



SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

VOL.4 No.2

Paper of PEOPLES' DEMOCRACY

Fianna Fail, SDLP, O'Fiaich OFF THE FENCE!

British treachery is not something new to the Anti-Imperialist movement or to the Irish Working Class. Over decades the British have manoeuvred against the rebellious Irish - often with success and sometimes with setbacks. We may have impeded the ability of the British to criminalise the prisoners, but we have not yet succeeded in neutralising this policy and such was the task with the last round in the prison struggle. As we engage in a new struggle around a Second Hunger Strike, the bitter lessons of British Betrayal are sharply engrained in the minds of many thousands who organised and marched for the protesting prisoners. Memories of promises made - false promises - on the basis of "secret talks and deals" have lingered. These have generated among many a new determination not to trust those like Haughey and other Fianna Fail leaders who refused the mandate from the prisoners' supporters and instead lobbied the British on their own secret terms.

Also remembered are those like O'Fiaich who asked Hunger Strikers to end their fast, without offering support for the organised campaign to win the five demands. These people offered the prisoners nothing, only the spectre of defeat - and created the opportunities for the British and their cohorts to isolate and outmanoeuvre 10 starving political prisoners.

The decision by the prisoners to go on another hunger strike has not been taken lightly. We believe that they are well aware of the consequences are grave. This decision illustrates their extreme frustration and anger. The British government's officials in charge of prison policy in the six counties cynically responded to every move the prisoners made, thereby encouraging the present outcome. But this Hunger Strike decision also illustrates the limitations of actions the prisoners can take inside the prison walls and the weakness of the mass movement on the outside. The confusion inside the campaign at the ending of the last Hunger Strike and the ensuing demobilisation of its forces, clearly left the prisoners with their backs to the wall. Promised concessions were then withdrawn and possible success started to shift towards a major setback.

People's Democracy expresses its deep concern that a second Hunger Strike is to begin. The last one indicated all the dangers of placing the massive responsibility for the struggle and principles involved on the shoulders of individual prisoners. They are indeed brave and courageous defenders of all the protesting prisoners. However, the tasks involved in defeating the British can only be successfully carried out by a mass movement - one which has its roots deep inside the organised Irish working class.

Therefore, the major task for the

Anti-Imperialists is to remobilise the mass campaign against the reneging by the British and for the implementation of the five demands. Getting the thousands of people who previously marched and organised before into the campaign again will not happen automatically. Definitive and clear plans will be necessary to galvanise the forces in the campaign. Projects must be built which will carry out its central needs. Pressure must be put onto the Nationalist Bourgeoisie. They must jump when we shout and come when we whistle! We must hold Fianna Fail and the SDLP hostage to our demands and not give them a mandate for more secret talks which they will use to demobilise the masses.

We must politically defend the right of the National H-Block/Armagh campaign to exist against the sectarian attacks by Loyalists. These attacks are their attempt to obstruct the right of the anti-unionist population to politically organise. If these remain unchallenged, they could succeed in demobilising layers within the campaign and politically isolating the Northern minority from the rest of the Irish Working Class. We must also counter the pro-Imperialist propaganda of Gerry Fitt and his cohorts. Through initiatives like the "Dump Fitt" campaign in West Belfast, we can ensure that never again will he and others like him be able to speak for the anti-Unionist population.

- We must avoid making overestimated and dangerous assessments of the present balance of strength between the Anti-Imperialist movement and British Imperialism. The can only lead to pushing the campaign beyond its capacity, threaten its credibility and possibly break the tenuous links with the Southern working class.

Every step the campaign and all the forces involved take over the coming weeks must be carefully considered. Our criteria for activity must be around 2 central axes: is there a clear political goal and direction; can the greatest number of people possible participate. Only actions which fulfill both can effectively build a mass campaign. People's Democracy clearly states that there can be no military solution to the prison struggle. Neither are the chances of successful remobilisation enhanced with an escalation of the military campaign. Quite the contrary, we have seen how reliance on such a strategy eventually becomes a real obstacle to the mass movement.

A strategy which avoids the pitfalls, we have outlined and which incorporates a plan to widen the base of the campaign and involve new layers of workers, women, students and youth, is the weapon we will need over the coming weeks.

It is the only weapon that can blunt the attacks of the British and force them onto the road to inevitable defeat.

SUPPORT THE PRISONERS



MAKE THE BRITISH CONCEDE!

FOR WORKER'S ACTION

A key element in winning the demands of the prisoners will be the taking of Industrial Action by key groups of workers. To this end, trade union supporters met in Derry on Saturday, February 21st and decided to build a workers' Day of Action on April 15th in support of the prisoners. This is seen as a launching focus for the trade union supporters of the campaign.

Workers are planning lobbies of trade union head offices to canvass support for the prisoners from the trade union leadership. Trade union leaders must be forced to support the prisoners and to protect workers who take industrial action from victimisation. International solidarity and strike action is also being planned.

The campaign as a whole must take on the task of canvassing groups of workers. All the action groups must see workers action as a priority in their areas. The Trade Union Sub Committee is planning closer

contact with the action groups and will be providing propaganda material and lists of key workplaces in each area.

As yet women workers have not been approached in an organised manner. As yet there are no women on the T.U. Steering Committee - this must be rectified as soon as possible if we are to take seriously the question of raising the question of Armagh with women workers. The under representation of militants from Belfast should also be rectified.

The Communist Party of Ireland should clarify its position with regard to the campaign as the mobilisation of its worker militants in support of the Day of Action is a priority. Officially the CPI does not support the National H Block/Armagh Committee for sectarian reasons, namely because they do not support the provos military campaign. Since support for the Provos campaign is not a demand of the Committee the CPI's position is

unprincipled. Rumours that the CPI has 'disciplined' members who participate in the campaign are disquieting.

The mobilisation by Sinn Fein of its trade union periphery should also be undertaken.

A successful Day of Action, especially by southern workers, would radically alter the balance in favour of forcing the British to retreat. The Working class has this potential power since it produces the wealth and services of society. The Nationalist consciousness of the Irish Working Class must be harnessed. If properly mobilised, British intransigence will be flattened in its wake.

ALL OUT APRIL 15th.

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DE LOREAN: NO SOLUTION TO CRISIS

The present crisis at the De Lorean car plant at Dunmurray in West Belfast, will come as no surprise to many people. When Roy Mason, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, announced the details of the project in August 1978, influential pro-capitalist journals, such as the Economist and the Wall Street Journal, voiced criticism of the commercial feasibility of the venture. However John De Lorean would have us believe that the present difficulties arise purely through lack of "operating capital", and he is confident that the company would make a "modest profit in 1981". However a report last December from a team of international consultants revealed numerous technical and production problems as well as financial problems.

The report from McKinsey and Co concluded that "the company's prospects for 1981 could be grim".

TAXPAYER FOOTS THE BILL

Regardless of the opinions of the capitalist press, the British government went ahead with the venture and the cost of



Roy Mason, who foisted De Lorean on the people of Belfast

the project was estimated at £65m. The lions share of £55m was to be provided by the government through the Ministry of Commerce and their agents in the Northern Ireland Development Association (NIDA). De Lorean was to find the balance of 10m. In fact to date the

government has provided funds to the tune of £70m and has just under-written bank loans worth another £10m.

De Lorean on the other hand only invested somewhere in the region of £4m and most of it isn't his own money. So if the plant

closes he has little to lose while the money held through the cuts in the Health and Social Services and other essential services, go to funding a White Elephant.

It is interesting to note that initially De Lorean had discussions with American businessmen, then with the Puerto Rican government and with the Irish government, through the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) before he finally decided on the Six County site. The reason he decided on West Belfast had nothing to do with any humanitarian concern about unemployment, he simply was offered the best deal, a blank cheque so to speak, from the British Labour government. The Puerto Ricans and the IDA were only prepared to advance between £30m and £40m and there had to be inbuilt safeguards and guarantees against total losses should the project fail.

Roy Mason told his negotiators to give De Lorean anything he wanted within reason! Roy of course was bowing out of the North and wanted to end his career as Northern Secretary on a high note.

No independent investigation was commissioned by the British to assess the feasibility of the project. De Lorean convinced Roy Mason it was alright and Mason fell for it. To add insult to injury we were told that the cuts in public spending on schools, hospitals and other social services were to be used to fund projects like De Lorean in order to "re-establish business confidence and provide jobs for the future". To date £70m of public money has been spent on De Lorean with 880 jobs to show for it, most of them loyalists, skilled workers from other declining industries around Belfast. That's almost £80,000 for each job and few jobs or training schemes for unemployed Catholics of West Belfast. So far we have heard nothing from Pitt, Devlin or trade union leaders, all of whom welcomed De Lorean with open arms in 1978. All of these, by their silence and inactivity support this kind of strategy as a means of combatting unemployment.

IMPERIALISM THE CAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

The present crisis at De Lorean underlines the weakness of this type of economic strategy which both British and Irish governments pursue with zeal, preferring to hand out millions of pounds of public money to con-men like De Lorean rather than expand the health and social services for example, thereby creating employment and providing a decent service for those least able to help themselves, the old and the sick. Their idea is to lure multinational companies like Ferenka and "fly by night" merchants like De Lorean, to Ireland. By offering massive state funded subsidies, tax free holidays and low interest loans, they hope that these people will be successful in exploiting our natural resources and working class and that somehow, if things get a bit tough, they will retain a commitment to the workers they have so successfully exploited! This is nonsense of course, Ferenka is a case in point and we have seen what can happen with capital intensive ventures like Strathern Audio thanks to capitalist government ministers who just can't wait to give away public money.

The fact is the imperialists have no answer to unemployment for workers of Ireland North or South, because they are the root cause of it. "When England sneezes Ireland catches cold". This accurately reflects the total domination of our whole economy by British imperialism. The continued existence of both partitioned states constitutes a real barrier to the unity of Irish workers which is necessary if we are to come to grips with unemployment and the many other social injustices in our society. Trade union activists must continue the fight for real democracy within the unions in order to force an end to the pro-imperialist and partitionist leadership.

They must fight for a 32 County County radical trade union movement with an action programme capable of uniting anti-imperialist workers North and South in opposition to unemployment, for an end to the squandering of public funds and for a policy of public expenditure on a programme of useful works. Only such a fight back by organised working class can defeat the strategy which allows con-men like John De Lorean to act out his fantasies at the expense of ordinary working people.

Defeat Paisley: Political Status NOW!



Ian Paisley's show of strength at the beginning of February, staged in the dark Antrim hills has been discussed by many as a stunt to whip up support for his Democratic Unionist Party in the forthcoming local government elections. Appealing as it may be to view the waving of 500 firearms' certificates as a publicity gimmick or Paisley as an Ulster Colonel Blimp, this would be false reassurance and dangerously mistaken.

Paisley is undoubtedly a master of publicity but he is no fool. He and his DUP face no real challenge within the loyalist population and was already assured of a very comfortable victory over his Official Unionist rivals in the May elections. The stakes in this game are much higher than the transfer of some votes between the Official Unionists and the DUP.

Paisley wants power. His whole career has trodden an ambivalent path of courting the loyalist paramilitaries

while retaining the cloak of legality for his extremist actions. This latest initiative displays the same ambivalence - a clear threat of armed violence but technically within the law.

Paisley has adopted the mantle of Carson with meticulous detail. Carson's UVF trained and recruited without ever firing a shot against the British forces. The threat of force and a promise of mutiny within the British army was sufficient to cover the British Government of the day. The haste with which Thatcher and Atkins rushed to reassure Paisley that the "constitutional" position of the North within the UK would remain unchanged is an indication that the British Tories are taking Paisley's threats seriously.

So too should the anti-unionist people in the North. At the first of the "CARSON TRAIL" rallies held in Omagh on February 13 Paisley issued the following warning: "You will never get your hands on the

Protestants of Northern Ireland because every last drop of Ulster blood would be willingly shed before we entered your priest-ridden banana republic".

Ostensibly this blood and thunder was directed at Charlies Haughey but the real threat is to the nationalist people of the 6 counties. It is their lives which will be at stake in the coming months.

The pretence for Paisley's campaign is the Thatcher-Haughey summit. Paisley's message to the North's unionists is that they are being betrayed by the British Tories. Paisley knows that there is no danger of Thatcher and Haughey agreeing to end partition and herald in a United Ireland. The betrayal which he fears is that the Thatcher-Haughey alliance may lead to new attempts to "reform" the North, new attempts to wallpaper over the sectarian features that mark the Northern statelet.

Paisley knows that sectarianism is the bedrock on which the North, an artificial creation, survives. He knows that any genuine reform in the North would lead inevitably to the collapse of the statelet. Paisley is quite prepared to see civil war, if necessary, to block any such eventualities.

It has to be said that there is a receptive audience for Paisley's ideas. Protestant workers today find themselves in the midst of uncertainty. The international crisis of imperialism is hitting them hard and for the first time, at least since the thirties, Protestant workers are facing mass unemployment. The collapse of traditional industries like shipbuilding and engineering coupled with the cuts in the public service have ended job security. It is a most appropriate time to play the 'Orange card', which offers certainty to Protestant workers amongst all the insecurities.

There are of course differences between 1912 and 1981. Unlike Carson, Paisley cannot confidently rely on the unqualified support of the British Tories. It is their government which he threatens with treas-

on. But this difference should not be overestimated. Thatcher may not be pleased with Paisley's threats but at the same time she allows the UDA to remain a legal organisation, and continues a policy of strengthening the loyalist RUC and UDR. All 3 organisations were well represented in the Antrim hills. If the British Tories do not show the same enthusiasm for Paisley that their ancestors showed for Carson, there is absolutely no reason to expect that they will determinedly oppose him.

Paisley's potential firepower is literally terrifying. Apart from his armed supporters in the so-called security forces, the North's loyalists have an enormous number of weapons at their command. Some 110,000 guns of various description are legally held in the 6 counties, the vast majority in loyalist hands. As the case of Bernadette McAliskey's unsuccessful applications for a firearms licence illustrates, it is almost impossible for an anti-unionist to obtain a legal gun. In addition to those guns legally held, the loyalist paramilitaries are heavily armed and are reputed experts at the home made manufacture of firearms.

In the context of a new hunger strike by the political prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh, Paisley's manoeuvres represent a double edged threat. The anti-unionist population will need of course to be vigilant in its own defence but we should not be torn away from our main task of the moment - the defence of the hunger strikers and their prison comrades. Paisley's attacks should be taken up within the context of the H-Block/Armagh campaign. Attempts by the SDLP and the Church to utilise the loyalist threat to dampen support for the hunger strikers must be firmly resisted.

The best defence against Paisley, the best way to show the British that we will not be intimidated is to build the massive campaign necessary to win victory for our political prisoners. The SDLP and the Church can be part of this campaign or they can get out of the firing line.

JOHN MAGEE

DENIS LARKIN

HOW BERNADETTE AND MICHAEL WERE SHOT

Unanswered Doubt

"There's just one possibility they knew it was going to happen and they decided to kill two birds with one stone - have us done in, and catch the boys who were doing it."

The speaker is Michael McAliskey, talking to Geoff Bell of the British newspaper, Socialist Challenge, about the role of the British Army in the attack on himself and Bernadette last January by the UDA. Socialist Challenge is the paper of the British Section of the Fourth International, the International Marxist Group.

In a gripping account of the shooting, Michael relates how the attack occurred; how he attempted a human blockade of the front door against a combination of sledgehammers and bullets; how he feigned death after bullets had entered his head, shoulder and stomach; how the Brits left himself and Bernadette lying for 20 minutes without any medical treatment after they had "accidentally" stumbled upon the attack.

Michael reveals how the RUC visited the McAliskey household before the attack. They were very specific about a death threat and said that it emanated from Belfast. However, they didn't seem to take it too seriously. As Michael says:

"The police warned us of the attack about eight weeks ago. They laughed it off, saying "Don't pass any remarks about these things."



It was the first time the police ever came to tell us about a threat."

The refusal of the RUC to allow Michael and Bernadette to have a gun is all the more criminal in the light of this knowledge. Michael's comments are succinct and to the point:

"Obviously the gunmen who came knew we had no weapons. You don't come battering on a door if you think you'll be met by a gun. They must have been very sure we had nothing. There's only one way they could have known and that was through the police."

This brings us to the British Army and the basis for Michael's assertion

at the beginning of this article. As we reported in the last issue of SOCIALIST REPUBLIC, the first soldiers on the scene were English not the Scottish regiment based in the area. Michael recounts his glimpse at one of these Brit specimens while badly wounded, lying on the floor:

"His face was blackened and he had one of those camouflage outfits on him, not the normal soldiers uniform."

These soldiers were dropped into the area the evening before the attack, three quarters of a mile away. They probably then staked out the McAliskey house overnight in the sure knowledge of an attack the next morning. After allowing the UDA to do their dirty work they stepped in as the 'saviours' of the hour - quietly confident that Bernadette and Michael would be dead.

In this way they hoped to deprive the anti-Imperialist population of one of the most gifted and determined leaders since James Connolly. The failure of the attack should make us more determined than ever to drive the British out of Ireland for good. To do that we must first win the demands of the struggling prisoners in the H Blocks and Armagh. That is the task which Bernadette was accomplishing when she and Michael were shot down. It is one we must re-dedicate ourselves to.

JOHN O LEARY

READING ABOUT REPRESSION

FROM CIVIL RIGHTS TO CIVIL WAR by O'Dowd, Rolston, Tomlinson. CSE Books.

The main theme of this book is the inherently sectarian nature of the Six County statelet. The authors argue that the political changes which occurred over the past ten years have not modified social and economic discrimination against the Catholic minority. This was never the intention of the British authorities. Their aim was to adapt the Northern state to new post-war forms of capital development while leaving the old privilege of the Protestant community intact. As the title of the book implies, there is no "reformist" halfway house between sectarianism and the destruction of the N.I. statelet.

This thesis has much in common with the analysis put forward by Peoples Democracy. The authors however make their own distinctive contribution, not least because they bring together for the first time, such a wealth of data and information. But also some new and important points are aired in the course of their discussion. The most striking feature of their work is that they treat the North solely in terms of its relationship with Britain. Their intention is to avoid a "potted" history of events "complete with constitutional scenario, etc". But when they come to look at trends of development and possible outcomes, this artificial starting point produces some strained reasoning.

Why is the choice between a return to old fashioned Unionist rule and the dismantlement of the N.I. statelet so stark? Why have the changes introduced under Direct Rule no chance of producing political stability? O'D, R' and T's explanation is framed in the context of overall changes in the British state which accompanied the rise of post-war, Corporative capitalism. Briefly, centralised economic planning put greater emphasis on Regional co-ordination and efficient Local Government. While this approach was consistent with the interests of British capitalism, it clashed head-on with

the needs of Unionism which relied heavily on decentralised local administration to keep the Catholic minority in check. As the authors see it, the contradiction between a sectarian society and Corporate state institutions, condemned Britain's power-sharing manoeuvres to inevitable failure. Since then the restructuring of British capitalism in the late '70's has changed the balance in favour of Unionism. Local government was once again becoming an important tool by which the central state delegates responsibility for public expenditure cuts. This new decentralisation of power is facilitating a return to traditional (albeit modified) Unionist rule.

Despite disclaimers to the contrary, O'Dowd, Rolston and Tomlinson are misled by a fatalistic appraisal of the relationship between economics and politics. There is an implicit assumption in their analysis - evidenced by their belief that the changes of the past decade were a reflex of British economic strategy that political arrangement relate directly to specific economic and social requirements.

It is odd that the authors should make such an error since their general approach owes much to the work of the State Group of the Conference of Socialist Economists which displays great subtlety on this issue. Among other things, the CSE-SG carefully acknowledges the autonomous political rationale of Local Government - its role in legitimating bourgeois democracy and representing dominant local interests. Even in Britain itself, these specifically political functions thwarted the streamlining of local administration, permitting as it happened, the wholesale survival of archaic, Tory dominated authorities. Similarly, all the evidence (explored by the authors themselves) indicates that an acceptable compromise between the Unionists and British Government had been reached in the 60's which would have

reconciled both the need for "strong" local government and the regional advantages of the North for the British economy.

They do not give any extended treatment to their claim that a restoration of local government in Britain will promote a return of Unionist power in the North. In any event, it is hard to imagine how the Tory cuts can be interpreted as strengthening local administering. By making the "quangos" and other bureaucratic agencies, powerless it is possible that a political vacuum will be created at local level. While this may increase the bargaining power of Unionism it does not automatically provide an institutional framework for reestablishing a Stormont-type regime.

The above points are made, not to deny the plausibility of the author's basic thesis, but to indicate that an important political factor - the revolt of the Catholic masses - is marginalised in their analysis. The change in Britain's policy and its relations with the Unionists cannot be understood without putting the struggle of the Catholic minority at the centre of development. Many of the changes introduced in the 70's went far beyond anything originally intended by Britain and came as a direct attempt to diffuse mass pressure.

That Nationalist revolt was itself triggered by a series of complex developments which operated on a 32 country level and in reaction, Britain's response has gradually assumed an all-Ireland character. The proper point of departure for analysing the North is, indeed, the role it plays in maintaining British domination throughout Ireland. Had the authors concentrated on this they could have produced not just an interesting book, but a text indispensable for all those fighting British imperialism.

BRENDAN KELLY

ITGWU Election



The conservative nature of the leadership of the Trade Union movement is becoming increasingly evident to broader layers of rank and file members. The bureaucracy's role of "policeman" or "watchdog" has been codified in restrictive National Wage Agreements and clearly illustrated by inability to deliver even the most basic social reforms. or address the fundamental issue of the National Question.

Militancy and direct action among key sections of workers continues to grow. Their determination has broken through the strangling grip of the labour bureaucrats. And these, rather than be cast aside on the rising wave of industrial action, are shifting ground, at least in words rather than action. They are more conscious of the pressure from below. Statements questioning the durability of the National Understanding have been made, but entirely in the absence of an independent plan of action by T.U. leaders.

Two experiences probably crystallise the frustration of thousands of workers:-
The conservative attitude of their leaders towards the Tax Reform campaign by which they diverted a growing mass movement from a path towards victory by mass and direct action, into a side show of petition gathering and little else. This must be seen by workers as a cynical manoeuvre by the ICTU which opposed the mass mobilisations in the first place and then took in order to destroy them.

The dogged determined no holds barred attitude of the farmers leaders which has stood in sharp contrast to the trade union bureaucrats.

While there is no wide scale move towards creating a new leadership in the unions, something is happening in many of the larger unions. Some of the "Old Guard" - i.e. the deadwood of the old labour aristocracy are being replaced by a new "Elite". Though fundamentally social democratic in nature, it couches reformist projects in radical language and it appears also somewhat more efficient at building its base. The motor force for this new elite is the organisation "Sinn Fein the Workers Party".

It is obvious to many in the anti-imperialist and labour and trade union movements that this party has adapted its politics to the social layer it has built itself on. This is particularly evident in the way it has accommodated the middle and lower level bureaucracy in the unions through its industrial policy.

For the SFWP National Wage Agreements are not fundamentally undemocratic just inadequate in achieving

social reform and full employment. They argue Industrial Expansion is necessary with thousands out of work. Multinational investment they believe is the only major option available - so the current orientation is towards more pressure on the IDA. This they pose as the major strategy to fight unemployment.

Avoiding the issue of agriculture and necessary development of this sector, SFWP insists that small farmers are to be sacrificed in order to curb the big ranchers. SFWP is content in throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

MAKING A BID FOR POWER.

The upcoming contest for position of Vice President in the country's largest union the ITGWU puts many questions on the agenda for this party. They are fielding Des Geraghty (if not a formal member - a close sympathiser). His appeal for votes circulated to all the branches mentions his history and experience with the union and more recently his role as "communications officer". A strong position from which to fight for power. But not a word of politics - of what the immediate issues are and changes to be made. But Des Geraghty is not alone. Not one of the candidates (ALL men) has stated anything other than an outline of their personal history. It would be hard for the rank and file to be enthusiastic about this election.

Militants must discuss the following point; would a vote for any of the candidates change the balance in favour of the rank and file.

The conduct of the election is also a major reason for alienation of the rank and file. It is, according to union rules, the branch committees which mandate the delegates to conference (elected from branch committee) to vote for a particular candidate. The vast numbers of rank and file members are uninvolved. It is obvious that the method of general meetings of the branch and a national ballot is the most democratic way to elect a leadership.

Trade union militants should vigorously pursue a course of confronting all the candidates on their views on all major issues which face the trade unions and the Irish working class. They should be questioned on: equality and democratic rights for women; the economic crisis and their solutions; repression and the "criminalisation" of Irish political prisoners. In short, they should be forced to stand up and be counted - or cast aside. Only when they have spoken or been seen to be silent, can the question as to who defends the rights and interests of Irish workers be clearly recognised.

JOAN BRADY

Despite every effort by the prisoners, the British have insisted on continuing the degradation inside H Block and Armagh. The H Block/Armagh Committee has begun, from the January conference in Dublin the long and patient task of remobilising and reactivating the local committees.

Just what is the motivation of British intransigence? That the H Block struggle is of central political importance is confirmed by British actions since the beginning of the last hunger strike.

BRITISH OPPRESSION

The prisoners, in an attempt to force the implementation of British concessions, 'conformed' and asked for their clothes at the weekend. The British could have provided the clothes and continued the other aspects of their oppression when the prisoners later refused prison clothes or do prison work. This would have brought H Block into line with the practice in Armagh and made further movement possible.

The British refuse to do this. They refuse to grant the prisoners any shred of human dignity, even under conditions where they would be able to continue to punish the prisoners and deny their demands for political status.

The outcome of the last hunger strike should finally end all British claims to act as a "peace-keeping" force in the North. It shows clearly that their aim is to defend partition and crush all anti-imperialist sentiment in the Irish working class and they were prepared to use large-scale violence to achieve this.

TWO LAWS

Other British activities show that a final victory over the prisoners would not be followed by the 'rule of law' but by the full establishment of dual system of law -- one law for anti-unionists and another for pro-imperialist groups. The evidence of this is overwhelming: the cover-up of UDA involvement in the attempted killing of Bernadette and Michael McAliskey and the refusal to ban them. The attempt to dismiss Paisley's threats and the underlining of the fact of a selective arming of Unionists by the British is further evidence.

The greatest evidence is offered by the H Block/Armagh struggle itself. All the prisoners are charged with forcefully opposing British rule. Many are held on a 'membership' charge which itself carries a ten year sentence. As if this were not enough further indignities are heaped on them in prison. In the meantime, the members and leaders of Loyalist gangs dedicated to the sectarian killing of Catholic civilians can operate without question by the State forces.

SETBACK

When we look at the full range of British activity we can see that the only force guaranteed to push them back was a mass movement of the Irish people. The H Block/Armagh campaign united all the anti-imperialist militants and built massive demonstrations but did not build this mass movement. It was not able to force the British to implement concessions to the prisoners and has now suffered a considerable setback.

It is important to face this if we are to rebuild on a realistic basis. It is also important to understand the reason for the setback--the inability of our movement to face the British with something worse than the granting of the prisoners' demands, and on a lesser level our inability to continue the mobi-

lisations and continue the pressure after the ending of the hunger strike. Has the recent conference developed a plan of action that can overcome this setback and lead us to a victory?

NEW AIMS

The main resolution, put forward by the National Committee, listed a whole series of strategic aims for the campaign. These include:

- 1) Demands on the Fianna Fail government and on nationalist groups, North and South, to withdraw from all talks with the British.
- 2) An end to all cross-border collaboration.
- 3) Calls on the Nationalist parties, churches and trade unions to condemn the assassination of H Block/Armagh militants and defend the right of the campaign to carry on political activity.
- 4) A threat to destabilise the six counties if the British do not give way (amended by the IRSP to include destabilisation of the 26 counties).
- 5) Calls for the building of the campaign in trade unions, amongst youth and in the women's movement.

Does this provide a way forward for the campaign? We believe that the general line, which reflects elements of PD proposals during the hunger strike, does do this. However, there are serious weaknesses. The resolution has ultraleft elements -- section 4 is utterly beyond the capacities of the campaign and would require its transformation into a revolutionary party, rather than a united movement for the defence of the prisoners. The resolution does not detail the methods of building the campaign in each area.

AMENDMENTS

PD put two amendments to the main resolution. One called on the campaign to bend all its efforts to avoid the danger that a new hunger strike would pose for the prisoners and the movement. This was withdrawn because we mistakenly believed that a hunger strike was being called from the conference. The other amendment called for a propaganda campaign as an immediate priority to clear up the confusion following the ending of the last hunger strike.

The two amendments need to be explained in relation to one another. The purpose of the first is not to open a public debate between prisoners and the movement or to imply less than full support for the prisoners now they have gone on a new hunger strike. The prisoners can not withstand hellish conditions indefinitely. If they are forced to undertake a new hunger strike we must do all in our power to win victory for them.

The point is however that we have suffered a setback that makes remobilisation a harder task.

Our last strategy was not sufficient so we not only have to remobilise, but we have to do so on a different basis, on the lessons of the last hunger strike. The campaign has a responsibility to recognise that success or failure rests with it and not the prisoners and that the prisoners must have accurate information about the state of the campaign on which to base a decision.

The other PD amendment recognises the fact that a new strategy is based not simply on resolutions from the leadership but on the actions and understanding of militants on the ground. They will have to be convinced of the value of a new strategy and that must be the first priority of the campaign.

DEMOCRACY

PD has argued throughout the period of the hunger strike and even before for the central importance of democracy and open debate. This is not some sort of lunacy or diversion but a vital necessity. Supporters of the campaign have to agree not just on the five demands but on a plan of action to implement them that deals with a constantly shifting political background and deliberate ploys by the British to confuse and demobilise the campaign.

This need is not met just by discussion in the action committees. One of the gains of the campaign was the new areas of struggle opened up: Trade Unions, Youth, Women's Movement and International solidarity work.

POLITICAL PARTIES

There was a sharp debate at the conference about the right of anti-imperialist political parties to be represented in the campaign. PD strongly supports this right of representation. The simple fact is that unity of a united movement consists precisely of a unity of different parties and their supporters and this provides the framework for drawing the individuals into action.

Opponents of this view argue that they are not trying to exclude parties -- just to ensure that they work through the action committees. Parties provide not just individual militants but an organised machine that carries out publicity and organisational tasks and argues political positions around which debate can take place. Moralising about campaign work discriminates against members of parties -- who have a double burden of campaign work and more general party work to carry out. It also tends to narrow the campaign to the most active and exclude new layers we might be able to persuade into action. We have already been through the consequences of this type of thinking in the RACs and there is no point in repeating that process on a national level.

A final point -- the history of the past ten years shows that unity depends on the active support of the Republican groups and especially of Sinn Fein. Any 'non-political' approach

FUND DRIVE

The British betrayal of the prisoners is the cause for the serious situation in H-Block and Armagh. All the resources of our organisation will be used over the coming weeks to ensure the prisoners' lives will not be lost.

Our target last time round was £700. We raised over half that figure. For a start we want to complete the £700 target and push towards £1000. We appeal to all our sympathisers and all who are in political support of PD to dig deep in their pockets. The stakes are high, the tasks huge. John North, Connolly Bookshop, Avoca Park, Andersonstown, Belfast.

disguises this central fact and makes unity more difficult to achieve. In fact the most worrying aspect of the conference was the virtual abstention of Sinn Fein and the IRSP in the debate. The campaign needs their enthusiastic participation and their supporters should question their silence.

MILITARISM

This silence can be linked to a change of strategy within the Republican movement. During the hunger strike the majority of anti-imperialists were united not just on the 5 demands but on the method of mass action. Now the Republican movement is committing more resources to military actions. For 5 years military actions have failed to win the battle for political status. In the recent campaign military actions did not advance the struggle and in some instances actually held it back. United mass action did force the British to make concessions even if we were not able to follow up on these. Yet many militants cling to the militarist conception of mass action as subordinate to military action, rather than the other way around. Getting rid of this confusion is of major importance for the future advance of the campaign.

DEFENCE

How can the campaign help resolve this confusion? Its first task is of course to build mass mobilisations that will unify all the anti-imperialist militants and political parties. To do this successfully it must take steps in its own defence that involve appeals to the mass of the Irish people. The conference has already agreed to call on political parties, trade union and other organisations to condemn the campaign of assassination aimed at it.

It must go on to ensure that the attacks are investigated and the level of British collusion determined and made public.

It must establish government complicity in Garda harassment.

Each demonstration and march must be filed for in order to establish that the political responsibility for any violence lies with the state

Open and democratic stewarding bodies need to be established, and clear guidelines laid down for the defence of marches and demonstrations.

The aim of each march and the tactics being adopted need to be explained before each demonstration rather than being applied in a heavy-handed manner.

WINNING THE MASSES

If there is one single reason why we were unable to resolve the situation in the prisons during the last hunger strike it is because we were not able to break the faith of the mass of the Irish people in the bourgeois nationalist parties. Their sympathy with the hunger strikers was linked to the belief that Haughey, Hume and company were willing and able to intervene. Unfortunately the campaign did not devote major resources to breaking that belief.

The main resolution at conference changed that. Putting pressure on these parties was posed as a central strategy.

The conference agreed to call for:

An end to talks with the British,

Withdrawal of anti-unionist councillors from councils in the North,

An end to cross-border collaboration.

PD agrees with these but sees them as general aims rather than as guides to immediate action. We weren't able to achieve them at the height of the hunger strike and we are unlikely to achieve them in the short term.

Our short term aims must be more immediate; work in the areas to demand that councillors and TDs support the five demands; to involve themselves in the campaign and fight openly in their parties in defence of the prisoners. In the North it might be possible to build an open conference of councillors to discuss action.

Anti-imperialists need to understand the nature of the bourgeois nationalist parties. They are pro-imperialist. They want to see the stabilising of imperialist rule and the defeat of all the anti-imperialist forces. Any apparent contradiction of this in their words or actions arises from their need to appease the massively anti-imperialist sentiment of the mass of the people. We can use this contradiction as a lever to bring the masses into action and thus force both the British and their local supporters to retreat. This needs a fine sense of balance. If we ignore them they retain popular support and we remain relatively isolated. If we simply appeal to them we will simply reinforce popular illusions.

BROAD CAMPAIGN

For reasons of space we are not able to deal in detail with the other areas of struggle outlined by the conference: trade unions, youth students and women. We will return to these in the next issues of Socialist Republic. We would however point to one simple fact: in none of these areas is there already in existence an organised anti-imperialist current. This means that all the forces of the campaign will have to intervene in these areas. It cannot simply be left to small sub-committees. The sub-committees will have the role of co-ordinating, providing information, and drawing together all the people that are eventually mobilised. Their success will depend on the support of the whole campaign and on its success in pressuring the political parties in the country as a whole.

British savagery against the prisoners and conciliation to Loyalism should convince everyone of the central importance of the H Block/Armagh struggle. In the hunger strike campaign this realisation united all the anti-imperialist militants. But we did not organise the mass of the Irish people and because of this we were not able to consolidate the concessions that we did force from the British and the movement has now suffered a setback.

The chief need now is that we remobilise and learn the lessons of the hunger strike in formulating a new policy. The full attendance at the conference shows that we can remobilise and the main resolution shows that at least the outlines of a strategy are available. We have made a start but now serious discussion is needed at all levels to change rather vague and rhetorical aims into a campaign of action. We need to defend ourselves and we need to expose the bourgeois allies of imperialism above all we need to prove the method of mass action as the crucial weapon for the prisoners and for the anti-imperialist cause.

U.S. HANDS OFF EL SALVADOR!



Mexico City protest in support of struggle in El Salvador. Estimates of number participating in January 22 march ranged from 50,000 to 100,000.

Once more, the most powerful government on earth has been guilty of genocide, just as it was in Vietnam and in so many other countries.

That is the only conclusion you can come to when you consider the current war in El Salvador, for it is the US governments of both Carter and Reagan that have armed to the teeth the Salvadoran military/Christian Democratic junta, its army and associated death squads which were responsible for the deaths of an estimated 10,000 people in El Salvador in 1980.

Against a background of military right wing terror, the revolutionary fighters of the Faribundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) launched a general offensive against the hated junta on January 10 of this year with a call to arms. The US government of Jimmy Carter responded by resuming military aid to the junta on Jan 14, aid which had been suspended after widespread popular anger both in the US and elsewhere about the rape and murder of three American nuns and a lay missionary on December 2, 1980, by members of the military "security forces".

What's more, on January 16, Carter approved an additional \$5 million in arms for the junta, including six UH1H ("Huey") helicopters, of the type used by the US army in Vietnam along with US advisers. Indeed, the Vietnamese war is further recalled by the use of napalm - like incendiary bombs in El Salvador and the wholesale slaughter of peasants.

Coinciding with the resumption of military aid, the capitalist press hastily reported the defeat of the FMLN general offensive, even claiming that the left wing forces are losing support, picturing the masses as being indifferent to both sides. While it is quite true that the FMLN has not yet succeeded in overthrowing the junta and that the general strike was uneven, this has to be seen in the light of the savage repression carried out by the junta's forces and allies. In many cases, workers were simply killed for going on strike. What's more the FMLN proved its ability to mount a coordinated offensive and to act as a single army operating freely in the rural areas and capable of mounting actions virtually anywhere in the country.

Comparison with the final days of the Somoza regime in nearby Nicaragua, in July 1979, however, raises questions concerning both the general strike and the level of US aid to the junta. In Nicaragua, in July 1979, the general strike which paralysed all the urban centres as well as the massive popular participation in the anti-Somoza struggle were clearly decisive factors in the victory of the Sandinista Front. A similar level of mass action in El

Salvador could really tip the balance in favour of the revolutionary forces. This in turn raises the questions of the ability of the junta to continue killing peasants and workers and also of how to stop the U.S. aid to the junta.

It is already the stated aim of the new Reagan administration to prop up anti-revolutionary regimes friendly to the U.S. irrespective of how barbaric those regimes may be. In central America today this is interpreted as a green light by all the military dictatorships to step up their murder campaigns against anyone who opposes them or who aspires to a better way of life. This applies also to countries beyond El Salvador in the region. Apart from Nicaragua and perhaps Costa Rica, murder of political activists is commonplace in Central America.

In Guatemala, however, the last year has seen a significant increase in the level of organised opposition to the dictatorship of General Romeo Lucas Garcia, inspired by the victory of the Nicaraguan revolution and the Salvadoran struggle. As in El Salvador, police and army units have used cover names - the "White Hand", the "Secret Anti-Communist Army", the "Death Squad" - to hide their murders (a tactic they've used for about fifteen years). But in Guatemala today various sectoral struggles - trade union struggles, struggles of landless Indian peasants, anti-repression struggles - have begun to move to unity with the formation of the Democratic Front Against Repression (FCDR). To a lesser extent this process has also begun in Honduras.

That's one reason why U.S. imperialism under Sheriff Reagan is once more giving the go-ahead to mass murder - a victory in El Salvador, coming soon after successful revolutions in Nicaragua and Grenada would give an enormous boost to workers and peasants all through Central and South America. It would have repercussions far beyond Central America and would be a giant blow to the monopolists in the world's most rapacious power.

U.S. Imperialism has to contend not only with heroic workers and peasants in Central America but also with problems at home, one of the most significant of these being the suspicion with which it is viewed by millions of working people and youth in the U.S. itself. They remember Vietnam and Watergate. Thus whereas in 1965, the US could simply send in the marines to put down an uprising in the Dominican Republic, its capacity for military adventures overseas is reduced since the Vietnam war. Overcoming this so-called "Vietnam syndrome" is one of the tasks the new Reagan administration has in mind - hence the stepping up of attacks on Cubans and Nicaragua for their wholehearted solidarity with the fight against tyranny. These attacks include the cutting off of economic loans to Nicaragua and attempts to organise an economic blockade of Cuba.

The stakes for U.S. imperialism are so high in El Salvador that they are willing to help perpetrate any number of atrocities to achieve their goals. We must prevent further horrors.

The Limerick El Salvador Committee may be contacted c/o Sean Loughran
John Street
Limerick.

CIARAN MAC NAIMIDHE.

Students Support Prisoners

There is widespread support for H-Block and Armagh among students. This is the message that came out of a National Student H-Block/Armagh Conference last month in Trinity College Dublin. 17 colleges were represented at the conference and they saw their central task as the relaunching of the campaign in the student movement.

While there has been very little student activity on H-Block/Armagh since January, the structures to build a mass student campaign still exist - action groups in all the major colleges and a National co-ordinating committee.

The main discussions at the conference were around the political basis of the campaign and future activity. Most delegates felt the politics of the H-Block/Armagh issue had been left out of the campaign and that this had been a major barrier to the winning support among students.

It was decided that future propaganda would situate the protest of the prisoners in the context of the sectarian repressive nature of the 6-county state. Combined with a motion which welcomed all support for the prisoners' demands, this decision provoked a clear political framework for the campaign.

Given the closeness of the hunger strike, most of the conference time was spent discussing activity. As well as mobilising student contingents for the March 1st demonstration in Belfast and the Armagh jail picket on International Women's Day March 8, it was decided to hold a national student day of action on March 14th. The political targets for this action would be Fianna Fail, the SDLP and the Catholic Hierarchy - these were the people who did their best to undermine the campaign during the last hunger strike. They called for an

end to the hunger strike to allow for a settlement but they have been totally silent for the last two months while Britain reneged on its agreement with the prisoners. To build for these activities, a propaganda campaign will be launched in the colleges, through public meetings, leaflets, etc. explaining the current situation in the prisons. It is the aim of the campaign to make the struggle of the prisoners in H-Block/Armagh the central issue in the student movement. Motions in support of the prisoners will be raised in all students' union elections and at students' union meetings.

A special effort will be made to get all College women's groups to take up the issue of the women in Armagh jail.

Just as the campaign as a whole has been under attack at every level from assassinations to police harassment so also the student campaign has to defend its right to exist. The defence of the right to organise politically will be a central feature of the student campaign. This issue has already been raised and will continue to be raised through publicising police harassment and denial of facilities by College Authorities and by getting student unions to campaign on these issues. The conference also promised student support for all defence activities of the national campaign.

It was resolved also to build closer links with the Youth Campaign on H-Block and to build joint Student/Youth activities. It is hoped to mobilise youth for the Day of Action. There are plans for all student action groups to send delegates to the Youth Conference on March 14th. This will be an important step in unifying the two campaigns which will have great benefits for the campaign as a whole.



Recognising the importance of international solidarity the conference decided to seek support for the prisoners among Youth and Student organisations abroad and specific plans are being made to hold a fringe meeting on H-Block/Armagh at the conference of the British student body, National Union of Students.

One of the most important decisions of the conference was to maintain action groups after the resolution of the campaign and to organise a conference in October to build on the

the campaign and to organise a conference to build on the gains which the campaign has made in the student movement. The actual theme of this conference is to be decided following discussion in the action groups. This decision will hopefully get over the recurrent problem in the student movement of having to start from scratch with every issue that comes up each academic year.

The October conference provides the opportunity to build a strong anti-imperialist current in the student movement which will be capable of leading students in the fight against repression but on all other issues, such as the oppression of women, inadequate education system, which arise from imperialist domination of Ireland.

PAUL HURLEY AND
SEAN MARMION



WHO IS TO BLAME?

In the aftermath of the Stardust fire at Artane, a cloud of gloom settled over Dublin city. In such a tragedy it is hard to know who to blame at first - the weak fire hazard legislation; the non-implementation of the existing laws, the failure to ban certain inflammable materials for use in public places, or the appalling lack of social facilities, a lack which drove 800 young people into an inflammable death trap as their only form of leisure.

When the ash settled and the 46 bodies were buried, we were left with a public enquiry which removed the Department of Environment, which was in charge of the implementation of fire regulations, from all responsibility. The Dangerous Substances Act (1972) is a minimal piece of legislation dealing with, among other items, the danger of polyurethane in

furniture and ceilings. Since its passage in 1972, this Act has been ignored by proprietors and the Department alike.

Ten new inspectors have been added to the fire protectorate - but inadequate staffing has been constantly pointed to be Fire Officers. As long ago as 1979, John Connolly, the Chief Fire Officer pointed this out in the course of legal proceedings against the Department of the Environment. Despite the warnings of Whiddy and Bundoran, the complacency evident in 1978 continued until last month.

In 1976, a Bill dealing with Building Regulations was mentioned in the Dail. That Bill, in five years, never got beyond the draft stage, and buildings have continued to be built on the old capitalist maxim of "what's cheapest is best".

The crocodile tears shed over the graves of the young Stardust victims by those very politicians who have done nothing in the last ten years to improve standards and who even now, are attempting to restrict the terms of reference of the enquiry, brought to mind the film, The Towering Inferno.

The film showed how the instinct for profits led to the use of the cheapest building materials and to a lack of emergency equipment. Only when the fire in the film had ended with many deaths did the profiteer-proprietor tell the audience that "it would never happen again". Our clear feeling was that it was a bit late for the killer to repent.

The night after the Stardust tragedy, the clubs and discos of Ireland were full again, although the papers informed us: that "a cloud of gloom hung over them". Again the Government must be held responsible for a situation in which young people have no outlet for their scarce leisure but dangerous over-priced and privately owned discos. Even now the provision of genuine and diverse facilities for young people is not thought worthy of government financing and the youth clubs which exist depend on the Church. As long as the Government sees social activity as outside their financial realm, young people will continue to go in large numbers to under-facilitated and dangerous clubs like the Stardust.

Inevitably then, there will be other tragedies.

SALLY SHOVELEIN

Last year the North's trade union leaders predicted that unemployment would reach 100,000 under Thatcher's Tory Government. Two months into 1981 that forecast seems to have been much too optimistic, for unemployment has already reached that figure. Coopers and Lybrands annual survey of the Northern economy, published mid-January, estimated that by the end of this present year the North's unemployment will have climbed on to a staggering 125,000 or 21.5% of the insured population.

With 1 in 5 workers now signing on the dole, the numbers out of work are the highest the 6 counties has ever witnessed, higher even than during the "hungry thirties". In fact, the North has almost as many people unemployed as the 'Free State' even though the latter has double the population. The Northern economy, as Eugene McEldowney put it in the Irish Times is staring disaster in the face".

"It is not just the odd factory which is closing whole industries like man-made fibres are collapsing in the face of the recession, and, with them, the jobs of thousands of Northern workers".

Terry Carlin, the full-time officer of ICTU in the 6 Counties has described the Tories economic policies as "criminal". He has described the effects of British government policies over the last two decades.

* Man-made fibres: In 1974 this industry employed over 9,000 workers, now it is down to about 2,500 and expected to fall even further in coming months.

* Ship-building: In the late '50's this industry employed over 24,000 workers, now its down to 6,500

* Linen: Once the backbone of the Northern economy employing 40,000 people, now its been virtually wiped out.

The general verdict in the North is that, even with the end of the recession, there will be no economy in the 6 counties for an upturn. The severity of the crisis has brought some new and strange additions to the list of employment deserts. Towns like Carrickfergus, traditionally loyalist which have usually enjoyed almost full employment, has now been devastated by wholesale lay-offs at major plants like Courtaulds and ICI. Protestant workers have also been jolted by the Tories attacks on the public service, an area where jobs have always been thought to be safe and secure.

These latter developments have prompted some fresh attempts to build a common political front of Catholic and Protestant workers which would aim at getting the Tories to cushion the effects of their economic policies in the North. The most noticeable attempt involves former SDLP leaders Gerry Fitt and Paddy Devlin who have called for the setting up of a "Left Alliance" to fight the forthcoming local government elections in May. This plan has already received support from the Republican Clubs and the miniscule United Labour Party. This electoral mishmash would like to receive the public backing of the North's trade unions - a most unlikely possibility.

In fact, despite verbal attacks on the Tories' policies as "criminal" NICTU has absolutely refused to sanction industrial action in defence of jobs and against the cuts never mind providing leadership for a fightback. Real opposition to the Tories would demand that NICTU take action over the longstanding unemployment blackspots such as Catholic Ballymurphy, Catholic Strabane and Catholic Derry as well as the more recent victims like Carrickfergus. The NICTU know that would run the risk of antagonising Protest-



North's union leaders Impotent

ant workers and that is a risk the trade union bureaucracy are not prepared to take.

NICTU's fears, however, are not completely divorced from reality. The attractions of sectarianism as a solution to the unemployment problems of Protestant workers were underlined in February by decisions taken at Armagh and Cookstown District Councils. Both councils are loyalist controlled.

Armagh Council had been instructed to implement a Code of Employment and Promotion Procedure adopted by the Local Government Staff Commission but loyalist councillors ganged up to ensure that staff appointments would remain in their patronage and not open to public scrutiny. Cookstown Council rejected a report by the Fair Employment Agency which indicted the Council for discriminating against Catholics in job appointments. Of the Council's senior staff only 2 out of 15 are Catholic; of 57 manual staff only 15 are Catholic; A great many of the North's loyalist controlled councils have refused to sign the Declaration of Fair Employment.

The trade union leadership has done nothing to counteract this tendency to seek sectarian solutions to the economic crisis. Indeed, on the April 2nd Day of Action' against the public expenditure cuts last year NICTU organised the protests with a view to minimising the mobilisation of workers from anti-unionist areas. The whole approach of the trade union leadership to the fight against unemployment and the cuts never rises above lickspittle pleadings that the Tories should treat the 6 Counties as "a special case".

NO SECTARIAN SOLUTIONS POSSIBLE

And so they betray the interests of all workers by masking the fact that it is the imperialist system which is in crisis and not just the vindictive policies of the British Tories. Unlike the "hungry thirties" there are no sectarian solutions capable of immunising Protestant workers from the scourge of unemployment. Only a socialist answer is possible: yet the trade union leaders determinedly refuse to mobilize that section of the working class which, having suffered most from the sectarian policies guaranteed by imperialism, is most capable of mopping out a line of march. Only challenging imperialist domination can offer real prospects of halting the decline of the Northern economy. The combativity of anti-unionist workers demonstrated in the anti-repression

struggle over the past 13 years would transform the balance of forces in favour of the working class if brought to play in the battle against unemployment. The 1,500 anti-unionist workers who formed the largest single contingent on the Belfast protest last April point to their willingness to

take up the challenge.

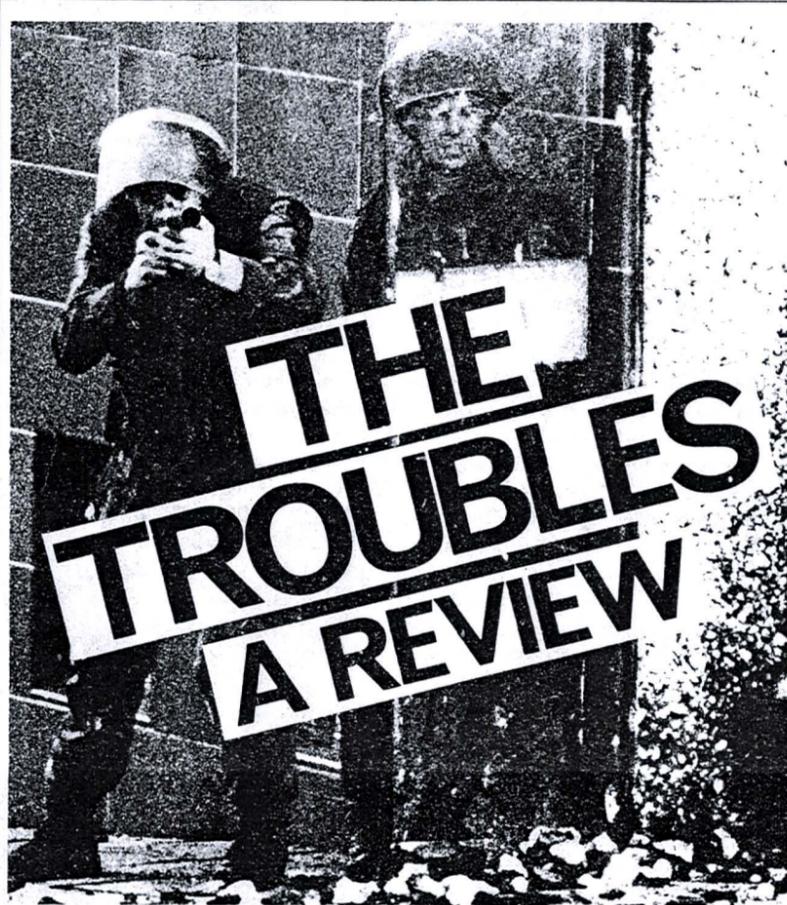
But anti-unionist workers are not fools. They will not take up position behind a trade union leadership that has presided over the structural discrimination essential to the survival of the Northern statelet.

That's why a fight to change this leadership is central to the fight for workers' unity in action. Such a fight requires the militant strength of workers in the 26 Counties as well as the North. The only reason NICTU can get away with kow-towing to imperialism is because the leadership of ICTU as a whole supports this policy.

Developing an alternative to the present leadership of ICTU will not be easy. Despite widespread discontent with the sell-outs of the trade union leaders there is no organised opposition within the unions. Socialists and republicans will have to wage a political battle against the bureaucracy, exposing the latter's accommodations with imperialism and explaining the relevance of an anti-imperialist perspective.

The demand for affirmative action to redress the misery of youth in the embattled nationalist ghettos of the North should be a cornerstone of such a battle. Young workers in the South should be encouraged to form links with the youth of places like Ballymurphy and the Bogside. Delegations of young trade unionists to the North to investigate the situation of youth in the ghettos, to discuss common problems would be a major step in starting to build all-Ireland solidarity.

JOHN MAGEE



For the past few months television viewers in Britain and Ireland have had a feast of Irish history on their screens, both the BBC and Thames TV produced series detailing the history of Ireland.

The Thames series "The Troubles" finished its run at the end of January. This was a television series which took over two years to make and attempted to look at an 800 year span of Irish history with an emphasis on the six counties. There is little doubt that "The Troubles" was a major achievement despite attempting to compress such a time period into five programmes. Although masquerading behind 'balance' and 'objectivity' the producers of the series, Ian Stuttard and Richard Broad, took a position on the interference of Britain in Irish history.

It became patently clear as the series progressed where the blame for Ireland's 'Troubles' lay. This was well illustrated in the programme on the Unionist State from the 1920's to the 1960's. Using old film footage from the intervening decades and counterposing the analysis of Michael Farrell and the apologetics of Glen

Barr, the programme clearly illustrated the sectarian and anti-catholic nature of the Six Counties.

One of the most striking pieces of film was, interestingly enough made by the Southern Government during the anti-partition campaign of the late 40's and early 50's. This clearly illustrated the sectarian allocation of housing used by Unionists to discriminate against Catholics. This programme clearly leaned on Michael Farrell's book, Northern Ireland: The Orange State, both as a source book and as a framework for analysis.

The second last programme on the '66-72 period dealt with the build up to the Civil Rights movement; internment and Bloody Sunday. Again it was clear what the role of the British and the Unionists was. One of the most impressive elements of this programme was a documentary film 'reconstruction' of Bloody Sunday. However it must be said that the last programme of the series failed badly to live up to the expectations which the previous episodes had built up. It became clear in this programme that the makers of

the series were not capable of following through their analysis to its inevitable conclusion: British withdrawal and the necessity to end Partition. Instead of the clarity and consistency of the previous episodes, this programme limped along from one banal conclusion to another finally dismissing the British withdrawal option as a false solution.

While it is unclear why this was so there is no doubt that the fact that the series was made by a major 'establishment' television company placed severe limitations on its ability to come to terms with today's presence of British troops on Irish soil. Yet that in itself does not detract from the overall value of the series. For the first time millions of people in Britain and Ireland were able to see an account of the recent history of Ireland which left little doubt as to the role of Britain and its Unionist allies in Irish history. In Ireland, history, no matter how far back, has an importance and an impact which shouldn't be underestimated. The Irish people are still prisoners of the history of British involvement in Ireland. It is a long history. Professor Donal McCartney of UCD criticised the series on the grounds that it revived a nationalist attitude to Irish history which he and other historians have done their best to bury. If that is the case, then the series was obviously worthwhile.

An important element in its success and impact was the brilliant television techniques which the producers used to put their case, techniques which gave the series a pace and sharpness rarely seen in television history or current affairs and without which it could never have attracted the audience it did. Because of Irish Government censorship it is something RTE is unable to even undertake.

This, in itself, is a savage indictment of the Irish Governments broadcasting censorship, RTE and Irish journalists; in that order. That such a series was produced by a commercial British television station, while RTE's contribution to posterity was to hand over its film archives to the BBC for their effort, is an indication of what ten years of Government censorship has resulted in.

RAUIDHRI MAC NEILL

As we go forward from International Women's Day 1981, sections of the Southern women's movement are attempting to re-define the strategy for women's liberation. The recent women's conference organised by the Status magazine in Dublin, which attracted over 800 women through the day, attempted to do this.

Many of those women have not failed to turn out in the last number of years whenever the possibility of a programme for political action has been held out to them. Unfortunately such a programme was not forthcoming nor was there any plan for activities which could pressurise politicians to implement the proposals which were passed.

The seven areas laid out by the organisers of the conference as appropriate for lobbying were the lowest common denominator of universally acceptable and immediately achievable aims. No analysis was made of the situation of the most oppressed women in Ireland, in order that the most real and concrete demands could be put to the politicians on the doorstep. Instead "areas of concern" to the more privileged women were prioritised while the vital issues stemming from the relationship between Church and State were avoided.

These priorities came from the speakers on the platform and were general and ambiguous, leaving too much open to the interpretation of politicians. In the discussion from the floor, women added detail and emphasised the role of working class women, the importance of controlling our fertility and the relevance of the Armagh women prisoners. The motion on Armagh fell because the number of abstentions outnumbered those voting for or against

Since its publication in early February, "The Armagh Women" has shown itself to be a best seller in the 26 counties. Below, we reprint a review of Nell McCafferty's book by a PD comrade, who is a member of Women Against Imperialism and was one of the 'Armagh 11' - arrested on a peaceful picket outside Armagh gaol on International Women's Day 1979.

WHO ARE THE 'ARMAGH WOMEN'?

"They are 'stitchers', 'cutters', 'shop assistants' and mothers from the anti-unionist areas of the North of Ireland. They are the children of our times, virtually all of them under 10 years of age when the movement for Civil Rights began in 1968. They are the girls who went to school to the sound of marching feet, the tread of British Army tanks, the whine of bullets, the crimp of bombs".

These are women protesting prisoners and anti-unionist women of the 6 counties described by Nell McCafferty in her remarkable book, "The Armagh Women"... Remarkable, because despite its limitations and length it successfully portrays the day-to-day realities of life for working class women in the 6 co.'s. Ordinary women, mothers, wives, daughters, thrown into a massive upheaval, the social and political struggle which resulted from the anti-unionist minority's fight for Civil Rights in the partitioned orange state - a fight that turned into mass resistance against British Army occupation of the 6 counties, Westminster's answer to civil rights for the anti-unionist minority!

WOMEN LED THE RESISTANCE

It was a resistance that took the form not only of mass street protests, but of civil disobedience, resistance that ran from street to street, from house to house. It was often led,

WOMEN'S Movement Which Way Forward

(by eight to one). This shows that many women still don't understand the importance of this issue.

In the last ten years any minimal reforms which have been implemented either North or South have come about through direct and independent organisations and campaigns. Even then these reforms have only been piecemeal. The contraception legislation restricted birth control both financially and by marital status.

Marital breakdown has only been considered insofar as it has already been recognised by the Catholic Church, and annulments here are the Irish solution to the Irish problem. Equal pay can be a reality only for those women who can directly compare themselves with a male worker on the job.

The Southern state is incapable of following the linear line of development established in other European countries. This fundamental fact cannot be ignored. Politicians are not just misled. They are constrained by the social facts of an economy dominated by imperialist interests, where even the most obvious democratic demands have a destabilising

effect on the state as a whole. This context is even more of a reality for Northern women who are on the one hand incarcerated for struggling against repression and on the other hand find that even the implementation of British legislation is opposed by the Unionist ruling class.

It is possible for women to unite around a programme for action which would expose major weakness in the political parties fighting in the general election. But this must not distract the women's movement from our larger principles and in particular from our political independence.

As it stands, the programme of demands for the Southern elections, decided on by the conference, is so broad that it is meaningless. It does not map the way forward for the Irish women's movement.

Failure to discuss the position of women in the North, and especially the women in Armagh jail, exposes the weakness of the conference in understanding the oppression of women in Ireland and therefore in formulating policy on how we should fight this. The resolution to "make contact" with Northern women seemed an empty gesture in this context.

An important task is to solidarise with the women in Armagh Jail who are on hunger strike for political status, for their right as women to have a political identity. As the review of "The Armagh Women" book on this page shows, there is a real ferment of political activity by women in the nationalist areas of the North. If the broader women's movement wants to influence these women then they have to relate to this struggle.

ROSE O'MAHONY

GAY SOCIETY BANNED!

In an unprecedented decision, the Joint Board of University College, Cork refused an application by the newly formed GAY SOCIETY for recognition as a college society. The president of the college, Sean Feegan, has banned the Gay Society from meeting in college. The refusal of recognition means that no college money will be made available to the society and in general the work of the society will be made more difficult.

When the vote was taken the three student representatives voted in favour while the four academic staff voted against without giving any reason. However, it is generally felt that the reason had to do with the sexual prejudices of the academics. In an earlier decision they again voted en bloc to stop the purchase of GAY NEWS, SPARE RIB and other progressive publications for the student reading rooms saying that Charles Kerrigan (the gay general secretary of the S.U.) was foisting his 'degeneracy' on others.

The anti-gay views of the college authorities have not gone without challenge. A leaflet calling on students to protest at violation of gay and human rights has been produced by the Gay Society. Many other societies have passed motions condemning the action and the Students Union, Class Council has promised continued financial assistance.

The emergence of an active Gay Society in UCC is one of several progressive developments in the Cork area. The Gay community has become more open and vocal. The spearhead of this radicalisation has been the Cork Gay Collective. Over the past eight months this group has realised through discussion that there can be no liberation without the direct participation in this process. Consequently they have initiatives including interviews on local radio, a lobby of the Labour Party and, most significantly, a forum for gay activists at the Glenree Reconciliation Centre. This led to a mandate being given to the Collective to organise a national conference of gay activists.

Already a planning committee, consisting of members of the Collective, the Gay Society and individual members of the Cork Irish Gay Rights Movement (IGRM) has been set up. It is hoped to have open forums, films and workshops as well as general discussion and socials. Gays from all 32 counties are invited and many are expected from Britain and the Continent.

MARTIN MAC AN GHOILL

Letters of protest should be sent to: Joint Board, University College, Cork. Send copies to: Gaysoc. c/o Students Union, UCC.

VICTORY TO THE ARMAGH WOMEN The Jail Experience

organised and where necessary (after internment, after the removal of political status) maintained by women. Women who, as Rose McAllister describes, "organised themselves into vigilante groups and such, blowing whistles and banging bin-lids and picketing at the drop of an insult".

As we read the book, we see the women protesting prisoners in Armagh gaol as part of this social struggle - women that travelled that same road of resistance to British rule. A road which led those young working class girls to the fouled cells of Armagh gaol. Women like -
- Sadie McGilloway, from Creggan, Derry, aged 23, began prison life at 14 years of age. Her brother was the first man to be interned in Magilligan camp, Derry, in August 1971. Currently serving 7 years.

- Anne Bateson from South Derry. 14 years old when her brother was killed in an explosion in 1971. Arrested and charged in 1976 - sentenced to life imprisonment.

- Jean Hamilton, from Ardoyne - Aged 18 when arrested in June 1977, 2 months pregnant. Serving 14 years

CONDITIONS IN ARMAGH

The conditions in Armagh are graphically described as is the background to the no-wash protest - the attack on the women by male warders on Feb 7th 1980, after which they were denied toilet facilities.

Through the eyes of Liz Lagrue - one of the Armagh 11 who refused

Nell McCafferty



Price £1.65 (South), £1.50 (North).

to pay a £10 fine for 'disorderly' behaviour and served 2 months we get a vivid insight into how the women cope with the no-wash protest, and their spirit of resistance and determination to carry on the struggle inside the gaol. We learn of their survival routine, central to which was entertainment: "On the 1st night there'd be general knowledge quizzes, based on books and records, next night we'd play bingo, the 3rd night we'd have a sing-song and the 4th night there'd be a debate".

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE GHETTOS

It is to Nell's credit that she was not content to arouse her readers' sympathies by simply dwelling on the

dramas of prison struggle. Instead she portrayed the complex problems of women's everyday experiences in the North over the last 10 years. This is mainly done through the in-depth interview, with three women, perhaps the best part of the book, because they provide a glimpse of the untold story of working class women's problems. Scores of marriages torn apart by the pressures of the 'troubles', having to cope with children alone, of grinding poverty in the face of inadequate social security and the Payment for Debts Act, of despair and loneliness. And yet each of these three women describe the exhilaration of realising you can cope on your own, of fighting back and getting involved, of becoming aware of the need to fight both as a woman and as an anti-imperialist, despite personal hardship and sometimes tragedy.

THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

The role of the women political prisoners and the women leading the RAC's answers the first half of the question. And yet the women's movement has been slow to understand the implications of this for their own struggle and many of them remain suspicious of feminist involvement in the national struggle.

Despite this, the anti-imperialist feminist current, led for a whole period by Women Against Imperialism, had a profound impact on the women's movement and the anti-imperialist movement. This effect is most clearly shown by Sinn Fein's newly adopted policies on women

(which despite being anti-abortion still mark a step forward) but as Nell points out: "It has so far proved easier to feministise Republicans, who have much to gain from the inclusion of women in the struggle than to republicanise feminists....."

The limitations of the book on this question are clearly the limitations of the anti-imperialist feminist current at this point in time. If we are not simply to repeat the history of women in the struggle, but are to transcend it by building an autonomous movement of women which can gain acceptance for the fundamental demands of women's liberation, then anti-imperialist feminists must develop beyond the support of women prisoners.

It must base itself on a broader anti-imperialist programme which links up key issues facing women (abortion, contraception, childcare) with the fight against imperialism, by ensuring that these questions all result from the form of imperialist domination in Ireland.

Only by broadening its programme and fighting to involve working class women will the anti-imperialist feminist current make a historic contribution to integrating working class women's struggles for their own demands into the fight for national liberation.

Despite these aspects, the book is a valuable contribution to the fight for such a women's movement. It presents a powerful image of 'the Armagh women' whose determination and courage is a challenge to all Irish women, North and South. Nell's book will undoubtedly bring that challenge home to many thousands of women, particularly in the 26 counties, in a way that they will not be able to ignore.

SUE PENTEL

THE PEOPLES DEMOCRACY bases itself on the following points:

We agree that the central political question for the Irish people is the political, economic and military domination of Ireland by imperialism and that the central task for the Irish revolution is the solution of the national question through the ending of partition and achievement of political and economic independence.

We are united in our rejection of the claim that any lasting solution to the oppression of the Irish people can be found within a 6 county framework, and in our rejection of any "right" of the Loyalist minority to continue partition.

As Marxists we believe that the capitalist state must be smashed and replaced by a workers' state and that only the organised wor-

king class can provide the motive force for doing this.

We believe that a crucial area of capitalist oppression is women, and this is especially so in Ireland, given the history of clerical power here. Women are oppressed as a sex and even a successful revolution will not automatically guarantee the elimination of this oppression. For this reason, we unconditionally support the right of women to organise independently to fight for their emancipation.

As Marxists, we believe that the working class has the ability to successfully challenge and defeat imperialism. It produces the wealth of society without being able to control or distribute it. It is potentially stronger than any other class because of its ability to organise on a mass base, combining its economic strength and

its strength of numbers.

We accept that workers have the right to defend themselves against imperialism. However, we do not accept the ideology of militarism - the belief that armed groups can substitute themselves for the masses and win freedom for them.

We believe in the building of an organised and experienced leadership, in a Marxist party based on the Leninist theory of party organisation; the central feature of which is democratic centralism.

The organisation is internationalist. It commits itself to holding an organised discussion with representatives of the Fourth International on the question of affiliation to the FI. Members of the organisation may hold individual membership of the FI.



HAUGHEY-THATCHER TALKS: A SELL OUT!

Confusion reigns everywhere when efforts are made to assess last December's meeting between C. J. Haughey, Margaret Thatcher and senior cabinet ministers of the Leinster House and Westminster governments. Haughey dubbed it as "historic", Thatcher dismissed it as a "routine meeting", and Ian Paisley denounced it as evidence of a new Sunningdale.

Despite the certainty of these comments we still know little about what was discussed. The official communique issued afterwards contained nothing beyond banal phrases such as "a unique relationship", plus one point of concrete information about proposed joint Anglo-Irish studies.

This in itself should alert us. The majority of the population in the South, and many anti-Unionists in the North are looking to Haughey for results in achieving British withdrawal and Irish Unity. He has deliberately set himself this task in public, continuously stating, quite correctly that "the Northern state has failed" (Fianna Fail Ard Fheis 1980). He has implied that the British can be persuaded to see his point of view, and that he should be trusted with delicate negotiations.

This in itself is an illusion. Thatcher has spelt it out!

While Charlie Haughey implies that great things are being achieved, Thatcher crudely brings the issue down to Ulster earth. She stated in a BBC interview that a "unique relationship" existed between the South of Ireland and what she laughingly calls the "United Kingdom" because the border is the only land frontier.

The truth is brutal but must be faced - Britain intends to stay and will only go if confronted and kicked out. Thatcher would not be holding talks if the British rulers were not facing serious resistance to their unwanted interference in Ireland. Two days before the talks a giant march to the British Embassy in Dublin was organised by the H-Block/Armagh Committee. It was just one indication of the

swelling revolt at home and abroad against Britain's barbarous treatment of the Republican political prisoners, victims of partition. The underlying reason for the success of this public campaign has been the growing awareness that the H-Blocks and Armagh would not exist but for the crisis in the North.

Any real believer in Irish Unity faced with this, would not have dirtied their hands in an exercise like the Dublin Summit. Haughey never supported the prisoner's demands: he spoke of his "concern", but glorified the prisoner's persecutors. He called these talks "historic". There is nothing "historic" about covering up for British atrocities in Ireland. Various Irish parliamentary "leaders" have tried it from Daniel O'Connell through John Redmond and Arthur Griffith to the present day. It is called collaboration and it never did us any good whatsoever.

Sooner or later the contradictions in Haughey's policy will be made crystal clear. Because Haughey wants to keep the evil day from coming he is pretending that something is happening. That is why the minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan has claimed that "everything was on the table" for the joint studies. Unionist protests and British denials were then avoided.

But two can play at this game. The more recent suggestions that there might be a British-Irish defence pact came from the British side. Haughey's denial has not clarified matters.

Time will eventually tell. What has taken place so far has not amounted to more than verbal shadow boxing. In the meantime "practical" security collaboration continues and grows more ominous by the hour. Far from getting rid of partition Haughey is helping to prop it up. The real question is whether Haughey will have to pay a price to the Irish people for doing Britain's dirty work. For all our sakes the sooner it happens the better.

JAMES CALLAGHER



What's Another Tour? NO TO RACIST RUGBY

Most readers of Socialist Republic probably have never played rugby. Rugby, you see, is a peculiar sport. If you belong to certain broad categories of humanity... well, you're out. If you are a woman, for example. That's half of you gone already. If you are from the wrong side of the tracks. If your accent is vulgar and you really don't know your claret. If you didn't go to a good private school. If you are small or lack the necessary aggression. And, in sunny South Africa, if you are black.

So what is all this controversy about the proposed Irish tour about? Why should the doings of fifteen burly executives with time and money to spare concern us? They are drawn from an elite minority segment of the community. If they wish to cart themselves off several thousand miles to the tip of Africa to kick an inflated pigskin up and down a grass field why should we bother? No doubt many of you wish you had the kind of job (that is, if you even have a job) with such attractive travel and recreation opportunities.

But South Africa is the problem, not rugby. And South Africa is unique. This vicious society is as repressive and exploitative as any capitalist country. But with the added dimension of apartheid - racial segregation and discrimination enshrined as a

fundamental policy of state. Over 80% of the population are totally and permanently disenfranchised, oppressed and degraded by the remaining 20%, simply because of skin colour.

In the psyche of the racist minority which presides over this barbarity, rugby plays an important role. All the classic features of the sport are there. Back-slapping bonhomie, character hardening platitudes, the gentlemanly violence of the heaving scrum, stiff upper lips, sexist jokes in the showers after the match, ribald drunken singing over a few brandies on the train home. With one added dimension, all the players, managers, commentators and spectators are white. Any blacks that do want to play must do it on their own and with inferior facilities.

Far away from the whites' manicured pitch the black kids are crowded into festering slums. Officially they don't even exist - they are 'citizens' of remote rural native reservations they have never even seen. They kick cans across the dusty bits of burnt earth sandwiched between the shacks. Loiter around the shebeens - the white government kindly subsidises the price of booze for blacks. Stand in mute humiliation while a white cop demands the pass book. Sometimes even get shot or clubbed by the riot police - as the touring

British Lions saw and heard to their discomfort last year.

No changes have really occurred in South African rugby. The well-financed and orchestrated SA 'government propaganda saying otherwise is a blatant lie. South Africa is racist and proud of it. Rugby, like all forms of social activity, reflects that racism. The SA government has made it crystal clear that it will not alter apartheid and will fight to maintain it. Even as rugby officials were coming to Ireland to debate on RTE (who paid for that?) SA commandos were invading a sovereign state to murder fourteen innocent civilians who disagreed with being categorized as animals.

Rugby is an integral part of white South Africa. Boycotts do have an effect. They stimulate the morale of the oppressed and insure that no aspect of South African life can pass itself off as "normal". South Africa is beginning to feel the first whisper of the coming wind as bastion after bastion of white rule and colonialism have fallen. That change did not come through any charm being exuded by a touring centre forward at a Johannesburg cocktail party. It came through the African liberation struggle being waged throughout the continent and the maximum international support for and solidarity with that struggle.

This is the time to isolate South Africa. The proposed Irish tour must be stopped. It is perhaps unfortunate that the debate on the tour, as revealed in the letters to the Irish Times, show a touching side to Irish liberalism which doesn't rise to the same heights when the issue is closer to home in Long Kesh or Armagh. But Socialist Republic isn't the Irish Times so we won't ask you to raise the matter in your local rugby club or at the next Rotary club luncheon. But do raise it and the issue of apartheid (and Western support for it) on your shop floor, among other workers, at your trade union branch, in your women's group, community association.

Workers in Dublin Airport have said they will refuse to process the travel documents of the rugby players. This is the kind of action that will stop the tour. Actions like these must be encouraged wherever possible.

Because the tour is a diversion. Apartheid is not. It is the foulest product of centuries of imperialism.

ALAN BRUCE

SFWP SUPPORT CENSORSHIP

Sources in the Workers' Union of Ireland inform us of an interesting debate at the annual general meeting of the RTE branch. While broadcasters were putting whatever political muscle they had behind demands for an ending to censorship, Sinn Fein - the Workers' Party took a different line.

A motion calling for the repeal of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act and for the right of the public to know was opposed by SF-WP fellow traveller, Gerry Gregg. In a notably articulate opposition speech, Mr Gregg stated that he was against

freedom of speech for "murderers and fascists". This gripping appeal did not need any further elaboration so he left it at that. Mr Gregg's principled reason for supporting censorship were not shared by the meeting. Of an attendance of 80, only three voted with him against the motion.

In other bodies of the union SF-WP have attempted to prevent discussion of the issue. Either this is because they fear the result of a vote on the issue or because they have not worked out a more sophisticated reason for supporting Section 31 than that put forward by Gerry Gregg.

REMEMBER SOWETO!

Title: Socialist Republic, Vol. 4, No. 2

Organisation: People's Democracy

Date: 1981

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