalists at all levels to give the local councils back all the powers taken from them in 1971. Under the terms of the MacRory Report many of the powers they exercised over education, health services, etc. were transferred to Stormont. Before this could become fully operative however Stormont was abolished in 1972 so that, with the continuing failure to construct a stable alternative to the collapsed power-sharing executive, the councils elected in 1973 were stranded with next to no powers. On top of this the balance of forces within Unionism has shifted dramatically to the right. In 1973 the Faulknerites still had a lot of support and the loyalists were neither well organised enough, or aware of the depth of their support, to contest these elections. The elections due to take place in May of this year will redress this imbalance. As part of the build-up for this campaign the loyalists have contemptuously rejected the humble plea to sign a declaration that they will not practice discrimination and the Paisleyites have been prominent in various sectarian campaigns: examples range from the denial of funds to GAA clubs to closing golf clubs on Sundays. It can be expected that they will be in fierce competition with the Official Unionists in particular for the control of these councils.

LOYALIST DIVISIONS

The divisions within loyalism centre around who can best defend the Northern statelet. Paisley, for example, supported the "integration with Britain" line for a long time but once he saw the break-up of Unionism and the chance he has of becoming undisputed loyalist leader he took up the demand for the return to Stormont in order to gain extra support. Similarly the Official Unionists (most recently through Molyneux's administrative devolution proposals) now give more importance to the question of local government. Support for this campaign is building up: even MacRory, the architect of the reform, goes along with it. His plan is to centralise a new system around these loyalist controlled councils based in Belfast, Coleraine, and Craigavon. Thus the Catholic majority west of the Bann is again to be deprived of even the chance of exercising power. Something along these lines will be the initiative promised by Callaghan for after May.

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DAVID CARR

CRISIS IN THE SDLP; devlin, mallon, cooper - force them into united action against the brits

Over the last six months we have witnessed an increasing number of conflicts within the SDLP. They have centred around the question of the British presence and the policy of the Westminster government since the UWC strike. Their last conference revealed the extent of the divisions when almost half of the delegates, and a majority of the ex-Convention members, voted for a British withdrawal. It is not enough for anti-imperialists to gloat over the problems facing the SDLP. Very close attention must be paid to these developments if advantage is to be taken of this crisis so that the resistance can be strengthened and the influence of the SDLP over large sectors of the nationalist community can be broken.

THE NATURE OF THE SDLP

The SDLP emerged following the upsurge of the Civil Rights movement seven years ago. The Nationalist Party, which had previously won the support of Northern Catholics on the basis of trying to achieve a United Ireland in the far off future, collapsed into irrelevance.

THE ELECTIONS: FOCUS FOR ANTI-IMPERIALIST UNITY

It would be a disastrous mistake if the anti-imperialist forces boycotted the local government elections. There have been many encouraging signs recently, ranging from the formation of the Irish Front in Derry to the struggles of the Turf Lodge women against the British Army, that a new rise in the struggle of the Catholic masses is beginning. A united anti-imperialist election campaign would go part of the way towards broadening this struggle and accelerating the crisis in the SDLP. Furthermore it would be able to clearly focus on the two prongs of the current British strategy: the stepping up of repression and the return to the loyalists of the powers they exercised so viciously before 1968. Unless the struggles of the minority can be broadened there exists a great danger that they will dissolve in frustration and despair. Since 1972 the repressive forces of the Six County state have been slowly recovering from the hammering they received after October 1968. As British Imperialism oversees the next step on that bloody path the anti-imperialist forces must use the limited opportunity they have now been given to spearhead a fight-back. If they fail the consequences will be very serious.

TROOPS OUT NOW!
DISBAND THE SECTARIAN SECURITY FORCES!
POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION FOR CATHOLICS-
NO RETURN TO 1968!

DAVID CARROLL

The minority wanted reforms immediately but the repression directed by the RUC and the British Army taught large sectors of the mass movement that no reform was possible within the 6 County statelet and that it was necessary to drive out the British Army and abolish partition as a precondition for social change. Other sectors of the movement, who argued that it was possible to reform the statelet through parliamentary methods, combined to establish the SDLP. Since its formation it has tried to walk a tightrope, balancing between the dictates of the British government and the aspirations of the Catholic masses whose support it needs. This role of mediator between the British government and the Nationalist masses flows not just from its policies but also from the social grouping on which it is based - the Catholic middle classes - the small businessmen, teachers etc. who also suffered from discrimination but were fearful of the revolutionary implications of the mass struggle.

NO REFORMS - LESS ILLUSIONS

The SDLP managed to retain its influence over broad sectors of the Catholic working class because it seemed to many of them that it would really be possible to reform the 6 Counties. The British government thought that by economic expansion in the North over a whole period enough jobs would be created to end the high levels of unemployment amongst Catholics and integrate them into the central sectors of the economy. SDLP participation in government was supposed to ensure that capital coming into the North would be evenly distributed to all areas so that Catholics would have a chance of "getting on" rather than be discriminated against purely on the basis of their religion. But the long-term downturn in the world capitalist economy - which has hit Britain particularly severely - laid the basis for the fall of the structure which was designed to carry out this policy, the power-sharing executive. This put an end to any possibility of "integrating" the Catholics in the foreseeable future so that it has become increasingly clear to the minority that no significant reforms are on the way. This awareness is having the effect of strengthening their determination to resist the stepped-up British Army repression and undermining their confidence in the SDLP.

As a result one wing of the party led by Gerry Pitt and John Hume has argued against criticising the British Army in case they might fuel the anger of working class Catholics and unwittingly spark a new mass revolt. The populist wing, led by Devlin, Cooper and Mallon, feels forced to make militant anti-British noises in case the Catholic workers lose all faith in parliamentary politics. In effect because British Imperialism is unable to make any significant concessions to the Catholics, the objective basis for SDLP support is being eroded. However it can retain its influence and cohesion to some extent if the anti-imperialist movement does not politically confront it. How then can this be done?

THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENT AND THE SDLP

In the period following the suspension of stormont in February '72 British Imperialism succeeded in driving a wedge between those sectors of the mass movement who were consciously anti-imperialist (the Republicans, the revolutionary left etc.) and the nationalist masses. The SDLP gained support from the Catholics on the basis of the promise of power-sharing, and large sectors of the mass resistance were demobilised. The anti-imperialist vanguard was not politically prepared for this and became more isolated from the masses. The Provisionals turned towards pure militarism while the Officials collapsed into sterile economism. Now that Britain can no longer offer the carrot of reform and is forced to ally with the stick of loyalism the anti-imperialist vanguard is being given a historic opportunity to link up once again with the mass movement and take its leadership from the reformists.

The very people who voted for the SDLP at the last elections will be more sympathetic to mass action against the troops. However they will be looking to the SDLP for leadership and Devlin, Cooper and co. will attempt to substitute verbal condemnations for real action. The anti-imperialist vanguard must force these fakers to put their money where their mouths are. If demonstrations are held around the questions of prisoners, RUC and UDR atrocities, Army brutality etc. Paddy Devlin should be invited to speak and give his support to these activities, along with any other SDLP supporters given to making anti-British noises. Also if United Fronts are formed around specific limited demands (e.g. withdrawal of a regiment from a particular ghetto or the setting up of an inquiry into a recent atrocity) these people should be challenged to give their support.

Revolutionaries have no illusions in the likes of Devlin and Mallon but many Catholic workers have. Only by forcing the SDLP leaders into united action against the Brits can the anti-imperialist vanguard effectively break their hold over sections of the Catholic masses. If they refuse to support genuine united actions they will lose credibility; if they do participate they will assist the anti-imperialist vanguard in digging their grave through the rebuilding of the mass movement, which will make their constitutional politics irrelevant.

DAVE COLLINS

The recent establishment of CURA, a Catholic church agency set up by the bishops to prevent women from having abortions, represents a new attempt, following in the footsteps of numerous previous efforts, to pressurise women at a time when they are emotionally insecure. CURA is a new departure for the Catholic church in 2 ways:

- (i) For the first time the church has admitted that Irish women have abortions as a solution to unwanted pregnancies.
- (ii) CURA is trying to switch the axis of the debate from a sphere where it is alienated from its "flock" - contraception - to one which is still abhorrent to most Catholics - abortion.

ORGANISED COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

This retreat should not lull us into distraction from the church's continuing operation designed to withstand the extension of Family Planning Services. On the ideological level the Catholic press attempted to counter the 'Hibernia' poll on contraception (which showed that over 60% of Irish people favoured legislative change) by their own written poll. This cross-section of Catholic fanatics voted (surprise! surprise!) 60% against the provision of legal contraception. Nor should we feel that the array of public opinion in favour of contraception (including the Irish Labour Party, Fine Gael, The Irish Association of Social Workers, 1/3 of the Irish Medical Association etc.) renders the hierarchy's activities useless. In Galway the opening of a Family Planning Clinic was prevented by bringing pressure to bear on a solicitor who had earlier offered his premises for the service.

The attitude of the Irish Catholic church towards female biology has always been that motherhood is the natural role of women and any interference in the process of continuous procreation is wicked and sinful. They have done this by only allowing women two rigidly defined sexual roles, as either whores or mothers. Women have been trapped in such definitions where real choice is non-existent, is obstructed by the denial to women of the right to control their own bodies. The church realises that any steps towards independence made by women means that in a situation where they cannot determine their reproductive capacities. With 60,000 women officially on the pill (13,000 of these receiving it free through the health service) it is clear that many Catholics are denying the church's right to legislate in this area.

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE VS. POPULATION CONTROL

The 2 Nation secularists in the government and Dail have shown little will to challenge the church, even when it opposes the wishes of the vast majority of the Irish people. In the April 4 issue of The Irish Times Fr Fergal O'Connor



CHURCH LAUNCHES NEW ATTACK ON WOMEN

urged the "changing (of) society so that using contraceptives is no longer necessary". This "necessity" is the same as that recognised by Conor Cruise O'Brien, when he argues that we need contraception because of overpopulation but "overlooks" the fact that thousands of tons of food are destroyed each year to keep up market prices. The debate between O'Brien and FitzGerald on the one hand, and Bishop Newman on the other, kept the debate rigidly within this framework. Neither side favoured the woman's right to time her pregnancies. O'Brien called for the replacement of religious enslavement with enslavement to the "needs of the economy".

CHURCH AND STATE

The first pre-requisite for democratic control on issues such as contraception, divorce, abortion etc. is to break the

link between the church and the state. A real opportunity to weaken that link is provided by the introduction of Mary Robinson's bill in the Senate, supported by the Labour Party. Labour must force the government to place a whip on its supporters to vote in favour of this bill. It is not a matter of the individual moral conscience of deputies but rather one of implementing socially necessary legislation. Mary Robinson's bill does not at all answer the needs of thousands of Irish women and only provides an absolute minimum of provisions. If it was passed it would have to be accompanied by a financial budget which would be used to finance clinic centres and education programmes throughout the Health Services at National and community level.

SIOBHAN DILLON

CONTD FROM Pg 5.

the reconquest of Ireland by her people. But Today for the officials, things have changed: "we do not envisage withdrawal from the EEC as a prerequisite of our economic plan...we will force the EEC to assist in the aim of Full Employment".

The sum total of these political positions is little more than the framework of the politics of the British and Irish communist organisation.. (although the BICO carried the logic of the positions through to their full logic and have adopted openly pro-Imperialist and counter-revolutionary stance.

RIFT IN THE "UNHOLY" ALLIANCE?

But while the CP has sharply criticised the Officials on a whole number of counts, it has not been able to explain the origins and roots of these serious political errors. We must go back to the conceptions which the Officials had of the Northern struggle to find one of the main elements behind their present approach. For them the struggle was one for Civil rights...to democratise the Northern state. When it was obvious that the Northern state was irreformable and the struggle for civil rights was taking on a 32 county dimension, the Officials hung on to their old schema of a stage strategy. This saw their isolation as an organisation, right down to their present position where their organisation in the 6 counties is now a very weak skeleton of its former self. They began to see the struggle of the anti unionist populations "sectarian"...and retreated back to seeing the main problem as one of uniting protestant and catholic workers on any basis. Thus the problem was sectarianism achieving peace etc and the intervention of British Imperialism in Ireland

On a parallel level, the defeats which the Officials incurred in relation to the National struggle led them to see

OFFICIALS TURN RIGHT ...

the economic struggle in the North and the South as the only genuine and pure struggle of the Irish working class. This period in the evolution of the Officials has seen the strongest attack by the Irish Ruling class on civil liberties and the traditions of Republicanism. Through all this, the Officials have stood aside, directing their fire against the plans of the Dublin and London governments but against organisations like the Provos and the IRSP. Their evolution has led them to take up a whole series of economist, reformist and social democratic positions.

CAUGHT IN THE SAME LOGIC

Yet while the communist party criticise the officials for ignoring the National Question we must seriously question the principle behind their critique. The CP holds the same stages theory as the Officials. Their political perspective over the past 7 or 8 years has been very similar. In the North their political projection while not as crude as Gardiner Place has had the same economist leanings. Indeed it was the ex-CP ideologues like Roy Johnston who first gave the Officials the political schemas that have landed them where there are today.

We might also ask whether the fight between the CP and the Officials over their respective "industrial" fields has anything to do with the recent level of polemic between the two organisations. Whatever the motivation of the CP in taking the Officials to task, the debate only serves to illustrate the bankruptcy of stalinist politics... and their total inadequacy when applied to the Irish Revolution. An inadequacy which has left the Stalinist organisations (the BICO and the Socialist Party of Ireland) in the two-nations camp and another verging on the abyss.

RUAIRI MAC NEILL.

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 The Secretary, M.S.R. 38 Clanawley Road, Dublin 5.

EQUAL PAY: WOMEN TELEPHONISTS LEAD THE FIGHT

This article is a contribution from a militant in the Womens movement. Socialist Republic sees it as the first in a series of articles on the question of Women workers, their self organisation in the workplace, in the unions, the need to build links between the womens movement and women workers struggling for equality. We welcome other contributions to discussion.

Whatever one's opinion on the achievability of equal pay in Ireland at the present time—whether one thinks that the system can actually afford to pay women workers or whether one thinks that womens agitation will push the system to its limits—everyone recognises the need for women to organise if any impact is to be made.

The womens movement, while encouraging women to unionise has different points of view on how to win women to trade unions. Many feminists find themselves fighting within the unions for recognition of the need to struggle for the rights of women as workers. The problems that these women come up against, are very often indicators of changes that are needed. These changes are vital within the trade unions as a whole if they are to be in any way effective as defenders of the working class.

What is currently missing among women in the womens movement and among women in T.U.'s is a perspective with which to organise them. Below are a number of ideas which could be taken up.

TRADE UNION BUREAUCRACY

The trade union bureaucracy and the undemocratic functioning of the unions have long pointed to by women workers who find, because of family commitments and their own lack of familiarity with bureaucratic procedures.. that the very structure of the unions so inflexible that it militates against its own effectiveness.

Women frequently complain that meetings on the job are held only once a year.. that in many places there is only one shop steward instead of a more representative committee, that branch meetings and T.U. courses are held miles away from the workplace, so making it difficult for women with children to attend. Trade union bureaucracy has also been guilty of holding angry workers back.. of keeping strikes isolated and even of calling off strikes.



THE CENTRAL IMPORTANCE OF EQUAL PAY.

In the telephonists struggle for example, the go-slow last August was called off literally at the request of the FUE as the workers were by some ridiculous logic charged with the responsibility for redundancies.

The significance of the telephonists strike during March 77, was that it flouted the NWA prohibition on industrial action on Equal Pay. and therefore placed it alongside the other major strikes and threatened strikes of the period.. including the Airline strike, the workers in the ESB at Ringsend, the building workers. It also confronted the pay policy of the government in the Civil Service, which has placed an embargo on any pay increases outside the NWA.

Yet, this strike was carried out on a stop-go basis. At no stage did all telephonists come out on a national scale, despite the willingness of the women to do so. Neither was there any question of all POWU members striking in sympathy with the 8 year old claim of the telephonists. The false statements of the labour minister for Posts and Telegraphs.. were not countered by the unions and it was and is the womens movement who sought support for the telephonists around the country. Exposing the lies of Cruise O'Brien who attempted to suggest that the women

wanted a higher basic rate was Irish women United who are attempting to hold a film tour of the country with the film "The Amazing Equal Pay Show". They have also pointed out by mass distribution of Posters.. the true facts of the case.

Such a coming together of women in the womens movement and women workers who are fighting for their rights is a huge step forward. But it would be a step backwards if they split up again after the tour.. as they did in the equal pay issue. And it would also be regrettable if women from different unions who come together to support the telephonists were not given a perspective to stay together. A platform of the minimum demands of the womens movement linked to a set of demands to democratise the unions so as to enable more women to join and participate, could provide the basis for a continuing unity of these women.

Equal Pay Without Further Delay!

WE WONT FORGET LIZ STUART

It is with the utmost sorrow that the International Marxist Group and the Movement for a Socialist Republic (Irish Section of the Fourth International) records the recent death of comrade Liz Stewart.

Comrade Liz had been a member of the IMG for three years, and although recent personal difficulties made it impossible for her to continue membership of the IMG, she remained fiercely committed to the politics of the Fourth International and had the perspective of rejoining the IMG once cir-

cumstances permitted.

For comrade Liz to become a revolutionary Marxist was not an easy or light-hearted step to take. Coming from a Protestant working class background in Belfast, to break from this type of environment was a much harder road to take than that facing most revolutionaries in Britain.

The comrade herself used to humourously recall how her first contact with the IMG was to tear down its Irish solidarity posters at Canterbury University. But once the comrade had committed her-

self to revolutionary Marxism, she worked without compromise in her main area of activity, the Irish solidarity movement. As the MSR has said in a statement, once Liz broke from the ideology of her background, 'she was one of us'.

Liz worked in the Troops Out Movement, the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee and other campaigns on the Irish issue in which the IMG was involved. When she visited Ireland she never failed to involve herself in the work of the MSR. At the time of her death, she was again returning

to activity, in particular on the issue of women and Ireland.

Besides the deep personal loss the many comrades who had the good fortune to know Liz Stewart will feel at her death, the revolutionary movement in Britain and in Ireland will remember most her ability to introduce fresh ideas into that movement, and her loyalty when carrying out the work of the movement.

The Fourth International is proud to have known comrade Liz and prouder still to have had her in its ranks.

SOUTH AFRICAN MILITANT TOURS IRELAND



On June 16th last year, in the African township of Soweto, on the outskirts of Johannesburg, a conflict broke out between the high-school students, school authorities, and the apartheid state over the students' refusal to accept Afrikaans as the official language of instruction. The conflict quickly blossomed into mass confrontations with Vorster's police and army throughout all the major cities and townships of South Africa. It was only by the bloodiest repression, with thousands killed by the state forces, that the revolt of blacks for their liberation has been temporarily quelled.

One of the leaders of the Soweto Students Representative Council, which organised the mass protests, Barney Mokgatle, is at present touring throughout the world, calling for solidarity with the struggle in South Africa. Recently he did a number of meetings in Ireland, where he was quick to see the similarities between the Irish struggle and his own.

Two meetings were held in Belfast. The first, in Queens University, was undoubtedly the largest meeting of international solidarity seen there for a long time. This was despite the fact that it was during vacation, and, more importantly, the Students Union Executive did all in its power to prevent the meeting taking place. After originally agreeing to sponsoring the meeting under the External Relations branch of the Executive, writing out and producing a leaflet and booking a room a few days before Barney was due to speak, they then proceeded to cancel 'all meetings' and duly removed the room-booking. Moreover, Vice-President of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), Gabriel Scally, who was advertised on the leaflet to speak on USI policy on South Africa, simply didn't turn up to the meeting. Both the National Union of Students (British equivalent of USI) and the USI pride themselves on opposition to the

apartheid regime, but faced with a positive initiative and opportunity to demonstrate practically that opposition, they ran away.

Barney also spoke at the Old Burnt Cabin in Andersonstown, contributing to a discussion of great importance to militants both in Ireland and in South Africa, - the relationship between the struggle for socialism and national liberation.

His final meeting in the Six Counties was at Magee College in Derry, where despite relatively low attendance a large sum of money was collected for his expenses and a solidarity committee set up.

Indeed, there are now three such committees in the North, formed through his tour, indicating the broad support existing amongst anti-unionists for the black liberation struggle.

Lively discussion followed Barney's speech at Trinity College Dublin, and the mood was one of enthusiastic commitment to the building of solidarity. Amongst speakers from the floor, black South African students (the majority of the 150 attendance were black) made many sharp and informed contributions to discussion.

It was stressed by several speakers that the struggle of the masses in South Africa was the struggle of the working class internationally for freedom from oppression. In terms of how to express solidarity, class action was seen as the key; and this was made concrete in the proposals for all-out trade union blacking of South African goods. Above all, the focus of June 16th - the anniversary of the Soweto uprising - was seen as an opportunity in the period leading up to it of fighting for trade union and student union sponsorship of a mass demonstration which would begin to raise the question of South African solidarity widely within the workers movement.

Barney also spoke at meetings in Limerick and at University College Dublin.

The central task will be to plan a campaign of co-ordinated activity around June 16th. Such a campaign should not be confined merely to the Movement for a Socialist Republic, who brought Barney over to Ireland, and to other revolutionary organisations such as Peoples Democracy and the Independent Socialist Party, who contributed towards organising his meetings, but should include the main anti-imperialist organisations in Ireland.

It should also include organisations such as the Anti-Apartheid movement, representative mass bodies such as the Trade Unions, Students' Unions etc., in effect all those for whom solidarity with the South African black masses is a political responsibility.

MIKE PINTER



She also related to the meeting about how she spent five hours in the Dail and the Senate, trying to obtain signatures on a petition which calls for a public enquiry into the conditions in Portlaoise. Five signatures were all she collected, those of three Senators and two T.D's. At the end of the meeting Paul Hurley, Civil Rights Officer of U.C.D. Students Union and member of the M.S.R. proposed that a further meeting should be held immediately after the Easter break to organise a student contingent for the demonstration to Portlaoise on April 17th. He also recommended that an enquiry should be held which would be independent of the Government and the State, but instead should be launched under the auspices of the Trade Unions involving reputable mass organisations in order to prevent a whitewash affair. The meeting endorsed both proposals.

Noel Vincent.

portlaoise protest meeting in ucd

A meeting was recently held in U.C.D. organised by a number of individuals in Sinn Fein and the M.S.R. in order to highlight the struggle for decent conditions

currently waged by the twenty hunger-strikers in Portlaoise Prison. All the speakers emphasised that the demands of the hunger-strikers were for the minimum conditions laid down by international bodies. Thus it was not necessary to share the political beliefs of the hunger-strikers in order to support them in their struggle.

An tAthair Piaras O'Duill called for an independant enquiry. Sean O'Bradaigh listed some of the people who had been refused entry to the prison: Dr. Lennon, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin the Bishop of Derry, Dr. Daly, Siobhain Mc Kenna and Senator Michael Mullen of the I.T.C.W.U. Nora Connolly O'Brien spoke of her attempts to break the "wall of silence" surrounding the case both at home and abroad. Amnesty International were now investigating the case but this process was too slow.

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NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENT; workers begin to resist



In recent months statements have been issued from many quarters on the future of NWA's. On more than one occasion, the ITGWU and more especially its vice president, John Carroll has expressed reservations on their value to workers. If even after 6 years of NWA's, this reflected a genuine appraisal of the situation by the union leaders, it would be welcome. But why should a number of bureaucrats who have consistently promoted these agreements take such an about turn?

Clearly it is not a case of them becoming "responsible" overnight. Rather, recent events in Shannon, may however give us a clue.

Addressing the AGM of the Shannon branch of the ITGWU, John Carroll warned the members and the employers to prepare themselves for a complete re-appraisal of industrial relations in local factories. He pointed to the "warning sign which have recently evidenced themselves on the Shannon Industrial Estate". Continuing on, he said; "We must now be in to question whether or not the time is overdue for a complete re-appraisal of relationships in the factories in Shannon."

SHANNON SETS THE PACE?

What then were the warning signs he referred to? Increasingly workers no longer accept the legality of the NWA's to keep wages down or undermine basic trade union principles. The examples of the Telephonists, the Airline workers and the building workers all point in this direction. The heavy battalions of the workers are moving and straining hard against the boundaries of these agreements. All over the 26 counties, struggles are breaking out which attempt to break out of the straitjacket which NWA place on them. Some are over wages, the major claims for anomaly or equal pay claims. But there are also a series of exemplary struggles taking place, many led by very young women workers for such basic issues as the right to join a trade... Hodge Finance in Dublin; the non-payment of NWA's... Allied Textiles Dublin; against the cutting of wages... Hickeys in Dublin and so on. In the Limerick/Shannon region in particular there has been a rash of strikes which reflect this growing confidence, Mohawk for union recognition BeFab on wages... De Beers on victimisation... SPS (limited action in support of their demand for a rise outside of the NWA.

These are the reasons why union leaders are talking about scrapping the NWA for something else. They are talking about pressure from the grassroots. But does this mean that this leadership will use the organised power of the workers in direct action to benefit its members? Not Likely!

STRATEGY EXPOSED IN SHANNON DISPUTE

What their strategy will be is clearly exposed by the example of the De Beers dispute. It is quite instructive to take a closer look at this dispute.

The issue at stake was blacklisting. De Beers sacked a worker and although he had only been there two weeks, the section shop-stewards took up the case because of the principle involved. The management claimed that the person sacked omitted a detail from his application form... he failed to mention that he had been working in another factory where he had suffered the same fate and lost the case at the Labour Court. The workers at De Beers refused to accept management's reasons for the dismissal and staged a sit-in at the factory administration section. A meeting of senior shop-stewards was held on the estate to discuss solidarity action. Grave concern was expressed over the fact of an FUE blacklist in operation. It definitely included people with certain political views who had records as active trade unionists.

As a result of this meeting we are aware that stoppages took place in SPS and in Lana Knit. Such inter factory acts of solidarity are almost unprecedented in the area and mark a major step forward in increasing the power of the workers to resist the employers' efforts to weaken their organisation. But unfortunately by a very small number the workers in De Beers have decided to refer the case to the Labour court.

PRESSURE FROM TRADE UNION OFFICIALS

Why then did a workforce initially opposed to going to the Labour Court change their minds? The answer is obvious. Before the solidarity actions could be strengthened and extended; union officials made determined efforts to steer this case into the Labour court... away from the method of direct action of the workers and into the arena of the so-called "independent" judges.

But however much they dislike it... all the signs are that workers will decide to fight issues by these means of their own strength. But they will find it difficult to resist the self-defeating strategy of the TU leaders if the struggles remain isolated and without perspective. As the Bottom Dog, which has covered the DE BEERS case extensively, the new found confidence will die if this strategy of the bureaucracy is not countered.

DIRECT ACTION V. DEFEAT.

The struggle for an alternative will and must be fought for within union branches as well as on the shop floor. It is from the branches that union officials claim their authority to

sell out every struggle. It is on this basis they choose not to fight. The union branches (weakened by the role successive NWA's impose on them) are being used as rubber stamps for the policies of the bureaucracy. The life of the union branch must be re-vitalised if they are to be made into weapons of action. A major part of this process will be the outlining of a clear class struggle alternative to the collaborationist policies of the bureaucracy. This is being attempted by many individuals in the TU's but all too often they are too easily isolated.

Had such a tendency been active in the union in Shannon, during the De Beers dispute, it would have been fighting for the extension by direct action of the struggle. It would have fought for the type of inter factory solidarity that had begun to develop. On the basis of examples like the De Beers case, it would have fought strongly within the trade unions for rejection of the Labour Court as something that could be trusted by workers and instead organising to involve broad layers of workers in action against the victimisation.

TRADE UNION CAUCUS/LIMERICK MSR.



MAY DAY 77 —

another year of struggle



May 1st is historically the day, when the world over, the working class demonstrates to re-affirm its solidarity against the power of capital., against imperialist exploitation and oppression. In significant areas the bourgeoisie, its colonial and neo-colonial agents are facing acute crises

In South Africa, the reactionary whits regime has been further discredited as a result of the Soweto student uprising and its aftermath. Initially a protest against cultural imperialism, it developed into a concerted attack by the black masses against the whole apparatus of apartheid..which is the lynchpin of imperialist oppression in South africa as a whole.

Western Europe is witnessing the right-back against the offensive of the bourgeoisie. Centre of the stage are the struggles on unemployment, cutbacks in Public expenditure of the European governments the right to strike and the independence of the Trade Unions. Britain, West Germany, and Denmark have had strikes against falling living standards.

The first three months in 1977 has seen strike waves in Belgium and the Netherlands. In France the gains of the reformist Socialist /Communist alliance and the large increase in the vote for the candidates of the far left in the municipal elections are a real blow to the bourgeoisie.

In all the countries of western Europe where the class collaborationist orientation of the social democratic and Communist parties. has through their control of the trade union apparatuses and identification with the trade union bureaucracy, tended to diffuse the the mounting struggle of the working class and led to a demoralisation amongst some sections of the workers movement. On the other hand it has pushed huge sections in search of an alternative leadership and perspective.

Italy sees a particularly evident form of class collaboration by a party which is preserving a minority Christian Democratic party in power and which is straining all its bureaucratic muscle to preserve working class passivity. Italian students in revolt against Governments proposals to "reform" the university system, were denounced by the CP as "parasites", "luddites and .. "Fascists"! The Cp even went as far to try and organise a strike against the students occupying their universities. The strike was a miserable flop and only further isolated the Cp from that layer of young workers who are seriously questioning their leadership.

The crisis in post-Franco Spain continues unabated where the Spanish working class has shown itself the most militant in western Europe. It is also the most successful in illustrating the austerity measures and repression of the Basques as a national minority. By maintaining militant solidarity and action sections of the workers have been able to challenge very effectively the bourgeoisie's attempts to restrict their democratic freedoms as under Franco.

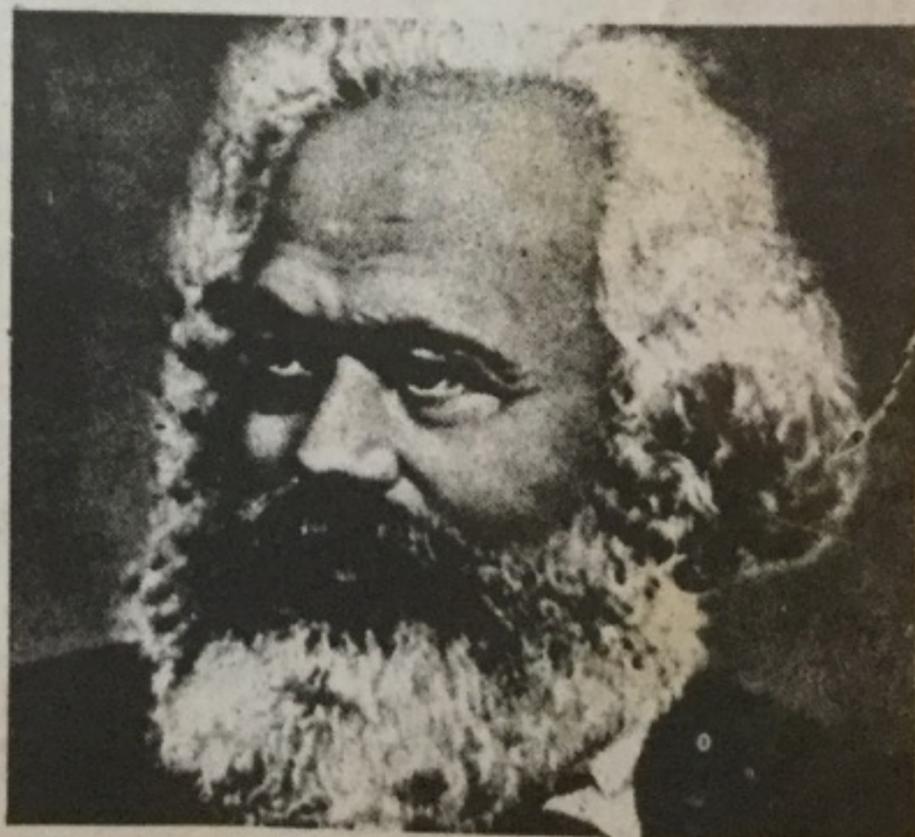
In Ireland, we have seen over the last year the systematic use of torture and police brutality North and South; continued British Army occupation and harassment; the training of the Provisional IRA (later to be attended by over 10,000 people); new repressive laws with the resultant erosion of civil liberties and the threatened hanging of Noel and Marie Murray. The north has seen however an upswing in the resistance of the anti-unionist population in the ghettos signified by the mobilisations in Turf Lodge and the appearance of the Relatives Action Committee. Also the formation of the Irish Front in Derry represents sections of the

Anti-Imperialist vanguard moving in the pursuit of solutions to the struggle.

In the South, May Day is greeted with growing resentment to the repressive policies of the Coalition, frustration with the attack on living standards and restrictions of NWA's. Large and heavy battalions of the workers are moving in the direction of a confrontation as unemployment reaches the 18% mark and inflation soars.

May Day 1978 may see the turning of the tide in favour of the Irish working class.

This depends on whether or not the revolutionary can come up with some answers to their questions. The MSR will strive to meet the challenge as part of our contribution.



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